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THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

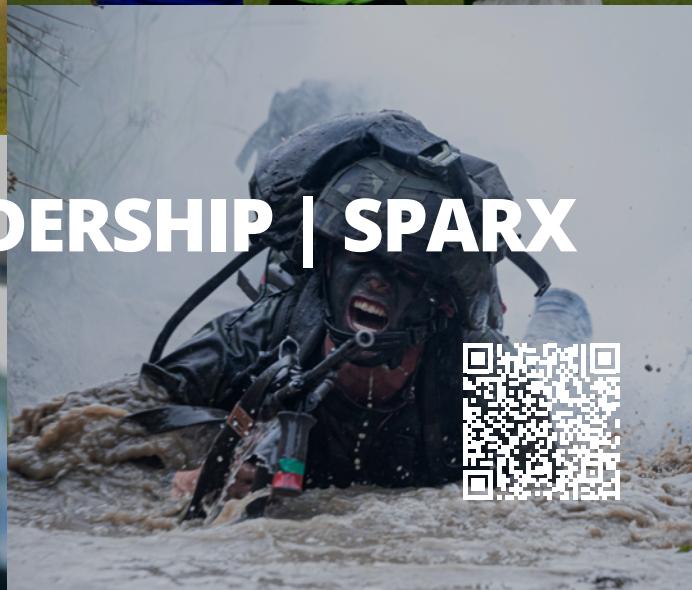
# AN COSANTÓIR



Óglaigh  
na hÉireann  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



NOV/DEC 2023



2023 IN REVIEW | LEADERSHIP | SPARX

[STRENGTHEN THE NATION]



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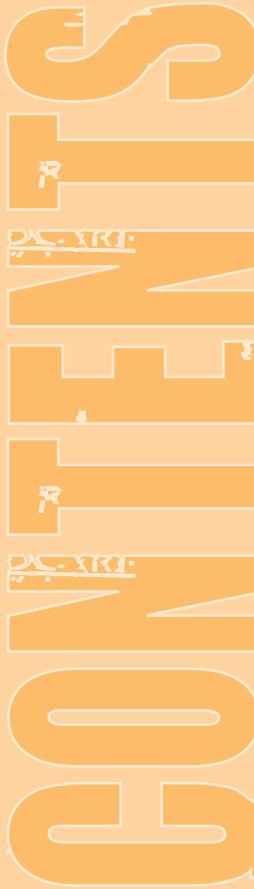
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**Front Cover**

By Various Contributors

# Editorial

Hello, and welcome to our sixth and final issue of 2023, our 83rd volume of the An Cosantóir magazine.

As the year draws to a close, we hope you have enjoyed reading all our editions throughout the year. We have enjoyed the challenge of bringing you a wide variety of articles during the year from the likes of mindfulness & meditation to the 2023 International Sniper competition, mentoring & coaching and many more. We are delighted here in An Cosantóir to have the opportunity to regularly showcase the professionalism and high standards that our members continue to set year after year both at home and overseas. In the area of veterans, we are continuing and will continue to shine a light on the important contribution that our veterans still manage to give long after their service in the Defence Forces has ended. A special thanks to all those that have taken the time during the year to submit pictures, articles and provided us with information for the magazine. We look forward to working with everyone again in 2024 as we continue to improve the magazine. We would like to wish all our readers and their families a happy and peaceful Christmas and good health for the new year.

For this final edition of the year, we have asked each branch of the Defence Forces to submit a roundup of the year, of achievements, changes and notable occurrences relevant to DF members. I think you'll find that it is informative for us all, highlighting the wide range of taskings for all branches of the DF.

Our first feature is a series of Christmas and New Year messages from Uachtarán na hÉireann, Minister for Defence, Secretary General DOD, Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and Head Chaplain, to the soldiers, sailors and airmen & women of the Defence Forces.

This is followed by a roll of honour for serving members that have sadly passed in service during the year 2023, we ask that you keep them and their loved ones in your thoughts at this time of year.

As usual in our On Parade section, we showcase pictures from across the

Defence Forces offering a snapshot of some of the great things that serving and former serving members have done in recent times.

Moving on to the main focus of this edition, our 2023 Branch & Corps reviews - this section provides readers with an insight into what several Branches, Corps, and sections and their members have been doing throughout 2023.

We are continuing to feature the new Leadership doctrine, with a piece from the Leadership Doctrine Working Group about Leadership Through Physical Courage. This also outlines the new Leadership Hub available on the Connect App, where the leadership doctrine is available as an audiobook – perfect for listening to on your commute!

In our Overseas feature, we get an insight into both UNIFIL & UNDOF and look at a brief history of the mission and recent events in both these mission locations.

Nextup Capt Marie Pigott provides us with an excellent piece on the Defence Forces SPARX journey, contributors to this piece explain the exciting journey of innovation within the DF, outlining the 2022 programme. We will feature the 2023 participants in a later An Cosantóir magazine.

We finish our final edition with our regular PSS article which offers some timely advice on how to look after your mental health at this time of year.

As always if you would like something featured in the magazine or have any ideas on further redesigning have your say by emailing connect@military.ie. We are also looking to expand our team internally with permanent positions or also on a detachment, if you have an interest in photography or journalism this could be the team for you. For more information e-mail websmaster@military.ie

*"We should try to hold on to the Christmas spirit, not just one day a year, but all 365." — Mary Martin*

**Sgt John Rossiter — Editor**



*Christmas Message*

# PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS

At this time of year we remember, with a heavy heart, the life of Private Séan Rooney, who tragically passed away in December last year, a life lost serving the people of Ireland, serving the United Nations, and serving all those wishing for peace in our shared world.

In a world where conflicts persist, where horrific suffering and exclusion run deep, the sacrifices of those serving in the Defence Forces do not go unnoticed. The sacrifices that you and your families make on behalf of all our citizens are not only greatly appreciated but also deeply admired by the Irish people. On their behalf, may I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your selfless dedication to the cause of justice, peace and security across the globe.

At home, our Defence Forces continue to play a pivotal role in various ceremonial events throughout the country, including State Visits to Áras an Uachtaráin, always upholding the dignity and distinction that make me, mar Uachtaráin na hÉireann, immensely proud.

May I also express my gratitude for your vital efforts in extending a hand of friendship and support to ex-service men and women, exemplifying the remarkable spirit of solidarity that underpins all that our Defence Forces undertake.

May I conclude by thanking and commending each and every one of you for the important and positive contribution that Óglaigh na hÉireann makes to the security and defence of Ireland, and to the furthering of peace, security and justice across the globe.

Thar ceann mhuintir na hÉireann, guím Nollaig shona agus Athbhliain faoi mhaise oraibh agus ar bhur muintir.

On behalf of the people of Ireland, may I wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

*Beir beannacht.*

**Michael D. Higgins**  
Uachtaráin na hÉireann  
President of Ireland

*Christmas Message*

# TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE MICHEÁL MARTIN



It is my pleasure and honour, on behalf of the government and as Tánaiste, and Minister for Defence to convey Christmas greetings to all personnel of Óglaigh na hÉireann, and their loved ones.

I want to thank each of you for your dedicated service to our country in 2023.

It has been an important year. We have had to face significant challenges, perhaps most notably with the publication of the report of the Independent Review Group on dignity and equality in the Defence Forces and the establishment of a range of initiatives to deal with the issue raised.

When I published that document, I was clear that I wanted it to be a catalyst for change; an opportunity to drive forward the transformation of Óglaigh na hÉireann and investment in a successful and sustainable future.

And in that context we have welcomed many encouraging developments this year. The rollout of private secondary medical care to the enlisted personnel of the Permanent Defence Forces was an important demonstration of Government's commitment to the health and well being of serving personnel, and a signal of our determination to make progress on recruitment and retention.

We saw the commencement of the training engagement with the EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine, and a significant contribution was made by the crew of LÉ William Butler Yeats in the Mediterranean during Operation Irini.

Closer to home, the country watched the commitment of our Defence Forces in action, as you were deployed, alongside Civil Defence volunteers, to help communities impacted by Storm Babet.

We also welcomed the arrival of two Airbus C295 Maritime Patrol Aircraft and two Inshore Patrol Vessels, representing a combined investment of more than a quarter of a billion Euro, demonstrating again the Government's commitment to make the investment necessary to modernise every branch of our Military. We look forward to continuing this programme of investment in 2024 and the years to come.

Christmas is a time when we think about those who are serving overseas. This year in particular, with the very difficult circumstances in the Middle East, we think of comrades serving in Southern Lebanon and offer our solidarity and support to each of them and their families.

It is also of course a time when we think of those we have lost. Twelve months have passed since the death of Private Sean Rooney in Lebanon, and I know how deeply the entire defence community feels this loss. The Government continues to use every avenue and every forum available to press for a full investigation into what happened and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention with respect all those serving and former members of the Defence Forces who lost their lives this year, including Acting Sergeant

Major Declan O'Connell who I know played such an important role as a trainer and a mentor at the Defence Forces Training Centre.

Finally I would like to thank all members of the Defence Forces for your service and wish each of you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

*Micheál Martin*

**Micheál Martin**  
Tánaiste and Minister for Defence

# Christmas Message

# CHIEF OF STAFF

# LIEUTENANT

# GENERAL

# SEÁN CLANCY

On behalf of the General Staff it is my privilege to extend season's greetings to you the men and women of Óglaigh na hÉireann, and in particular to those of you who will be spending Christmas away from your families due to service at home or overseas.

In the season of goodwill it is important to give thanks, and as an organisation to take stock of where we are as we approach the end of the year. However firstly, I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you all for your work and dedication over the past year.

In reflecting, I am once again reminded of the character, competence and commitment of the personnel who serve in Óglaigh na hÉireann and live our values. We have and will continue, to be open and forthright in discussing and addressing the negative aspect of our organisational culture. Our Sexual Ethics and Responsible Relationship (SERR) workshops provide just one example of this. However, it is important to note the very positive aspects of our organisational culture deeply imbedded since our establishment over a century ago. It is these positive aspects of our culture that have supported how the Defence Forces has performed at home and overseas throughout our history and as recently demonstrated during OP PIANO (MV Matthew interdiction) and by our personnel serving in the Middle East in a time of conflict.

This year, you continued to represent the people and values of this State in the pursuit of peace, completing 1550 individual tours of duty, in 11 missions, in 11 countries and 1 sea, across the globe. You have added to Ireland's reputation as a major contributor to international peace, security and humanitarian efforts and proven Ireland's commitment to the principles of the UN Charter.

Last month the Tánaiste published the Detailed Implementation Plan providing a roadmap and timeline for the implementation of the Commission on the Defence Forces recommendations. The Commission report was published almost two years ago at this point and significant progress has been made. 37 of the 38 Early Actions have now been achieved. 12 of the 130 recommendations have been completed, with 6 more due for completion by the end of 2023. We are already beginning to realise the benefits of this work with for example, the introduction of private healthcare for all ranks, the increase in Patrol Duty Allowance, the establishment of both the Office of Reserve Affairs and a new Joint Induction Training Centre and additional appointments and promotion opportunities, to name but a few. This programme of transformation will be the biggest and most radical transformation of the Defence Forces



since the Second World War. The size of the task should not be underestimated. Achieving the goals committed to by Government in the Detailed Implementation Plan will require a huge effort. Each and every member of the Defence Forces will be required to fully engage in this transformation process in 2024 in order that we develop into a modern, joint, fit for purpose military force capable of facing the threats the State faces now and into the future.

At this time of year, I am very conscious of the unending support given to every soldier, sailor and aircrew by their families. Many of you will spend Christmas away from your families or will have missed other important family events during the year due to your service. I thank you for your commitment and ask that you pass on my gratitude to your families who make a huge sacrifice so we can serve.

Christmas is also a time to remember those who have gone before us, a time when we feel their loss most acutely. We remember those serving members of Óglaigh na hÉireann who have gone to their eternal rest during the past year, including Pte Seán Rooney who died in such tragic circumstances in South Lebanon one year ago. We also remember those members of the wider, Defence Forces veteran family who have passed during 2023. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families, friends and comrades. Go ndéana Dia trócaire orthú.

I would like to thank every member of the Defence Forces for your professionalism and commitment in 2023. I wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

*Nollag shona daoibh go láir.*

*Seán Clancy*

**Seán Clancy**  
Lieutenant General  
Chief of Staff

*Christmas Message*

# JACQUI MCCRUM, SECRETARY GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

Dear Women and Men of the Defence Forces,

As 2023 draws to a close, I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of myself and that of my management board and Departmental colleagues to convey Christmas wishes to you and your families. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to you all of you for your commitment during this past year and for your continued excellent service both home and abroad.

In reviewing the year I think that substantial progress was made in a number of areas, welcoming the arrival of two Airbus C295 Maritime Patrol Aircraft, and two Inshore Patrol Vessels earlier this year, allowing for enhancements in our capabilities at sea and in the air. This year also saw the rollout of private secondary medical care to the enlisted personnel of the Permanent Defence Forces, and the most recent announcement of an increase in Patrol Duty Allowances paid to Naval Service personnel. These are just highlights that I hope demonstrate the ongoing investment in our Defence Forces; in its people, infrastructure, capabilities and culture.

As usual there were many events and ceremonies to attend and 2023 was a year in which I had the honour of meeting and speaking with many of you at various events, including a visit to UNIFIL in January, Veterans Day in June, Defence Forces Open Day in Farmleigh House in July, National Day of Commemoration in Collins Barracks in July, the visit of the US Navy in conjunction with the American College Football Series in September, and the Fuchsia Appeal in September to name but a few. These are all great events to meet colleagues and catch up on news.

On the 21st of November the Tánaiste published the Detailed Implementation Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces. The plan sets out the detail behind efforts to enhance and transform the Defence Forces into a modern, fit for purpose organisation, to defend the State, and meet the challenges of today and the future. This is a really significant milestone and the results of great efforts by all involved for which they should be congratulated and thanked.

The Tánaiste has re-affirmed his commitment along with the Chief of Staff and myself to this transformation. We now have the appropriate plan, structures, and resourcing, to deliver on this change programme. I look forward to working with you to build on the excellent progress achieved to date.

Following the publication of the Independent Review Group in March this year, a number of initiatives have also made significant progress, including the establishment of the External Oversight body and progress towards establishing a statutory inquiry. All of these and other initiatives will be

brought together in the reporting process under the Strategic Framework. It is important that everyone is kept informed of our progress on all initiatives, both internally and externally.

I would also like to highlight the continued excellent work undertaken by the Defence Women's Network. This civil / military team continue to deliver on this important initiative at a time of significant cultural transformation across the organisation, with enjoyable and informative events in the Curragh, Athlone and Portlaoise, with the final more festive event of the year to take place in Cork.

Internationally, as well as our continued overseas missions, the women and men of the Defence Forces have also made significant contributions this year to the EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine, and to operations in the Mediterranean by the crew of the LÉ William Butler Yeats during Operation Irini. Nationally, significant weather events, such as Storm Badet, necessitated the assistance of the Defence Forces, alongside Civil Defence volunteers. I would like to thank the members involved for their commitment and service.

At this time of year, we remember all those serving and former members of the Defence Forces who have lost their lives this year. December also marks a year since the tragic loss of Private Séan Rooney in Lebanon and my thoughts go to his family, friends, and all his colleagues.

As we approach Christmas time, for those serving abroad, their families will miss them all dearly, but I also know how proud they are of the outstanding work they do in the cause of peace and justice.

I look forward to working with all of you during 2024 and meeting many more of you in person. For now, both on my own behalf, and that of my management board and colleagues in the Department, I wish all of you and your families a happy and a peaceful Christmas.



*Jacqui McCrum*  
**Jacqui McCrum**  
Secretary General Department of Defence

Christmas Message

# HEAD CHAPLAIN FR PASCHAL HANRAHAN



A Chairde,

It is truly an honour and a joy to be offered this opportunity to extend greetings to the women and men of Óglaigh na hÉireann and to your families and loved ones, as we prepare to celebrate Christmas 2023. The message of that first Christmas night comes to us down through the years and is as relevant today as it ever was.

"Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace to all who enjoy his favour."

The Christmas message is for all people. It is the story of a family; but of a family in very distressed circumstances. Mary and Joseph found no room at the inn; they had to make do in

a stable, and the new-born Jesus had to be laid in a manger. This family had been shut out. Perhaps it was because of this of this early experience that, throughout his ministry, Jesus of Nazareth reached out and made friends with people whom others ignored or despised. Thus reminding us that everyone in this world is a brother and sister with an innate right to be treated with dignity and respect.

With the birth of a child, as you know, there is a new dawn with endless potential. And so it is with the birth of Jesus. Through his teaching and by his example, Christ would show the world how small steps, taken in faith and in hope, can overcome long-held differences and deep-seated divisions to bring harmony, understanding, transformation and growth. The path, of course, is not always smooth, and may at times this year have felt quite bumpy. But small steps can make a world of difference. It's worth remembering that it is often the small steps, not the giant leaps, which bring about the most lasting change.

At Christmas we are also reminded that it is the time of peace and goodwill towards all. Yet we are only too well aware of the tragic fighting, hatred and ill-will in so many parts of the world from Ukraine to the Holy Land. "Peace on Earth" – we may not have it now, we may never have it completely, but we will certainly achieve nothing unless we strive to remove the causes of conflict between peoples and nations.

To our 'Peacekeepers' our friends and colleagues deployed overseas in the cause of peace. May the prince of peace watch over you and protect you and keep you safe and reward you and your families for your sacrifice and service.

I am particularly mindful this Christmas of all who have died during the past year and we especially pray that the souls of our deceased personnel (serving and retired), especially those who died during the past year, may they Rest in Peace. To the families of those who have died, we keep you in our thoughts and prayers.

On behalf of the Chaplaincy Service, I wish everyone in Óglaigh na hÉireann, serving and retired, and your families a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas and every blessing for a brighter 2024!

The light of the Christmas star to you.  
The warmth of home and hearth to you.  
The cheer and good will of friends to you.  
The love of the son and God's peace to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fr Paschal Hanrahan'.

**Beannachtaí na Nollag agus Síochán san AthBhliaín!**  
An tAthair Paschal ÓhAnnraocháin

# REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN COMRADES

## A SOLDIER'S PRAYER

Lord, I ask for your grace and strength for this moment.

May I be diligent and honourable in all things; and show cheerfulness and courage in the face of hardship and danger. Be with me in my trials and struggles.

Watch over my comrades and friends. Be with my family, friends, and all who are special to me.

Lord, give me confidence in times of doubt, strength when I feel weak, hope when there are feelings of despair.

Guide me, direct me and support me today and always. Amen.

*Every saint has a past ... every sinner has a future!*

Shrapnel Cross - St Patrick's Garrison Church, Cathal Brugha Barracks



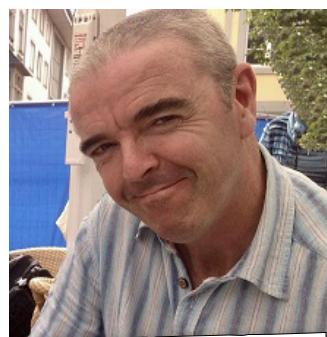
A/RSM Declan O'Connell



Sgt Gordon O'Leary



Armn Glenn Fullam



CS Kieran Nugent



RSM Ken Hurley



Pte Ignacy Sokoluk



L/S Conor Kiely

We would like to remember our brothers that passed in service during 2023, we ask that you keep them in your thoughts. We would like to offer their friends and family our deepest sympathies and prayers.

May they rest in peace.

# ON PARADE

ARW operator on a recent ARW exercise



Defence Forces Soccer Team recently played a memorial match against Crumlin United FC in memory of Glen Fullam (RIP)



A view from the office for a member of 104 Sqn



DF members always learning, soldiers recently completed the UEFA C course ran in Cathal Brugha Bks



DF Boxing Coaches Sgt John Molloy and CQMS Andy Brennan with Pte Sean Mari (7 Inf Bn) after becoming National Champion (Elite 51kg)



Eng Gp members helping people during the recent floods in Midleton, Co Cork



Recent patrol by DF members in UNIFIL AO



Comdt Ronan Carberry receiving the Lt Col Sean Clancy & Lt Gen Tadgh O'Neill awards at the JCSC Graduation, he is seen here with his mother and D COS (Ops) Maj Gen Anthony McKenna



# ON PARADE

Recruits recently passed out in Gormanston; they are now new members of the 7 Inf Bn



Members of the 7 Inf Bn D Coy who recently raised funds for the Laura Lynn Childrens Hospital



Arty Corps who recently held their Annual Corps Concentration, these shoots qualify many of the corps members



GOC 2 Bde Brig Gen Cudmore at the McKee Bks 2 Bde GOC parade



Air Corps C295 on a recent low approach to Donegal Airport



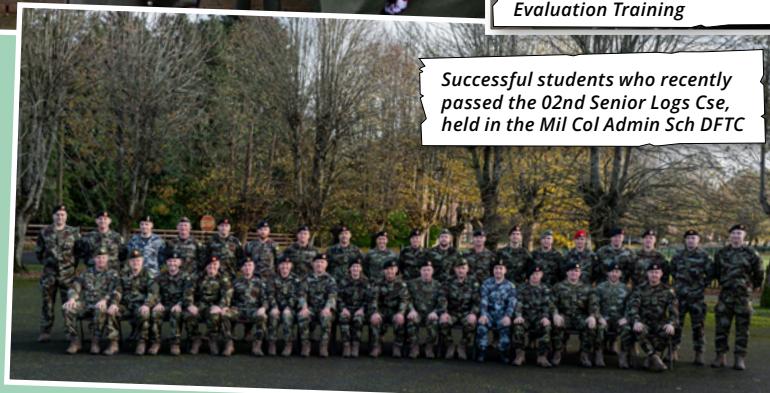
COS Lieutenant General Seán Clancy speaking to members at the recent Veterans Parade held in McKee Bks



Lt Col Keohane of 122 Inf Bn UNIFIL conducting the transfer of authority to Lt Col MacEoin of 123 Inf Bn



Successful students who recently passed the 02nd Senior Logs Cse, held in the Mil Col Admin Sch DFTC



OC 28 Inf Bn Lt Col Rockett & BSM Enfield present a cheque to Aidan Redigan of Beechwood House ONE Letterkenny

# PRESS OFFICE 2023

BY LT EOIN CLANCY  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COMDT CONOR HURLEY



The Press Office had a busy year in 2023, with many impactful posts and interesting projects. The office also underwent a change in leadership, with a new Press Officer Comdt Conor Hurley taking over the reins from Comdt Gemma Fagan in August.

There was a media visit to several of our overseas missions, Michael O'Toole with the Star and Mirror visited the troops

serving with UNIFIL in South Lebanon in June, and Conor Gallagher of the Irish Times visited the sailors on Operation Irini in the Mediterranean.

In this year's Social Media Awards the Defence Forces team took home gold in both Facebook and Instagram for a State Organisation and silver in Twitter for a State Organisation and Social media strategy for a State Organisation.

The team is constantly upskilling with Capt Kenny attending both Basic and Advanced NATO PfP Media Communication courses in Switzerland, and Lt Clancy attending a NATO Strategic Communication course in Greece.

Equally, three new students were enrolled in DCU's MA in Political Communications to further equip the team with the skills to best communicate the organisations messages.

The Press Office is already looking forward to 2024 but here are a few of the top posts and headlines.

**Mick O' Toole with the DFPO**

**MARKET FORCES**  
**LEB FRONTLINE PS KEEPING GILE PEACE**

**IRISH TROOPS IN LEBANON**  
**LICENCE TO DRILL**

**irishdefenceforces**

**EXCLUSIVE: BEHIND THE SCENES ACCESS IN LEBANON**  
**LEB PEACEKEEPERS**

**HUGE 24/7 OP THAT KEEPS IRISH CAMP SHAMROCKIN'**  
**While outposts patrols the Blue Line border...**

# A Year in review 2023 in the DF Info Office



**BY COMDT HELEN HOSBACK**  
**PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COMDT HELEN HOSBACK**

2023 has been a busy year in the DF Info Office (which comprises the An Cosantóir magazine, Audio Visual Section and DF Photographer) – this is our sixth An Cosantóir of the year; our Audio Visual Section produced over 50 videos, and the DF Photographer attended over 90 events to record DF ceremonial, sporting, overseas homecomings and family days.

The An Cosantóir magazine has recently taken on a different structure – we are delighted to feature pictures submitted by members of the Defence Forces in our On Parade section each month, and we have added in a Sports and Clubs section with details on the regular sporting events taking place in the DF. In each edition we have focused on one of the DF sports in detail, including DF Basketball, DF Diving, DF GAA in 2023 and we look forward to covering more in 2024. We are including regular DF Veterans pieces – looking at various Veterans organisations and activities currently taking place. At various points during the year the General Staff have featured in the magazine, to communicate directly with DF members about various topics including an interview with the ACOS about the OCSC in the Jul/Aug edition. In addition to this we have had articles on DF Courses, History and current missions overseas.

The An Cosantóir magazine continues to be published free, online ([www.military.ie/magazine](http://www.military.ie/magazine)) but we also publish 3000 hard copies of the magazine, thanks to the Defence Forces Printing Press. These are distributed to all units and common areas of the DF, including to RDF units and Veterans Organisations.

The DF Audio Visual Section has made some brilliant videos this year – their product hides well the fact that it is actually

quite a small section. We have featured some of the AVS videos with articles in the online version of the An Cosantóir magazine, and the rest of their videos are all available on DF Social Media, or on the DF YouTube Channel at [youtube.com/@TheDefenceForces](https://youtube.com/@TheDefenceForces) Highlights of this year include the overseas homecomings, UNIFIL MRE, the visit of POTUS to Ireland and the Making of a Monument: The National Army Centenary Memorial.

The DF Photographer attends a variety of DF Events, and all photos taken by the DF Photographer can be found on the DF Flickr page at [flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums](https://flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums)



# J1 BRANCH A YEAR IN REVIEW

BY VARIOUS CONTRIBUTORS  
PICTURES PROVIDED BY COMDT KATE HANRAHAN

## EPMO BY COMDT TOM FITZPATRICK

The role of the Enlisted Personnel Management Office (EPMO) is to ensure that all Enlisted Personnel of the Defence Forces are served by a highly efficient and transparent management system underpinned by the regulatory frameworks. EPMO works alongside the other J1 functions and is situated within Support Division in DFHQ. In this stream EPMO works in support of the formation Personnel Cells (G1, N1, and A1) to progress and develop projects at formation level as it pertains to workforce planning. Generally, EPMO has three key pillars: Promotions and Competitions, Overseas Selection and Military Information. Each cell has both Officer and NCO staff which respectively furnish formations and DFHQ/DOD with policy and thematic advice. EPMO has long standing Officer and NCO staff who are subject matter experts within their area. OIC EPMO advises the Director of Human Resources Branch (DJ1) on matters impacting Enlisted Members of the Defence Forces.

In 2023, EPMO have worked extensively on progressing all service promotion Order of Merit lists across both Junior and Senior NCO ranks, to support the formations and directorates in filling vacancies in support of CAPDEV priorities on foot of the CODF recommendations. In parallel, EPMO engaged formations and directorates to review the current XYZ,

in order to shape the promotion competition landscape in 2024. This is an important role as it allows directorates to shape the essential skillsets within their Corps to meet operational needs in the future. EPMO have responsibility for the administration and conduct of both Discrete and Limited Promotion Competitions, which were used extensively to select successful candidates for key NCO appointments in the JTIC, Army Force Design, Office of Reserve Affairs, Joint Recruitment Office and other CODF Implementation appointments.

The Defence Forces continues to meaningfully contribute to International Peace and Security through our Overseas Deployments. EPMO has responsibility to force generate for our larger scale PSO, and in 2022 EPMO enabled the deployment of the 67th and 68th Inf Gps to UNDOF and the 122nd and 123rd Inf Bns to UNIFIL. Throughout the deployments EPMO supported the units in personnel related matters.

Currently EPMO, as the year comes to an end, have launched the 12th Potential Officers Course which will see 30 candidates commencing their training in APR 2024. UNDOF will come to an end in Q2 2024, and the EUBG will be in the "stand up phase", with EPMO having key roles in these processes. 2024 will see new opportunities for Enlisted Ranks on foot of CODF recommendations, and EPMO will be at the centre of those processes in the new year.

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) BY COMDT STEPHEN MOLUMPHY

The DF FOI office has the responsibility to manage the Freedom of Information function within the Defence Forces as required under the Freedom of Information Acts. This year has seen an increased roll out of the FOI training to front line decision makers at Brigade and Corps Director level. This will continue into 2024. It is key that all personnel in the DF are aware that all, or aspects of any correspondence, written or typed and relating to work or personnel can be captured under the Freedom of Information Acts and therefore every member of the DF needs to be cognisant of such.



*Uachtaráin na hÉireann President Michael D. Higgins at the Easter parade*



## DATA PROTECTION BY COMDT RONAN O'REILLY

The area of Data Protection is ever evolving and continues to grow in importance in an increasingly data driven world. Highlights for the office over the past twelve months include the investment in resources; from the on-boarding of a new civilian clerk, to the implementation of new case management software and engaging expert consultancy to inform decision making. Training in the area of Data Protection has also been delivered as part of multiple course syllabi which has served to increase awareness of our members. These resources and activities have proven to be invaluable assets for the DPO in ensuring that the DF upholds the rights our members in line with our responsibilities as an Organisation under Data Protection legislation.

## COMO BY CAPT TOMMY MONAHAN

COMO were heavily engaged this year in workforce planning to support the DF's 2023 transformation programme, including the conduct of associated officer promotion competitions and management of officer appointments. The sanction of 44 new officer appointments throughout the year, beginning with the creation of the appointment of Director of Reserve Affairs, precipitated a large volume of consequential vacancies across multiple promotion streams and ranks. This required extensive work on regulatory provisions for promotions into new streams. COMO also staffed work on the allocation of new appointments across all services and promotion streams, work that will continue in 2024 and beyond as further appointments are sanctioned.

These changes were reflected in an exceptionally high volume of officer promotion competitions conducted across all three services, with 25 separate competitions conducted in 2023, up from 10 in 2022. In addition, a larger than usual volume of specialist appointments boards were convened for the Corps of Engineers, DF Legal Services Branch and CIS Corps, to allow these specialist Corps and Branches to staff new and anticipated appointments. COMO also conducted a large number of EOIs in 2023 for non-promotion appointments into new CODF vacancies as well as pre-existing vacancies, including JITC Student Counsellor, LO to DF Ombudsman, OIC Printing Press, Cadet Class Officer, POC officer staff, as well as for courses such as the CIS YOs, PCBC and diplomas in mentoring run through third-level institutions.

In addition to CODF related work and promotion competitions, COMO processed a number of applications for permanent commissions for

re-joiner officers as they came towards the end of their initial three-year contract. A total of eight (8) re-joiner officers were awarded permanent commissions in 2023.

As part of the revitalisation of the Reserve Defence Forces, COMO was involved in the conduct of RDF promotion competitions. Following on from the publication of the new DFR R5 in 2022, GRO 01/2022 provided administrative underpinning for the conduct of Lt – Capt competitions, the first such competitions run in almost a decade. 1 Bde and 2 Bde competitions have now concluded and the DFTC competition is ongoing. In April a Comdt - Lt Col competition was conducted in the DFTC and an officer successfully promoted. Planning is currently underway for the conduct of a Capt – Comdt competition in 2024.

2023 also saw renewed interest in applications for the First Line Reserve from officers who voluntarily retired during the year. On foot of recommendation for the revitalisation the FLR, three (3) army officers were appointed during 2023, the first army officers appointed in over a decade. Several other applications are in process and COMO will work closely with ORA on the development of the FLR going forward.

On the COMO overseas desk, routine selection of officers for overseas was conducted in addition to selection for the EUBG. 2023 saw an increase in the number of personnel deployed on EUMAM-UA and a drawdown of Irish deployment to EUTM.

Several staff rotations occurred in COMO in 2023; most notably OIC COMO Brendan McGovern who retired from the Defence Forces in November 2023. He is replaced by Comdt Kieran Moynihan.

## CEREMONIAL BY COMDT KATE HANRAHAN

The Defence Forces participated in over 30 significant military and State ceremonial events in 2023. State ceremonial honours were afforded on the occasion of the Official Visit to Ireland of The President of The United States in April. Ceremonial honours were also afforded on the occasion of the State visit to Ireland of the President of Malta in March. A Ceremony of Reconciliation and Remembrance of All Those Who Lost Their Lives in the Irish Civil War took place in The Garden of Remembrance, Dublin in May at which the Taoiseach and Tánaiste attended. The Defence Forces participated in the National Famine Commemoration, held this year in Milford, Co Donegal in May at which the President attended.

The Defence Forces celebrated Veterans' Day in McKee Barracks in October where members of ONE, IUNVA and ARCO paraded along with Unit Veteran Associations. The Defence Forces Remembrance Ceremony was held at The National Memorial, Merrion Square in November to remember the eight (8) members of the Defence Forces who lost their lives in the past 12 months. As part of this ceremony the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence and families of the deceased laid wreaths at The National Memorial. The Defence Forces participated in the annual State

commemoration ceremonies, including the commemoration of the 107th anniversary of the Easter Rising at the GPO, O'Connell Street; the 1916 Leaders Commemoration at Arbour Hill and at the National Day of Commemoration in Collins Barracks, Cork. Four (4) Ministerial reviews for overseas contingents took place throughout the country to mark their departure for peacekeeping duties with UNDOF and UNIFIL.

J1 took the lead in the ceremony for the rededication of the Defence Forces Plot in Glasnevin Cemetery on the 30 Jul 2023. The National Army plot contains the remains of some 180 of the estimated 810 National Army soldiers who died in service to the state during the Civil War. The remains of others lie in graveyards across the island of Ireland. Until the 30 Jul there had been NO dedicated memorial to their memory.

The monument took its inspiration from the national flag, following its proportions and tricolour division. Centred on the design of the 1913 Irish Volunteers/Óglaigh na hÉireann emblem, which represents the sunburst of the Fianna and encapsulates Irelands long martial traditions. The emblem has been darkened in mourning, a tradition dating to the funeral of General Michael Collins and continued to this day.

## RECRUITMENT & COMPETITIONS

During 2023, Recruitment & Competitions Section have conducted 32 different competitions across the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps. This is broken down into internal competitions for members of the Defence Forces such as Trainee Technician Schemes and external recruitment campaigns including Recruits, Cadetships, AC Technicians, NS Direct Entry, Re-Commissioning & Re-Enlistment etc.

In 2023, some of the major changes made by R&C section to streamline the recruitment process include the introduction of the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) grading for induction fitness testing, increase in the age for enlistment as a recruit to 29, the introduction of the Self Declaration Medical Questionnaire in lieu of a GP Cert and additional supports to potential candidates surrounding the completion of psychometric testing.

In June, R&C Section in conjunction with the Naval Service and external media partners launched the 'BE MORE' Naval Service Recruitment advertisement which has been running on national and regional media across TV, Radio, Print and Social Media.



*Rededication of the Defence Forces Plot in Glasnevin Cemetery on the 30 Jul 2023*



*Veterans Parade which took place recently in McKee Barracks, Dublin*

# J3/5 YEAR IN REVIEW

BY CAPT KARL DEMPSEY

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPT KARL DEMPSEY

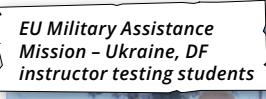


Counter IED training being provided by DF members

Compass' for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy by 2030. This document reflects Ireland's core values that underpin our approach to CSDP, including Ireland's commitment to effective multilateralism and the rules-based international order. This evolution in EU security & defence policy seeks to encourage increased cooperation between EU member states and Irelands engagement with EUMAM-UA affirms Ireland's commitment to enhanced EU cooperation.

The Defence Forces' involvement in EUMAM-UA (EU Military Assistance Mission – Ukraine), which commenced in December 2022 with the deployment of one Staff Officer to the MPCC (Military Planning and Conduct Capability) in Brussels, has brought about several significant benefits for our personnel. This mission has offered our personnel valuable opportunities for growth, development, and DF personnel are in a position to share their expertise with UAF and our EU partners whilst gaining experience through operating in a Multinational HQ.

The deployment of three personnel to the Special Training Command in Strausberg, Germany, in April 2023, further enhanced their training and expertise. This exposure to international training environments and collaboration with counterparts from other nations has significantly expanded their skillset.



EU Military Assistance Mission – Ukraine, DF instructor testing students



Ukrainian soldier performing counter IED drills

Additionally, the Defence Forces have continued to send mobile training teams to Germany and Cyprus to conduct specialized training in areas such as demining and clearance, tactical combat casualty care, and Drill Instructor training. These deployments have not only enhanced the proficiency of our personnel but also fostered cross-cultural exchange and cooperation, enriching their international experience.

In 2024, the Defence Forces plan to maintain their engagement with this mission, ensuring that our soldiers benefit

The EU's Common Defence & Security Policy (CSDP) provides the EU with the capacity to undertake peacekeeping and crisis management operations thereby strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter. To date, the DF have participated in many CSDP missions and operations. The value the EU places on the type of capacity and experience the DF brings to these missions cannot be overstated. In Mar 22, the EU heads of state & Government agreed the 'Strategic

from ongoing opportunities for skill development, professional growth, and collaboration with our international partners. This continued involvement will enable our personnel to stay at the forefront of military practices and maintain a high level of readiness for a variety of operational scenarios, ultimately contributing to the overall readiness and effectiveness of the Defence Forces.

## OP 'PIANO' BY SO J3/5

The Defence Forces once again responded when called upon during the Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO) against the 'MV Matthew' on the 26 SEPT '23. The Joint Task force (JTF), an emergency joining of state forces to deal with such incidents, managed this inter-agency operation. However, from the DF perspective, the DF Operations and Plans Branch, known as J3/5, coordinated all elements from the DF. The joint operation involved all elements of the DF including the Army, Naval Service (NS), Air Corps (AC) and Special Operations Force (SOF), the Army Ranger Wing (ARW). From the J3/5 perspective, Operation 'PIANO', required dynamic planning processes that are both robust and well-practiced, yet flexible to produce workable options in a compressed timeline. Relying on Liaison Officers (LOs) from all three (3) services and the ARW were key to the successful outcome of Op PIANO. The ARW, in close cooperation with the NS, Air Corps and J3/5 regularly run MIO and Maritime Counter-Terrorism (MCT) Exercises to prepare for such eventualities. The DF has a Joint

Operations Centre (JOC) established exactly for such operations. The DFJOC is operated 24/7 and has been used regularly for both ongoing routine overseas operations and shorter, more high-profile operations such as Op 'PIANO' or the evacuation of Irish citizens from Kabul, Afghanistan in 2021.

The setup of the JOC allows for a surge capacity of Liaison Officer's and other qualified advisors as necessary for such operations, coupled with the ability to track operations in real-time. In McKee Bks on the 26 Sept '23, the Director of J3/5 was able to monitor the Maritime Interdiction Operation in a secure setting, on multiple platforms while surrounded by naval, air and SOF advisors. This all enables the JOC to have the latest operational picture and situational awareness in McKee Bks despite the operation taking place off the Southeast coast of Ireland. Op PIANO once again showed how effective the Defence Forces can be when called upon in an emergency and how lessons from previous operations have improved the functioning of the JOC. This setup, and the ability to have advisors readily available in one location ensures that even when time is short and the tactical picture is changing, multiple courses of action can be quickly generated, disseminated and executed to achieve mission success.



DF instructor and interpreter during a student lesson



Members of the ARW aboard the MV Matthew

# J4 BRANCH

## SNAPSHOT OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

BY LT COL FRANK FLANNERY  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LT COL FRANK FLANNERY



*"Effective logistics assists commanders in establishing and sustaining combat power and is an integral part of all operations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war."*  
— (J4 Branch, 2023)

The central role of J4 Branch is to support DF operations and training at home, at sea and abroad through the judicious use and coordination of DF organic support capabilities and contracted services. J4 Branch staff perform their roles in order to ensure effective, value for money outputs as well as providing governance and oversight across the DF. J4 Branch carried out extensive logistical operations, training and support to DF members serving at home and overseas throughout 2023. The following is a snapshot of J4 Branch activities.

### INVENTORY MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Inventory Management activities and the coordination of governance inspections, both at home and overseas, was a central element of J4 oversight and governance activities. This year J4 inventory management and governance teams provided advice and guidance through coordination of DCOS Sp inspections, Internal Audit and OCAG inspections, thereby providing assurance in respect of inventory management across the Defence Forces. The DF Travel Office, DF Printing Press, Compulsory Random Drug Testing and Court Martial Administration also come under the remit of J4. Significant activities in these areas include;

- Move of the DF Printing Press to a bespoke, custom renovated building in McKee Barracks scheduled for completion in 2024.
- CRDT of over 900 soldiers across 24 DF locations so far in 2023.
- The booking and co-ordination of flights for Training Activities, Competitions, Conferences and Small Mission deployments.

### EUTM-MALI WITHDRAWAL

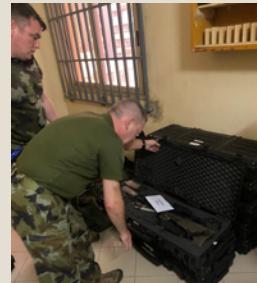
The withdrawal of DF personnel and equipment from the EUTM Mali mission presented a logistical challenge that demanded meticulous planning and execution. Managing the withdrawal of troops and equipment from the EUTM mission area back to Ireland was a challenging and rewarding mission to undertake and successfully complete. Detailed planning for the operation began when the Irish Government promulgated the decision to withdraw from the mission. Logistical planning for the withdrawal operation allowed J4 Branch to execute the logistical withdrawal in challenging circumstances by deploying to the mission area and ensuring the safe and efficient repatriation of personnel and equipment. The withdrawal operation in a challenging and evolving environment highlights the invaluable role of logistics in DF operations overseas.



*J4 meeting with DEU Logs Comd*

### UNIFIL MISSION ROTATIONS

The UNIFIL mission rotations add another layer of complexity to the J4 Branch's annual responsibilities. Managing troop rotations, ensuring seamless transitions, and sustaining operational capabilities require meticulous planning and coordination with multiple stakeholders, both domestically with DF Formations and the NSRC located in the DFTC, externally with the DoD, and close coordination with UN Headquarters and UNIFIL Mission Headquarters along with Dublin Airport Authority.



*J4 staff packing stores in EUTM MALL to return to Ireland*

### PLANNING FOR THE EU BATTLE GROUP 2024/25 AND USE OF PESCO LOGS HUB

The PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) LOGSHUB (Logistics Hub) project represented an innovative initiative aimed at enhancing logistical capabilities within the EU framework. J4 Branch's involvement in this project focused on sharing expertise, resources, and strategic insights to develop a robust logistics infrastructure to support participation in upcoming and future EU missions. J4 Branch plays a central role in coordinating with our EU colleagues in preparation for participation with the EUBG.



*Comdt Richie Barber, J4, pictured during UNIFIL rotation*

In particular, J4 Branch are leading the DF involvement in the PESCO Logistics Hub project which is an exciting initiative in which the DF will utilise a Logistics Hub in Germany to securely store DF EUBG equipment for training and operations with the German led EUBG. The Logistics Hub is based in Germany and J4 Branch have participated in extensive planning with our German colleagues in order to use the Logistics Hubs to securely forward deploy equipment for the EUBG.

### UNDOF WITHDRAWAL

Planning for the withdrawal of personnel and equipment from the UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) mission in 2024 is a significant logistical activity for all personnel in J4 Branch. The meticulous planning process involves detailed assessments of troop movements, equipment logistics, and strategic considerations to withdraw from the mission area in 2024.

### WORK PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

J4 Branch provides work placement opportunities for individuals seeking to gain professional and personal development in the areas of supply chain management and logistics operations within the Irish Defence Forces. If you are interested in gaining logistical experience, apply to join us and participate in the critical role played by J4 Branch in coordinating and overseeing of logistical operations across the Defence Forces.



# DIRECTORATE OF TRAINING AND EVALUATION

## Shaping Excellence with Lessons Learned

**ARTICLE BY LT PHILIP KEARNEY**  
**PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LT PHILIP KEARNEY**

### INTRODUCTION

J7 Training and Evaluation Branch stands as a linchpin for the Defence Forces, diligently crafting training policies, coordinating education, and vigilantly monitoring standards. These concerted efforts underpin the highest operational capability, efficiency, and effectiveness levels.

### EXTERNAL EDUCATION SECTION: A BRIDGE TO EXCELLENCE

The External Education Section plays a vital role in facilitating, processing, and administrating external education and training. Its mission is clear: to bridge the training, education, and capability gap within the DF. By collaborating with relevant stakeholders and optimising budget and resources, this section ensures that DF personnel have access to continuous professional development. An essential enabler for this purpose is the DF Refund of Fees scheme. Training Instruction TI 04/2000 provides the necessary guidance for applying under this scheme, ensuring that personnel can access external education. By managing participation in NATO and European Union military courses, the External Education Section keeps the

DF at the forefront of military thinking and best practices. The External Education Training Output statistics in 2023 illustrate the section's impact:

Refund of Fees	
Formation	No. of Participants
1 Bde	12
2 Bde	21
DFTC	1
AC	1
NS	4

NATO Courses	
No. of Courses	No. of Students
46	57

European Courses	
No. of Courses	No. of Students
271	690

### TRAINING PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SECTION: PRECISION IN PREPAREDNESS

The Training Planning and Management Section is responsible for developing training policies and crafting the Annual Training and Education Directive (ATED). This crucial task ensures that training ammunition allotments are optimised for effective, safe and efficient training activities. The section's Training Instructions (TI), Circulars (TC), and Syllabi (TS) are designed to align all training courses and activities with the DF Strategic Goals. Each training course and activity must gain authorisation from DJ7, with the section facilitating this process. This Section also spearheads various military competitions, recognising and rewarding excellence within the Defence Forces. Highlights from the year include the Defence Forces Small Arms competition, where 1 BCS won the falling plates; the Infantry Tactics competition, won by 1 MIC; and the International Sniper competition, won by 27 Inf Bn. The Training Planning and Management output in 2023 demonstrates the scale of its activities:

Training Courses Authorised	
No. of Courses	No. of Students
1301	16120

Competitions Authorised	
Competition	Number of Participants
DF Small Arms	217 (141 PDF, 76 RDF)
Infantry Tactics	6 Teams
International sniper	35 teams

maintain the required fitness standards. The section collaborates with various sports groups within the DF to organise and facilitate sporting events. Examples of the remarkable sporting achievements in 2023 include the DF Boxing team winning the Celtic Cup, the DF men's rugby team placing 5th at the Military Rugby World Cup in France, the DF golf placing 3rd in the CISL military golf championship in the USA, and the high standard of running observed during the An Cosantóir.

### EVALUATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED SECTION: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Evaluation and Lessons Learned Section assesses and evaluates training throughout the DF to ensure adherence to current doctrine. It employs two primary methods of training evaluation:

- **Domestic Unit Training Evaluation (DUTE) model:** assesses unit-training administration, facilities, and infrastructure to ensure courses are effectively administered, and training is conducted in a student-centric manner.
- **Domestic Exercise Evaluation Model (DEEM):** evaluates the preparedness of deploying units across five operational areas, identifying shortcomings and training gaps.

Training Output 2023: Evaluation		
Evaluation Type	Number of Evaluations	Units Evaluated
DUTE	7	DFSM, 28 Inf Bn, Ordnance School, NS TTS, 12 Inf Bn, DFSC, AC TTS, MP School
DEEM	4	67 Inf Gp, 68 Inf Gp (UNDOF), 122 Inf, 123 Inf Gp (UNIFIL)

Lessons Learned		
Lessons Learned Training	Number of Students	Training Location
NATO Lessons Learned POC Course	15	McKee Barracks
DF Lessons Learned Staff Course	9	AC MTS
NATO LLSC	7	Sweden

Training Output 2023	
Sports Group	Number of Events
DFAA	7
DF Adventure Race	1
DFAM	3
DF Boxing	5
DF GAA	6
DF Golf	6
DF Orienteering	1
DF Rugby	3
DF Sea Angling	1
DF Soccer	8

Additionally, the Lessons Learned element of the section aims to enhance organisational performance by learning efficiently from experience and providing validated justifications for amending existing practices. The DF Lessons Learned Process is an invaluable tool for achieving this goal.

### CONCLUSION

In 2023, the J7 Training and Evaluation Branch has been a hive of activity, working diligently to enhance the capabilities of the DF. The tireless efforts across all sections have not only facilitated the development of new skills but have also propelled the DF towards its strategic goals. As the DF evolves, the J7 Training and Evaluation Branch will continue to shape new best practice standards, ensuring it remains a linchpin in enabling capability development and operational readiness.



DF Men's rugby team at the Military Rugby World Cup in 2023



DF Women's rugby team at a recent game



DF boxers with coaches

# GENAD 2023

BY LT COMDR CAROLINE SCANLON  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SGT PAUL KEALY



2023 has been a both a busy and productive year for the Gender, Equality and Diversity Office. With the support of the wider DF, we have delivered on major projects such as White Paper Project 56, 'Survey to identify the impediments to the advancement of women in the Permanent Defence Forces'. This was undertaken in Q1 2021 in order to establish what impediments female members face in terms of career progression within the organisation. The responses provided in the survey offer a valuable insight into the current feelings and experiences of women in the DF, providing new information and insight into the impediments to the advancement of women in the DF. The survey results highlight many of the positive structures in place that encourage greater participation and retention of women in the DF. Whilst providing valuable information that will feed into the creation and delivery of policies and initiatives aimed at increasing the number of serving females, the goal is to address any impediments to their advancement within the DF. One such policy GRO 01/2023 DF Maternity and Associated Protected Leave, signed by DCOS Sp Adrian Ó Murchú is a complete revision of GRO 04/2015, incorporating national legislation. This transformational GRO will assist all members of the DF to fully understand their rights in respect of maternity and associated protected leave and inform them of their statutory rights.

The rollout of period products throughout DF installations is a wonderful success story. Beginning with advocacy and drive from Defence Forces Women's Network, followed by the successful delivery and distribution of the sanitary products throughout the organisation by Lt Col Sharon McManus and her team in D Eng Branch Barrack Services, namely; BQ Paul Gifford, CQ Leon Clarke and CQ Peter Scully. Exigencies of military service means that women are often restricted from leaving locations such as guard rooms when on duty or barracks when in training. Access to sanitary products in restricted environments normalises the needs of military women, raises awareness amongst all DF

personnel and removes one less barrier for women in the DF. Products will also be made available in overseas locations shortly.

Another good news story is the new scheme to reimburse female DF personnel the cost of purchasing their own sports undergarments. Female personnel can make one claim per year, to the amount of €130.

Organisational Cultural Standing Committee (OCSC), in driving positive cultural change in the DF, developed the Sexual Ethics and Respectful Relationship (SERR) workshop. This training consists of modules on consent,

military culture and environment, sexual ethics and respectful relationships and being an ethical bystander. The workshops focus on addressing inappropriate behaviour and encourages people to call out inappropriate behaviour in others. The SERR workshop is designed to give personnel the opportunity to discuss, explore and learn about sexual ethics in the workplace, with a view to making the DF a safer place to work. The workshop is being delivered by Professor Louise Crowley, a Professor in Family Law in the Legal Department in UCC, alongside a DF Military Champion. Prof. Crowley developed the Bystander Intervention programme which she delivers across Universities, private companies and the public sector. Prof. Crowley will deliver 68 workshops.

A number of events held by the Defence Forces Women's Networks (DFWN) and Defence Women's Network (DWN) have taken place throughout the year. These events focus on a variety of topics such as women in leadership, empowerment, mental health and wellness. The most widely attended event this year was 'Radiance from the Skin and Within', attended by 130 DF & DOD personnel. The line-up included renowned skin expert Jennifer Rock (The Skin Nerd) and a leading nutritionist Isabelle Fagan. The event was enjoyed by all and offered participants the opportunity to network and learn from our peers from throughout the DF.





# THE DEFENCE FORCES REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

## MANAGING THE EDUCATION OF THE FORCES

BY LT COL COLIN LAWLOR

PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON DF FLICKR ([FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/DFMAGAZINE/ALBUMS](https://flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums))

The delivery of training and education is one of the most essential roles undertaken by the Defence Forces. A robust and relevant professional military education is vital to developing a broad spectrum of national military capabilities. These capabilities allow the Irish government to project military power in response to security or national disaster crises in domestic and international settings, supporting government security and foreign policy objectives. The military is a unique profession, and its education processes are very different from other models of higher education. Unlike other professions, the DF cannot hire junior leaders or middle managers such as Company Sergeants or Company Commanders. Specialists such as engine room artificers, military communications experts, or military engineers cannot be recruited externally; they must be trained and educated internally. The broad and varied capability requirements of the DF contributes to the challenge of providing military education. The Defence Forces Registrar's Office manages several military-academic programmes that aim to build military capability. This article will examine the education opportunities available in the DF, based on collaborations with external Universities.

### THE TRAINEE TECHNICIAN SCHEME BY CAPT PAUL FARRELL

In the wake of the Army Apprentice School closure in 1998, the Trainee Technician Scheme (TTS) was established in 2002 in response to identified deficiencies and the need to restore technician levels. The Office of the Defence Forces Registrar manages the TT scheme on behalf of the Director of Training and Education (DJ7). Working in collaboration with technical Corps Directorates, the TTS has evolved into a vital component of the DF.

#### General Information

255 students are currently enrolled in the TTS, spanning diverse courses across the various Corps. The year 2023 witnessed the successful qualification of 67 students from different streams of the TTS as listed below:

#### Future Developments and Capability Delivery

In 2024 the DF anticipates graduations in line with the numbers achieved in 2023. This consistency indicates the program's stability and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the various Corps. The Commission

on the Defence Forces recommends the establishment of a National Defence Academy and an Apprentice School to bolster a future tech-

- Heavy Vehicle Mechanic - 9
- Printing Press Technician - 4
- Air-Con and Refrigeration - 1
- Construction Plant Fitter - 1
- Weapon System Mechanical Technician - 6
- Armour Artificer Instrumentation - 13
- Carpentry - 8
- Plumbing - 3
- CIS Technician - 11
- Vehicle Body Repair - 2
- Electrician - 9

enabled force. Since the closure of the Apprentice School, the Defence Forces have forged excellent collaborations with entities such as SOLAS (formerly FÁS) and SETU Carlow. Such partnerships have played a pivotal role in training and educating our technicians and continue to provide them with essential skill sets required by the DF. The Army Trainee Technician Scheme is a testament to the Defence Forces' commitment to maintaining a skilled and adaptable workforce. Collaboration remains key as the DF navigates future developments, including the potential establishment of an Apprentice School.

### LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND DEFENCE STUDIES PROGRAMME - COLLABORATION WITH SETU BY CAPT GRAINNE KENNEALLY

A significant achievement in the DF has been the growth of our collaborative educational relationship with the South East Technological University (SETU), formerly IT Carlow, which commenced in September 2012 and has gone from strength to strength since. The Leadership, Management and Defence Studies (LMDS) Programme, developed to meet the needs of Enlisted Personnel, is the most extensive academic programme in the DF and rewards lifelong learning of enlisted personnel by providing academic validation for military training and education through its alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications (see image). Accreditation increases the academic and professional standing of the DF and contributes to our organisational learning, professional knowledge and expertise.

Enlisted personnel are provided with the opportunity to register on the LMDS programme during Three Star training. Throughout their DF career, enlisted personnel are supported through the DF 'life-long learning concept' to acquire academic credits based on the training and education courses they complete. Acknowledging the unique professional

experiences that a career in the DF provides, experiential learning is recognised through completing a work-based learning portfolio (WBLP).

### DF-SETU ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

The DF has had approximately 2,000 personnel graduated from SETU, with a further 250 personnel graduating in January 2024.



The following tables illustrate the range of courses available, number of personnel who graduated, and the number of DF personnel currently on an academic programme with SETU:

#### a. Leadership Management and Defence Studies (LMDS) Programme

Programme	No. conferred to date	No. currently on the programme
<b>Level 6 Higher Certificate</b> (typically awarded upon completion of a Potential NCO Course)	956	81
<b>Level 7 Minor Award</b> (typically awarded upon completion of an All Arms and Corps specific Standard Course)	562	92
<b>Level 7 BA (Logistics)</b> (typically awarded upon completion of a Senior Logistics Course)	141	22
<b>Level 7 BA (Senior)</b> (typically awarded upon completion of a Senior NCO Course)	157	14
<b>Level 7 BA RPL</b> (Elements of this programme can be completed through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for personnel who had joined the DF prior to the establishment of the programme in 2012)	1	34

#### b. Young Officer Programmes

Programme	No. conferred to date	No. currently on the programme
<b>Level 9 M. Sc. in Communication Technology Management</b> (CIS Corps YOs)	24	8
<b>Level 9 M. Sc. in Military Engineering Management</b> (Engineer Corps YOs)	13	12
<b>Level 9 M. Eng. in Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives Engineering</b> (Ordnance Corps YOs)	25	3

#### c. Other Corps Specific and Miscellaneous Courses

Programme	No. conferred to date	No. currently on the programme
<b>Level 7 Certificate in Software-Defined Communication Systems</b> (CIS Corps)	0	8
<b>Level 7 Certificate in Introduction to Fire Service Operations</b> (Engr Corps)	22	14
<b>Level 9 Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education</b>	5	5

#### Other Courses available include:

Level 8 Certificate in Advanced Incident Command Management (New Programme in 2022)

Level 8 Certificate in Leadership and Operational Management (New Programme in 2022)

Level 8 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Leadership and Operational Management (New Programme in 2022)



### OFFICER THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION OFFICER SCHEME BY COMDT RORY O'REILLY

In the ever-evolving landscape of military education, the Third Level Education Officer Scheme stands as a beacon of excellence, enhancing the next generation of military leaders and, as such, the capability of the DF. There are currently 112 student officers actively participating in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) under this transformative program. The distribution of student officers across the designated units and HEIs provides a snapshot of the scheme's widespread impact. Galway's 1 Cn Cois leads with 56 student officers (National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) and Athlone Training Unit (ATU)). Dublin's 2 BTC has 44 student officers (Technological University Dublin (TUD), University College Dublin (UCD), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Dublin City University (DCU), and Maynooth University (NUIM)). The breakdown of student officers by year highlights the scheme's continuity and growth, with 16 in Year 1 (Reg 2023), 40 in Year 2 (Reg 2022), 36 in Year 3 (Reg 2021), and 20 in Year 4 (Reg 2020). This progression showcases the commitment to developing leadership skills over the course of the program.

Some student officers have the opportunity to participate in ERASMUS in countries such as Germany and France. Furthermore, student officers are gaining practical experience through work placements internal and external to the DF, which allows student officers to apply skills and knowledge in an appropriate setting. For example, there are a number of supply chain management

students that will undergo their work placement in J4, DFHQ becoming involved with strategic-level projects of a military logistical nature. In 2023, the scheme celebrated the graduation of 34 student officers. Looking ahead, approx 25 new entrants are scheduled to join the scheme in 2024/2025 and 30 in 2025/2026. The achievements of student officers extend beyond the academic realm, with many participating in university sport at a national level. Student officers are encouraged to contribute to university life, with many taking on leading and administrative roles in clubs, societies and charities.



Level 7 Diploma in Leadership Management & Defence Studies (Special Purpose)

### OFFICER PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION PATHWAY

The DF has a long-standing relationship with Maynooth University (MU) for the accreditation of career courses along the officer PME pathway. MU has been an academic partner with the Command and Staff School since 2002, the Cadet School since 2007, and the Infantry School since 2012. Upon successful completion of the Cadet Course, Officers graduate from MU with a Level 7 Diploma in Leadership Management and Defence Studies (Special Purpose). Graduates of the Land Command and Staff Course receive a Level 8 Higher Diploma in Leadership Management and Contemporary Security, while graduates of the Joint Command and Staff Course are awarded a Level 9 Masters in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies. In November 2023, 123 officers graduated from MU. Embedding academics from MU in DF Schools has been a significant step forward in providing academic support to students and instructor staff. This model mirrors many European military academies with scope for deeper collaboration as the DF explores options to establish a National Defence Academy as the Commission on the Defence Forces recommended.

### CONCLUSION

The Defence Forces remain committed to training and educating its personnel in line with international and academic best practices. Education is a critical enabler for developing the capabilities needed to work in the modern security environment, ensuring that our personnel are educated to make the right decisions in complex operating environments and have the technical and military skills and competencies to execute operations successfully.



# AIR CORPS: A YEAR IN REVIEW

## NO 1 OPERATIONS WING A YEAR IN REVIEW

BY LT LAUREN CUSACK

PHOTOS BY VARIOUS PHOTOGRAPHERS

**O**ne cannot stress the importance of the capabilities of the fleet and personnel in No 1 Operations Wing, at the forefront of critical operations carrying out a wide variety of operations in service to the state, the public and other organisations.

### 101 SQN - SURVEILLANCE & AIRLIFT

This squadron plays a pivotal role in maritime defence, aerial surveillance and logistical support for various state agencies and the wider DF. With two C295MW Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) aircraft entering service this year, and a third C295MW Military Transport aircraft (MTA) to enter service in 2025, the Air Corps has seen the introduction of its most advanced aircraft to date.

Throughout the integration period the CN-235 aircraft continued to provide the State with vital operational output. These two aircraft will retire in 2023, after amassing over 20,000 hours each.

The coming year will see a leap forward in the Air Corps capabilities, providing a number of new, demanding and exciting opportunities for growth and development throughout the DF, built on the proud and unbroken service of 101 Squadron for almost 50 years.

### 102 SQN - AIR TRANSPORT

The core function of this squadron is the provision of the Ministerial Air Transport Service (MATS). 102 is tasked with short and medium haul missions to Europe and this year also conducted flights to the Middle East. Apart from MATS, 102 squadron also fulfils vital roles in the areas of air ambulance and service support to the wider DF. Looking to the future, processes to acquire a new aircraft has begun, which signals a new chapter for 102 in terms of providing service to the state and its citizens.

### 104 SQN - SURVEILLANCE AND RECONNAISSANCE

With the qualification of new pilots and the retirement of experienced flight officers, this squadron has been kept busy with a high number of training courses, while also partaking in numerous operations in service to the state. 104 Sqn has 4 PC-12 aircraft which have carried out ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) flights in 2023, including being heavily involved in the joint operation with ARW and AGS, off the coast of Waterford in September.

The PC-12 has been utilised in the support of other Units in the Air Corps and wider Defence Forces, An Garda Síochána, National



*Air Corps taking part in the successful Op PIANO in Sep 23*

Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) and the HSE. A number of resupply missions to Irish troops serving in UNIFIL and UNDOF were successfully completed throughout the year, showing the range and capability of the aircraft and also the professionalism and dedication of the flight and maintenance crews.

The versatility of the aircraft in the Unit and the expertise of the crews who fly and maintain them is vital to continue providing the high level of service and output from the Unit.

### AIR CORPS COLLEGE

ACC continued to be the engine that supplied the Air Corps with sufficiently trained personnel across all areas in 2023, despite the ongoing HR challenges. In March, members of the 80th Aptce class and GS recruit platoon passed out. The 3\* Airmen were posted to AC operational units and the Aptces will now begin their 4 years of technical training to become qualified aircraft mechanics. They will join the 78th & 79th Aptce Classes in the Technical Training School which is an EASA Part 147 recognised institution. In June, the 77th Aptce Class passed out becoming qualified aircraft mechanics. As part of their final year project, they designed and built a Full Authority Digital Engine Control (FADEC) simulator and gave a superb demonstration of its operation to GOC AC. Yet again, these students demonstrated the technical prowess of the Air Corps technical training facility. Induction of the new Trainee Military Aircraft System Technician (TMAST) class is currently underway in the Joint induction Training Centre in Gormanston.

On the Flying side, the 29th YO Wings Course (7) continued their Wings Course training on the PC-9 with the finish line in sight in the 1st Quarter of 2024. Following them up are the 30th YO's Wings Course (5) who are currently completing their Ground-school in the Flying Training School. Nipping at their heels are the future 31st YO's Wings Course who will complete their training in DFTC in April 2024 and the future 32nd YO's Wings Course who have just started in the DFTC. There have been some changes in the FTS with the promotion of Capt McDermott to Comdt. He takes over Command of FTS from Comdt Snowdon who moves to ACC 2IC. An Instructors Course is currently ongoing to qualify two new QFI's following the departure of Lt Gavin Byrne to the RAAF and imminent retirement of Capt Damien Kelly.

One of the highlights of the Year was the awarding of the DF Values award for Moral Courage to Lt's Blake & Godden for their successful recovery of a PC-9 to Baldonnel in 2021 following an in-flight engine failure. All of this training was facilitated by robust maintenance practices in FTS that often saw 7/8 aircraft serviceable with 150hr + 300hr inspections completed on site.

MTS broke some new ground this year with the completion of the very first and second Senior NCO's Courses qualifying 40 students for further promotion and facilitating a Level 7 qualification with SETU for the award of a diploma in Leadership, Management & Defence Studies. MTS Instructors also participated in NATO Lessons Learned Courses in Sweden, Personnel Recovery Course in Germany, Urban SERE Course Workshops – Czech Republic & Belgium and Operation Red Flag in the US.

In addition 6 ACC personnel served overseas in a variety of roles this year. Altogether a busy year for Air Corps College. Roll on 2024.



*Air Corps Honour Guard for Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence Micheál Martin*



*The Air Corps recently received a new C295 aircraft*

# NO. 3 OPERATIONS WING – A YEAR IN REVIEW

BY CAPT NEIL DUNNE

In the dynamic landscape of No. 3 Operations Wing, 2023 has been a year marked by remarkable achievements and significant contributions to various critical operations. From life-saving initiatives to international collaborations, the unit has consistently demonstrated its commitment to excellence.

## AED TASKING

Early in the year, 301 Squadron undertook a pivotal task – installing two eco-powered cabinets on Croagh Patrick to support life-saving



equipment. Designed by Mayo native and qualified EMT Engineer, Darren Forde, these solar-powered cabinets not only house defibrillators but also provide temperature-controlled storage for life-saving medications. Registered with HSE Ambulance Control, these cabinets have the potential to

make a life-saving difference in remote locations, and No. 3 Ops Wing takes pride in playing a role in their installation.

## POTUS VISIT TO IRELAND

In April, No. 3 Operations Wing played a pivotal role in welcoming two Sea Kings from the United States Marine Corps' HMX-1 Presidential Airlift Squadron and six Chinooks from the US Army Black Knights to Baldonnel during the visit of the President of the United States to Ireland. Arriving via Air Force C17 strategic airlift aircraft, the Sea Kings were meticulously reassembled in the hangar, while the Chinooks, overcoming technical challenges, flew in from Cardiff. The Sea Kings served as the transport for POTUS during his visit, while the Chinooks were instrumental in transporting associated security teams. The collaborative efforts between No. 3 Operations Wing and their American visitors included various tasks, from aircrew and tech crew operating as marshals to guide the Chinooks, liaison officers addressing miscellaneous issues, to technicians preparing a dedicated space for the Sea Kings in the squadron's hangar. A camaraderie-building photo session, words of appreciation, and presentations in the officers' mess, followed by a shared celebration at the 51 Bar, underscored the successful cooperation during this high-profile visit.

## 57TH HELICOPTER CONVERSION COURSE

The culmination of the 57th Helicopter Conversion Course marked a significant milestone for No. 3 Operations Wing. Five students completed their comprehensive training in August, encompassing 89 flights across diverse disciplines such as basic and advanced handling, instrument flying, mountain flying, and navigation flying. The Airbus EC135 served as the training aircraft, providing a robust platform for honing their skills. Having graduated from the course, these students are now operational, actively contributing to various tasks within the unit. The successful completion of this course not only enhances the capabilities of the unit but also reflects the commitment to maintaining a highly skilled and proficient aircrew. As these graduates take on responsibilities, 302 Squadron continues to operate alongside 301 and 304 Squadron in carrying out any taskings received.

## EXTERNAL FLYING TRAINING

Four of 302 Squadron's newest members embarked on a transformative journey to RAF Shawbury for Rotary Wing Flying Training. Station Commander Group Captain Andy Barron welcomed them to the tri-

service establishment, emphasizing the unique collaboration of the British Navy, Airforce, and Army. As they progress through their course consisting of ground school, basic and advanced flying training, these aviators will return as fully qualified helicopter pilots ready to begin their operational career as pilots in No. 3 Operations Wing.

## PREPARATIONS FOR HELI60

With a rich history spanning 60 years, No. 3 Operations Wing continues to pioneer in military and civil aviation. From being the first Air Ambulance and SAR mission operator to introducing NVIS and helicopter ICU, the unit's legacy is etched in milestones. Recognised with 21 unit personnel receiving DSMs, the unit remains at the forefront of aviation advancements. The unit celebrated this occasion on November 24th of this year.

## MARITIME OPERATION

In collaboration with the Gardaí, the Naval Service, and the Army Ranger Wing, No. 3 Operations Wing played a crucial role in detaining the non-compliant Panamanian registered cargo vessel, MV MATTHEW, suspected of drug trafficking off the Cork coast, using its AW139 platform. This operation, involving aerial boarding and the seizing of the vessel, exemplifies the unit's commitment to national security and anti-smuggling efforts.

## AIRSHOWS

No. 3 Operations Wing graced multiple airshows, showcasing their EC135 and AW139 aircraft both within and outside Ireland. Participating in various locations like Birr, Rush, Bray, RAF Cosford, and RIAT, the unit not only demonstrated their capabilities but also engaged with diverse audiences. Notable appearances, such as landing at Farmleigh for the Defence Forces Open Day, added to the unit's public relations efforts.

## TRAINING ACHIEVEMENTS

The completion of the Aircrew Instructor Course and the Tech Fliers Course stands as a testament to the unit's dedication to skill enhancement. These accomplishments not only elevate the expertise of the existing team but also bolster the unit's capacity to train future aircrew.

## FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS

Responding to a call for assistance, AW139 crews collaborated with the Northern Ireland Fire Service and the Civil Air Patrol in tackling fires in Antrim. Over the 15th and 16th June, the unit's pilots and aircrew demonstrated their versatility, operating out of Aldergrove and actively contributing to firefighting efforts.

## OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

As of November 2023, No. 3 Operations Wing demonstrates impressive operational statistics, including 926 Garda Air Support Unit (GASU) flights, 221 Emergency Aeromedical Support (EAS) Service flights, 5 Neo Natal Air Ambulance flights, 3 Ministerial Air Transport flights, and 51 Joint Operations. These figures underscore the unit's unwavering commitment to its diverse range of missions.

In reflection, 2023 has so far been a year of triumphs for No. 3 Operations Wing, where innovation,



collaboration, and excellence have been the hallmarks of their operations. As they look ahead, the unit remains steadfast in its mission to uphold the highest standards of service and continue its legacy of pioneering achievements in the field of helicopter aviation.

# NAVAL SERVICE END OF YEAR REVIEW

BY LT (NS) DUBHEASA NÍ CIONNACH PÍC  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LT (NS) DUBHEASA NÍ CIONNACH PÍC

## IPVs

HMNZS Rotoiti and HMNZS Pukaki are two of four Lake Class Inshore Patrol Vessels (IPVs) built by Tenix Defence in Whangarei for the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), and commissioned into service in 2009. At 55 metres in length, the vessels have a displacement of 340 tonnes, and have a top speed of 25 knots (46km/hr).

Both vessels were subsequently decommissioned in 2019, following a decision by the RNZN which identified that a better capability outcome would be achieved utilising their current Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs). Following the procurement of both vessels by the Irish Government in 2022, HMNZS Rotoiti (now P71) and HMNZS Pukaki (now P72) underwent a regeneration and modification programme of works, primarily taking place at Devonport Naval Base, Auckland. The programme of works included a major overhaul and service of Main Engines and Generators, upgrade of various Control Systems including Steering, Power Management, Propulsion, and Measuring Alarm Systems. The vessels were also dry docked, during which time the propulsion shafts were removed and both hulls surveyed and repainted, including the new Irish Naval Service (INS) pennant numbers. Electrical modifications also took place on-board both vessels, including replacement of sockets, upgrade of lighting and CCTV System, and cable replacement throughout the internal areas. During Q1 of 2023, a multidisciplinary Project Team of INS Personnel oversaw the final Harbour Acceptance Trials (HATs) and Sea Acceptance Trials (SATs) of both vessels in Auckland. The team consisted of Marine and Electrical Engineer Officers, Navigation and Operations Officers, Radio & Radar Technicians, Electricians, Fitters, and Seamanship specialists.

On completion of HATs and SATs, the vessels were commercially lifted and transported from Auckland to Cork Harbour, arriving in April of this year. Now in the custody of the INS, the vessels are undergoing the final phase of the overall Regeneration Project, where communications systems are undergoing installation to ensure fleet standardisation and future capabilities can be achieved. Some minor outfitting works will also be carried out during this period, prior to crew familiarisation and training, with an expectation of becoming operational during 2024.

OP IRINI members enjoying a break in the sun



## CHENS 2023

The Chiefs of European Navies (CHENS) is an annually held, independent and apolitical forum which is attended by the Chiefs of Staff of European nations, who as members of NATO or the European Union, have a military navy. The event seeks to promote understanding between navies of the member countries, to examine issues of common and mutual interest and to increase awareness of maritime domain trends and in member countries. This year the Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service (FOCNS) held the presidency and was responsible for hosting the event. There are 27 participating nations (Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Greece, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands,

Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey) and four associate delegations (NATO MARCOM, NATO IMS, USN 6th Fleet and EUMS) who are invited as observers for CHENS each year. In May 2023 Ireland hosted this event for only the second time (previously hosted in 2001) and the 2 day programme was hosted

in Cork. This event was attended by over 100 people from 27 different international delegations and had international speakers from military, industry and academia presenting on the theme of Naval Implementation of Emergent Disruptive Technologies. The co-ordination for this event was led by the Naval Service and would not have been possible without significant support and logistical assistance received from a wide variety of Defence Forces Units and State Agencies to deliver the event successfully. The event received extremely positive feedback and served to strengthen international ties for the Irish Naval Service in the Maritime domain.

## OPERATION IRINI - EUNAVFORMED

In accordance with the government decision to contribute to the maritime mission OPERATION IRINI, LÉ WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS deployed in June 2023 to EUNAVFOR MED. During their 34 day deployment period, they operated to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 2292 and 2578, including the interception of illicit cargo such as weapons or oil bound to or from Libya. On a daily basis, the ship's crew conducted Friendly Approaches of merchant vessels. The friendly approach team was made up of 4 personnel, Boarding Officer and three NCO's. Prior to conducting a Friendly Approach, the ship would conduct a hail on the target vessel. Once the approach was approved, the Operations Officer would brief the Friendly Approach Team. This briefing would include information such as the ship's cargo, last port of call, the number of and the nationality of ship's crew and any other relevant information which would assist the approach. The team would then be mounted and COD6 (Use of Force) brief carried out, before launching the team on a RHIB. The team would embark the target vessel via a boarding ladder and would make themselves known to the ship's crew. The team would conduct a thorough inspection of the vessels documentation and of the vessel itself. The aim is to obtain as much intelligence as possible, including pictures of cargo or other items which may be deemed hazardous. Once the approach was complete, the team would return to the Unit to collate all the intelligence and information gathered, a formal de-brief could take place and an after action report would be sent to Fleet HQ. During its deployment with EUNAVFORMED, the ship fell into the fleet's battle rhythm as directed by Fleet HQ. In line with this directed battle rhythm, the ship also entered Sicily, Souda Bay and Malta. This was a very successful deployment, and proved the interoperability between the NS and other European Navies.

## MV MATTHEW SEIZURE

The Joint Task Force (JTF) on Narcotics Interdiction carried out a coordinated Operation at sea on the 26th September. The JTF comprises members of the Naval Service, Revenue Customs Service and An Garda

Síochána which resulted in the detention of a Panamanian registered bulk cargo vessel that originated in South America, "MV Matthew". A significant quantity of suspected controlled drugs were located onboard. The Defence Forces played a pivotal role in this operation after receiving a request for assistance from the JTF. The LÉ WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, two AW139 helicopters, one CASA fixed wing aircraft and once PC12 fixed wing aircraft all participated in the intelligence led operation in addition to the Army Ranger Wing (ARW). The MV Matthew was being tracked by the Naval Service over the previous days and was detained following the firing of warning shots by the LÉ WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS. A specialist team from the ARW were then deployed via helicopter, onto the MV Matthew via fast rope insertion, in challenging conditions. The ARW made the vessel safe and enabled its boarding by officials and personnel from the Naval Service, the Garda National Drugs Unit, Organised Crime Bureau (GNDOCB) and Revenue's Customs Service. The MV Matthew was escorted by the Naval Service to an Irish port where it was detained to allow for a detailed search and investigation by the relevant state agencies. A number of arrests have resulted from the successful operation.

*NS picture showing Air Corps AW139 and ARW operators after boarding the MV Matthew*



## NSR MOTOR LAUNCHES (MLS)

As part of the ongoing regeneration of the Naval Service Reserve (NSR), a contract has been awarded to an Irish firm for the construction and delivery of up to four Motor Launches (MLs) for use by the NSR. The 14metre, twin engine MLs will be deployed to each NSR unit (Waterford, Limerick, Dublin & Cork) to reinforce and enhance their maritime capabilities in the littoral environment, in support of their Port Security role and wider operational support to the NS and DF. The MLs will be armed with 7.62mm GPMGs and fitted with secure military communications, to ensure full interoperability with the DF Joint Common Operational Picture (DFJCOP).

In preparation of the arrival of the first ML, a new programme of training was implemented for NSR personnel to qualify them to crew and master the MLs. A series of modularised courses were provided to facilitate the dual commitments of NSR personnel (to the DF and their full time civilian employment). This was further enhanced with the award of Department of Transport (DoT) Passenger Boat Certificate of Proficiency (Category A commercial endorsement), on completion of the requisite examination and certification by external assessors.

The first ML is due for delivery in February 2024, on completion of a series of Harbour and Sea Acceptance Trials (HATs & SATs). This will be completed in close coordination with the Marine Survey Office (MSO). It is expected that each follow on ML will be completed every twelve months. The NSR ML Build Project is being project managed by a First Line Reserve Officer (Lt Cdr MEO). This reinforces the importance and capability of the First and Second Line Reserve to the NS, in the delivery of operational capability. The NSR ML Project is also a manifestation of the positive future that is envisaged for the NSR, in accordance with the Government intent to implement Level Of Ambition 2 (LOA 2) of the Commission on the Defence Forces Report, published in February 2022.

## NS "SHIP" ADVERT

The first Naval Service specific advertisement was developed, produced and launched this year in conjunction with the production company KICK Dublin, as part of the wider DF "Be More" recruitment campaign. This advert focuses on the values and qualities represented by words such as mentor, leader and guardian which can be found in one place; onboard an Irish Naval Service ship. The footage was shot onboard LÉ George Bernard Shaw in May with the rollout commencing in June across TV, Cinema, Social Media, Radio, Digital Audio and Print. This project is an exciting development for the NS and broadens the reach and scope of the ongoing recruitment campaign.

# THE OFFICE OF RESERVE AFFAIRS

BY COMDR PHILIP DICKER  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SGT JOHN ROSSITER



and an RDF staff of one (1). The next tranche of appointments expects to see the Reserve Defence Force (RDF) staff expanded.

The ORA mission is to unlock the potential and develop the capability of the RDF to enhance national resilience. The strategic objective for the regeneration and development of the RDF, as accepted by Government in the Strategic Framework is:

"To create a reserve force that can seamlessly train, operate and deploy with the Permanent Defence Force, nationally and internationally".

The work of the ORA is focused on operationalising the intent of the CODF report while concurrently supporting the day-to-day functioning of the RDF. The initiatives being undertaken are guided by the 15 recommendations of the CODF that have been consolidated into four key actions within the Strategic Framework. These are stated as:

- **Reserve Defence Force Vision:** The Defence Forces to publish a new Reserve Defence Force Vision.
- **Reserve Defence Force Regeneration Plan:** The Defence Forces to complete a Reserve Defence Force Regeneration Plan.
- **First Line Reserve:** The Defence Forces to prepare proposals to provide for a Fast Track Process for First Line Reserve.
- **Employment Protection:** Employment protection measures for RDF members who deploy on a voluntary basis in support of the Permanent Defence Force, will be developed by the Department of Defence in 2024.

Principal amongst the actions of the ORA is the development of the RDF Regeneration and Development Plan. Work in this regard is well advanced and it is anticipated that the plan will be published in Q2 2024 in line with the requirements of the Detailed Implementation Plan. In the development of the plan the ORA has consulted a broad range of stakeholders, not least Reservists themselves. During a series of workshops, the ORA engaged Reservists in campaign planning whereby they were tasked to develop the actions, effects and conditions necessary to achieve the end-state. The Reservists provided a rich insight into the issues they face. It was clear from the workshops that there is a huge willingness and significant dedication amongst Reservists to revitalise the RDF so that it can make a meaningful contribution to national defence capability.

The ORA has identified recruitment

The Office of Reserve Affairs was established earlier this year as one of the Commission on the Defence Forces early actions. The ORA is, in part, a re-hatting of the Director of Reserve Office and while many of its roles will remain the same, it will be a fully resourced and integrated element of DFHQ reporting directly to CHOD. The ORA, with offices located in the DFTC, has now reached Initial Operational Capability (IOC) with a PDF staff of five (5)



and retention as a key priority. The RDF RDP will create actions that will open multiple RDF induction streams. These will include the recruitment of direct entry specialists, re-enlistment and re-commissioning of PDF and RDF personnel and the transfer of personnel from the First Line Reserve to the

Second Line Reserve. To enhance these efforts the ORA is examining a range of issues including an assessment of limitations presented in the area of age thresholds in the context of how these constraints impact on a need to retain experienced personnel and secondly induct experienced retired personnel who are seeking to continue their service on a part time basis.

Recognising the need for immediate action, a recruitment campaign was launched on 03 October. Applications have been moderate however it is anticipated that an initial induction will commence late this year or very early in 2024. The recruitment process has been significantly streamlined based on lessons from previous campaigns. Recruitment Liaison Officers, with a target of eight (8) weeks from application to attestation, have been appointed to facilitate the efforts at sub-unit level. Going forward it is the intention of the ORA to establish a 'rolling recruitment' system for the RDF whereby multi annual inductions can take place where such capacity exists. The induction of new recruits in Q4 2023/Q1 2024 will be supported by Formations and Brigades through the training of additional instructors. This will be further complemented by the roll out of new and improved recruit training syllabus that will form the key stone to a system of continuous professional career training. Additionally, the RDF will commence centralised recruit training in 2024. This initiative has been introduced in order to consolidate resources and enhance the training available to Reservists.

To further complement the retention of personnel, in addition to the commencement of an RDF Potential Officer Course in Oct 2023, ORA has sought to complete a number of Officer and NCO promotion competitions. ORA will continue to support the filling of key appointments and make recommendation, where appropriate, for RDF establishment to be reviewed. This will include the promotion of senior enlisted leaders into appointments that have previously gone unfilled.

Over the course of the last year the ORA has sought to keep all stakeholders informed of the initiatives being undertaken. A comprehensive communications strategy has been implemented at all levels. Paired to this effort is the extension of access to the Connect App to Reservists. This has been a hugely positive move that will further enhance the integration of the RDF through comprehensive communications across the DF.

To conclude, ORA are focused and committed to operationalising the intent of the CODF. It is clear that the revitalisation efforts that have already been implemented are building momentum and are on the path to the enhancement and integration of an RDF that is fit for purpose in line with the Government's strategic objective.



# THE DEFENCE FORCES JOINT TASK FORCE (DF JTF)

BY COMDT TADHG O' DONOGHUE  
PHOTOS BY COMDT TADHG O' DONOGHUE

## OPERATION FORTITUDE

On 20 Mar 20, the Minister for Defence issued DFR 05/2020 establishing a COVID-19 Joint Task Force "to comprise of Land, Sea and Air Components of the DF for the purpose of Military Operations relating to COVID-19". OPORD 03/2020, which was issued by D COS (Ops) on 23 Mar 20, established Operation FORTITUDE and the requirement for the DF to stand up a dedicated JTF to support the cross-Government approach to fighting COVID-19. Under Operation FORTITUDE, the Defence Forces contributed to the maintenance of national resilience across a wide range of areas including, vaccination, testing, contact tracing, administration and logistical support, organisation of the Mandatory Hotel Quarantine scheme, the deployment of ambulances and support to residential care homes. When Operation FORTITUDE was stood down on 31 May 23, 124,900 DF deployed workdays had been utilised to resource Operation FORTITUDE operations. The statistics for Operation FORTITUDE are shown in the table below:

Table 1: COVID-19 Supports – Personnel and assets deployed

Operational Heading	DF Personnel Deployed	DF Reserve Personnel*	DF Personnel committed	DF Vehicles Deployed	AC Flights	NS Ship Days
<b>TOTAL Op FORTITUDE</b>	124,900	2,502	226,632	25,467	79	197

\* Included in 'DF Personnel Deployed' figures

All DF activities conducted under Operation FORTITUDE were part of the integrated whole of Government approach. The response from the DF in providing surge support to the HSE and other agencies, underlines the key role and value of the DF in support of national resilience in a time of crisis. Liaison with the HSE has been conducted with regard to contingency planning for another pandemic-type event and the possible role that the DF may play in this.



## OPERATION FÁILTE

The utility the JTF has provided in Operation FORTITUDE has been further emphasised in the DF response to the cross-Government effort to deal with the arrival to Ireland of large numbers of Ukrainians who are the Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) and related

issues concerned with persons seeking International Protection (IP). DF efforts in this area, under the banner of Operation FÁILTE, commenced in Mar 22. Initially the JTF assisted the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) with the planning process to be utilised in response to the national effort to deal with this issue. A campaign plan to deal with the arrival, accommodation and other needs of BOTP was prepared by the DF Planning team and presented to DCEDIY. In response to further DCEDIY requests, the JTF has coordinated DF supports under four (4) main headings: Pledged Accommodation Call Centres in support of the Irish Red Cross, Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) accommodation, logistical support to DCEDIY and International Protection (IP) accommodation. In supporting the Irish Red Cross, up to 40 phone lines were maintained across the DF with 17,588 pledged accommodation calls made and 4,474 property details passed to the Irish Red Cross.

The DF constructed an Emergency Accommodation and Reception Centre capable of accommodating 320 BOTP in DF tentage in



Gormanston Camp in 2022. This facility was operational between 19 Jul and 07 Oct 22. The DF constructed an Emergency Accommodation Centre in Columb Bks, Mullingar in Mar 23 with a capacity for 120 persons. Currently 124 bed-spaces are provided by the DF in Kilbride



Camp for persons seeking International Protection (IP). 62 bed-spaces are provided for BOTP in Ballymullen Bks.

Currently 13 DF MPTSS tents are deployed in Knockalisheen, Co Clare allowing for the accommodation for 104 persons seeking International Protection while 60 DF MPTSS tents and 435 camp beds have been handed over permanently from the DF to DCEDIY. Up to 11 NOV 23 Operation FÁILTE has required 6,425 DF deployed work days. The JTF continue to work closely with the DoD on all DCEDIY requests, attend the weekly Department of An Taoiseach-chaired Senior Officials Group meetings and attend weekly meetings with DCEDIY, acting as the focal point for any DF activity in this ongoing national effort.

The breakdown of DF commitments to Operation FORTITUDE tasks is shown in the table below.

Table 2: BOTP / IP Supports – Personnel and assets deployed

Operational Heading	DF Personnel Deployed	DF Reserve Personnel*	DF Personnel committed	DF Vehicles Deployed	AC Flights	NS Ship Days
<b>Pledged Accommodation Call Centre Operations</b>	943	0	943	0	0	0
<b>BOTP Accommodation Operations</b>	2,158	1	2,558	330	0	0
<b>Logistics Operations</b>	1,012	277	1,012	45	0	0
<b>IP Applicant Accommodation Operations</b>	2,312	0	3,779	444	0	0
<b>TOTAL OPERATION FÁILTE</b>	6,425	278	8,292	819	0	0

## SUMMARY

The JTF offers the benefit of a HQ focused on coordinating DF efforts in contributing to cross-Government efforts to respond to complex national problems. The complexity and range of the Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA) issues dealt with by the JTF has required a highly agile HQ which is capable of re-orientation and rapid adaptability. The JTF, characterised by a small C2 element capable of channeling appropriate DF resources to respond to requests for ATCA support, has been central to the successful conduct of a diverse range of ATCA operations since its formation in Mar 20.

## CIS CORPS 2023

BY LT COL CJ CULLEN

From a capability development perspective, in 2023 the CIS Corps has focused on enhancing the Defence Forces Interoperability and Cyber Defence capabilities. The CIS Corps is in the final stages of the process to select a Software Defined Radio (SDR) as replacement for the SINCGARS radio which has been in service since the mid-90s. The adoption of an SDR military communication system across the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps will form the Defence Forces backbone tactical communications system for the next 20 years. It will significantly enhance interoperability capability delivering secure voice and high data rate transmission capability and Tactical Internet. The SDR will provide protection against modern jamming and direction-finding systems.

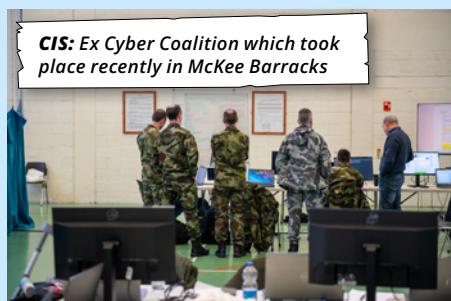


The current DF Joint Common Operating Picture (JCOP) C2 system utilises multinational interoperability standards to share C2 information within the DF and with multinational partners. The capacity of this system was clearly demonstrated in the recent

maritime interdiction operation of the MV Matthew where the vessel was successfully boarded by the ARW off the Irish coast, resulting in the seizure of two tonnes of drugs. This operation was coordinated via the Recognized Maritime Picture (RMP) which is the Maritime element of the JCOP. The new SDR system in conjunction with the JCOP will facilitate seamless secure information exchange with partner nations in deployments such as the upcoming EU Battlegroup in 2025.

Recognising the fundamental importance of Cyber to military operations, in 2016 NATO designated Cyber as the fifth operational domain alongside Land, Air, Maritime and Space. The Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces (2022) proposed the establishment of a Joint Cyber Defence Command. The first stage of this process was the standing up of an initial Cyber Planning Office in 2023. This will be followed by the phased roll out of a new Cyber establishment across Army, Naval Service and Air Corps in subsequent years. The Cyber Planning Office will develop a new strategy, setting out the steps that need to be taken in order to achieve an effective military Cyber Defence capability. A key first step in ensuring effective Cyber

Defence capability is the provision of a robust DF CIS network. In order to achieve this goal, the CIS Corps is implementing the Next Generation Working Environment (NGWE) project. This project will provide for the evolution of the CIS network by enhancing all nodes and functions of the network, including telephony, conferencing, security, backup and applications. The NGWE will be a key technological pillar of digital transformation allowing the Defence Forces to securely access cloud services where required, as well as maintaining a secure 'on premise' IT system built around two resilient Data Centres located in McKee Bks and DFHQ Newbridge. In 2023 the Defence Forces participated in major international cyber exercises including: the European Defence Agency (EDA) organised MilCERTS (Military Computer Emergency Response Team) cyber exercise and the Tallinn, Estonia based NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD CoE) Exercise Cyber Coalition 2023. These exercises provide an excellent opportunity for Defence Forces personnel (permanent and reserve) based in Ireland working in cooperation with national agencies such as the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) to access virtual exercise



networks and exercise with international partners to gain experience in responding to, and recovering from, realistic cyber-attacks/incidents.

## DIRECTORATE OF ORDNANCE AND SUPPLY

BY COL MATTHEW BYRNE



In 2023 the Ordnance and Supply Corps continued to maintain the operational role of the Ordnance Corps to train for and provide the states only EOD/IEDD capability, it also supported operational units by attending weapons firing on military ranges, annual ordnance inspections at home and overseas as well as major equipment and weapon repairs. The Corps continued the technical support and oversight to the DF for the procurement, storage, distribution, inspection, maintenance, repair and disposal of all items of Ordnance related equipment. In parallel with this the Corps maintained its logistical role through Subhead A14 to provide the day to day sustainment from arming, clothing, feeding and force protection and maintenance of the supply chain procurement model. Technical advice and project management was also provided to J3/5 and Subhead A8 projects in 2023.

The Procurement Section of the Directorate was responsible for planning and managing Ordnance spares and maintenance through Subhead A14.1. Projects included procurement, calibration and recertification of small arms and crew served weapons, ground to air systems repairs, camp field equipment replacement, tent repairs & replacement, artillery brake upgrade and EOD / CBRN consumable and first responder equipment replacement. Customs and Vat Control Section continued to facilitate import / export and also to manage the DF bike to work scheme.

The planning and management of Subhead A14.2 which provides for the multi-annual clothing requirements of the DF including Air Corps and Naval Service saw the approval of the new Irish Transitional Multicam® Pattern (ITMP) for future use with the Irish Defence Forces.

It will be utilised as the new camouflage pattern in the ongoing Defence Forces Combat Clothing System (DFCCS) tender as well as in other future soft ordnance and uniform procurements. This bespoke ITMP has been developed on behalf of, and in conjunction with the Irish Defence Forces, utilising a transitional colour palette to ensure improved effectiveness across a range of National and Multinational environments. The adoption of ITMP in tandem with the launch of the DFCCS tender is an example of the continued modernisation of the kit and equipment of the Irish Defence Forces. The DFCCS aims to provide the soldier with the required gender specific clothing items that makes this uniform an integrated system of different layers that any soldier can tailor to his/her individual requirements when operating in the field or on operations. Other new kit procured in 2023 include the beanie hat, toiletry bag and pace counter.

The planning and management of Subhead A14.3 which provides for the



food and catering requirements for the Irish Defence Forces continued in 2023. This included the sourcing and supply of fresh rations and Operational Ration Packs, the payment of overseas rations and for the provision of Front of House services for the Defence Forces. There are currently ten different food categories for the DF to source and supply from including bread, cooking oil, dairy, eggs, fresh fish, frozen foods, fruit and vegetables, meat and poultry and ambient products. The Daily Ration Rate was increased to €8 in 2023 to allow for greater flexibility and efficiency from all involved in the food cycle.

Throughout the year, the Corps and in particular the Ordnance School when not engaged with teaching the next generation of Ordnance personnel endeavoured to maintain strong and established links with both academia and Industrial partners, including Science Foundation Ireland and Defence Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) in its capacity to incorporate new and emerging technologies.

All of the above would not be possible without the dedication and continued effort of all personnel within the Corps and the constant feedback from the end user / soldier, the single most important capability in any Defence Forces.

## INFANTRY CORPS

BY LT COL DAMIEN MURPHY

2023 proved to be yet another busy year for the Infantry Corps and all three Wings of the Infantry School. The Corps, despite many challenges, continued to develop and enhance capabilities, while also continuing to deliver its operational outputs. The education and development of

our personnel continued at both officer and NCO level. The Infantry School conducted the full spectrum of career courses including the Land Command and Staff course (LCSC) and an Infantry Platoon Commanders course as well as a Senior NCO, Infantry Platoon Sergeant and All Arms Standard courses during the year. This resulted in

a total of 271 pers completing career courses necessary for promotion in 2023. The LCSC and the Senior NCO courses also benefited from the increasing use of Blended Learning as a means of course delivery, with both courses now having a significant proportion of their respective content delivered remotely. It is intended to further develop and enhance the use of blended learning on all career courses within the Infantry School over the coming year.

Also in 2023 four of the DF's seven Infantry Battalions assumed the role of "Lead" Battalion for overseas deployments, and underwent the associated Mission Readiness Evaluations before their deployment. Indeed, the deployment of the 6 Inf Bn is significant as it will be the final DF Battalion to deploy to UNDOF, with the withdrawal of the Inf Gp from UNDOF scheduled in 2024.

The IWW continued to ensure the maintenance and development of Support Company competencies throughout the year. In 2023 a Javelin Instructor course, LFTT course and a much needed Mortar Instructor course were successfully conducted by the IWW with further courses planned for 2024. The Mortar Instructor and LFTT courses in particular were critical in ensuring the maintenance and development of our competencies for these critical capabilities.

In 2023, The Inf School continued to contribute to the professional development of the Army Reserve (AR) by supporting an AR Senior NCO Course. This course was conducted over a number of weekends and culminated in a two week Field Training Exercise in Kilworth where pers were exercised in a number of areas including ammunition resupply, casualty extraction and the Field administration of a coy. In total 25 AR personnel completed the course.

In terms of development the Infantry School has also recently received

the approval of the doctrinal committee for its proposal to update DF Land Doctrine thereby establishing an updated bedrock for Officer and NCO training and education in Land Operations and Activities.

In September, an Infantry Tactical competition was conducted by the NCOTW in Kilworth. This year the competition took the form of a section-in-attack and after a highly competitive competition, 1 Mech Inf Coy emerged victorious. The IWW also conducted an international sniper competition in September during which 19 Sniper teams competed including 10 international teams, with the 27 Inf Bn emerging as overall team winners.



**Inf:** Students on a recent shoot firing the 12.7mm HMG

## ENGINEER CORPS

BY COMDT BRIAN COUGHLAN

2023 has once again been a busy year for the Corps of Engineers, with the Corps celebrating its centenary with a parade in McDermott Barracks, DFTC on Thursday 9th November. This event saw serving and retired members of the Corps parade, catch up and reminisce on Corps activities both at home and overseas over the last one hundred years.

The primary focus of our Combat Engineer Units has been on the NATO Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC), with 2 Field Engineer Company undertaking the Self Evaluation (SEL) in July and the National Evaluation (NEL) in November. Under the stewardship of Comdt John Murphy as Company Commander and CS Brian Donnelly as Company Sergeant, the unit have undertaken extensive training in preparation for both



**Engr:** Recent NATO exercise testing CBRN skills

evaluation periods. In addition, the Corps has supported two training missions to Cyprus as part of the EUMAM (European Union Military Assistance Mission) assistance to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, training Ukrainian personnel in military search, demining and UXO disposal. This training mission has seen our Officers and NCO's build on the Corps extensive ESSC experience at home and overseas, while also gaining an insight into the current explosive threats being faced in this conflict. In addition, the Corps has recently taken delivery of a new Medium Girder Bridge (MGB), which will enhance the Corps' bridging capabilities as well as new generators to support our deployed troops in UNIFIL and the upgrade of our ESSC equipment as part of the Equipment Development Plan.

The Corps of Engineers continued supporting the Defence Forces with its Infrastructure delivery through both the Infrastructural Development Plan (IDP) and its Delegated Annual Procurement Plan with an expected delivery of €42.1M worth of construction this year. To date, nine IDP projects have been completed at a cost of €10M, 12 projects are ongoing valued at €34.3M, four projects have been carried over from 2022 valued at €18.1M, 16 new projects started in 2023, valued at €26.3M and 15



**Engr:** Students on a Combat Engineers course learning to build bridges

projects are in the tendering/competition stage valued at €77M. As part of this infrastructural roll out a number of significant projects in particular are under way, including a new Cadet School HQ for the DFTC, a new University Student Accommodation Centre in Renmore, two Accommodation Blocks in Collins Barracks, a new accommodation block in Haulbowline, a new Military Medical Facility for Baldonnel and McKee Barracks, and the Block F project in McKee Barracks. There has also been significant investment in overseas infrastructure with construction underway of a new Dining Complex at UNP 2-45, a new CST facility at Naquora, and a new TOC facility under design for construction at UNP 2-45. As well as IDP projects the Corps also has been busy delivering delegated projects, expecting to complete over 45 delegated projects across the Defence Forces by year end.

## D CS ISTAR

BY LT COL SHANE BRADLEY

Combat Support and ISTAR defined by the Artillery and Cavalry Corps continued to support on-island and Peace Support Operations throughout 2023. This included the continuous deployment of a Cavalry Recce Section (13) to UNDOF and both an Artillery Heavy Mortar (27)

and Cavalry Troop (25) to UNIFIL each 12-month period to a total of 90 personnel annually. Our Units were also drawn upon for domestic ATCP security operations and ACA requested including responding to recent extreme weather events. In order to support this effort our Schools continued to progress education, training and capability development throughout 2023. Both Schools delivered domestic courses across the full spectrum of direct and indirect fires, ISTAR and GBAD in order to develop and maintain capability and support operations at home and overseas as mentioned above. We also sent students abroad to the UK, Germany and Canada covering areas such Joint Targeting, Air Defence and Cavalry Recce in order to validate School practices and ensure that TTPs remain current and evolving new practices are inculcated into future training.

Both Corps continue to develop simulation programs with the Kongsberg Crew and Gunnery Simulator supporting Cavalry unit training, gunnery courses and commander training with further plans to expand this capability by



**ISTAR: Recent Artillery shoot**



**ISTAR: Defence Forces Cavalry member taking part in the Gainey cup held in the US**

decentralising capacity to the Units. The Artillery Corps trialled a new gunnery training simulation system which will significantly enhance gun crew practices and procedures thus adding tangible and measurable value to future training.

Plans to maintain and further develop capability continue with a number of initiatives presented for consideration to include GBAD radar replacement, upgrade of the 105mm light gun, general utility and gun towing vehicles, unattended ground sensors, recce drones and submissions to the LTAV replacement Board to include both ISTAR and GBAD variants. Research and Development continues particularly within the context of CoDF recommendations. Work here comprises identifying gaps in extant doctrine and adopting, adapting or caveating current NATO doctrine to address shortfalls and align procedures to progress interoperability across both Corps in line with future ambitions. Furthermore, recommendations around increased firepower, mobility, protection and interoperability shape research in certain areas to include armoured direct and indirect fire platforms, future Fire Control and Command Systems, GBAD, C-UAS and ISTAR assets to include enhanced ground surveillance radar and UAV capabilities.

It is important to recognise the high standards that we set particularly when benchmarked against our international colleagues. None more

prevalent this year than the success achieved by the Cavalry Corps in the Gainey Cup, Cavalry Scout Competition in the USA. A team of 6 drawn from the Squadrons performed excellently against top teams drawn from the US, Germany, Canada and the Netherlands thus proving the standards that we continue to set and attain through our education and training practices. The result was also a fitting celebration of the 25th anniversary of 1 ACS who contributed to the collective team effort.

Finally, 2023 also saw the centenary celebrations of the Artillery Corps where the Irish Free State first saw the deployment of artillery in June 1922 with the siege of the Four Courts and later formalised with the establishment of an Artillery Corps on the 23rd of March 1923 at Islandbridge Barracks (now Clancy Bks) Dublin, with a strength of 11 Officers and 62 Enlisted Personnel. Preceded by the Cavalry centenary celebrations in 2022, both Corps now look to the future with ambition and determination to continue to achieve excellence in all that we do.



**ISTAR: Gainey Cup**

## THE MILITARY POLICE CORPS

BY COMDT DAVID FARRAGHER

The main function of the Military Police (MP) Corps is to enhance the combat effectiveness of the Defence Forces by providing professional military policing services. Consisting of well-trained personnel drawn across from the Defence Forces, the MP Corps utilises their experience, knowledge, and Corps specific equipment to assist and facilitate the Defence Forces in executing government-assigned duties at all levels. Throughout the year 2023, the MP Corps has primarily concentrated on providing support to formation commanders through various means such as investigations, mobility support, security, and provost operations, as well as contributing to training and capability development. Additionally during this period, the MP Corps has extended their assistance overseas by aiding the 122 Infantry Battalion commander in UNIFIL and the 67 Infantry Group commander in UNDOF. At present, relief detachments from the MP Corps have been deployed to sustain operations alongside the 123 Infantry Battalion and 68 Infantry Group. The MP Corps places a high level of



**MP: On Ex Guardian Angel held in Spain**

importance on the development of skills and education to ensure that its personnel are well-prepared and capable of effectively carrying out military police operations. In June 2023, ten members of the MP Corps took part in Exercise 'Guardian Angel' in Spain. This international exercise is designed to provide training and practical experience to MP units on NATO TTPs (Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures) that are relevant to the execution of MP operations. Additionally, MP personnel have successfully completed various international courses, such as the NATO

MP Junior Officer course and Senior NCO course in Poland, as well as an international investigation course in the Netherlands. At the national level, the MP school continues to collaborate with An Garda Síochána to offer courses that enhance the skills of personnel and promote the adoption of best practices. These courses



**MP: Military Police member on a recent parade**

include a scene of crime examiners course, scene of crime managers course, and a course on interviewing in cases of sexual gender-based violence. Furthermore, the MP School recently concluded the 69th MP Probationers Course, which consisted of a total of 26 students. The MP Corps is dedicated to enhancing its capabilities to provide greater support to Defence Forces operations. Currently, the MP Corps is working on establishing a close protection function for the Defence Forces. To achieve this, students are participating in the nine-week Royal Military Police Close Protection Course in the United Kingdom. One student has already completed the course successfully, while another student is currently undergoing the final stages of the course. The objective of this course is to train students in the preventive and reactive measures that Close Protection (CP) personnel should take to safeguard individuals who are at risk of assassination, kidnapping, or other illegal acts committed by terrorists or criminals.

## DEFENCE FORCES MEDICAL CORPS

BY COL ANTHONY CORCORAN

2023 has been a very busy and productive year for the Medical Corps as we ensured and coordinated the provision of medical services to the Defence Forces. The Medical Corps maintained a medical capability that was deployed at home and overseas, worked to maximise the medical readiness, health and fitness of all personnel and strove to manage and deliver high quality, efficient and effective healthcare.

With the roll-out of Private Medical Care, all enlisted members of the Permanent Defence Forces now have the same access to private medical care as officers currently do. Commencing in October 2023, this is a very positive development and a key recommendation of the CODEF. Significant developments have also been made in relation to fixed period promotion for Medical Officers and technical pay for EMT/CMT, Paramedics and Advanced Paramedics. These retention measures for DF clinical personnel will allow continued focus on recruitment & retention in the Medical Corps and the Defence Forces in 2024.

In the Training arena, it was important to resume participation in Ex Arduous Serpent, an annual international competition conducted by the British Army Medical Corps. The competition was conducted in June and teams entered the competition from the UK, Canada, USA, Norway, & Ireland. The team consists of eight (8) medics and two (2) non-medical members and they are tested in various Military and Medical scenarios over a four (4) day period, requiring interoperable and professional skillsets. In an excellent result the Defence Forces team placed fourth overall out of the seventeen (17) teams. Further participation is planned in 2024.



**Medical:** Medical Corps soldiers taking part in Arduous Serpent hosted in the UK

Throughout 2023, the Medical Corps has continued to engage with external partners, in order to further develop the level of medical services we provide to the Defence Forces. These partners come from both the military and civilian healthcare settings, as well as third level institutions, and at both a national and an international level. Service Level Agreements and Framework Agreements have been reached with the National Ambulance Service and the Irish College of General Practitioners in relation to the training of our personnel. Further agreements are being developed with agencies such as the Irish Blood Transfusion Service, medical colleges, and hospital groups. Internationally, Medical Corps personnel have engaged with their UK colleagues on a regular basis, while also participating in EU and NATO/PfP medical initiatives, courses, and committees, presenting excellent opportunities for training, experience and



**Medical:** Members of the Medical Corps providing cover during a recent exercise

continuous professional development to members of the Medical Corps and the wider Defence Forces.

## TRANSPORT CORPS 2023

BY COL BRENDAN NORTON

From a fleet perspective – and despite global materiel shortages due to post-pandemic production shortfalls and conflict in Eastern Europe – the Transport Corps enjoyed a year of considerable success in upgrading its platforms throughout 2023. Examples of refresh include:

- 10 x electric saloons (Kia e-Niro) delivered during the first quarter of the year.
- 03 x electric vans (Peugeot e-Expert) delivered, with a further 07 to be received by year's end.
- A heavy logs truck (MAN 8x4) with mounted 30t crane, delivered Q3.
- A 40ft 'Exhibition Trailer' delivered to DFPB during the first quarter of the year.
- 16 x more TCVs (Scania P370 4x4) delivered in Quarter 3 of the year, with a further 14 to be delivered before the end of 2023 (thus closing-out the contract for 120 such items).
- 20 x crew cab vans (Renault Master) delivered during Quarter 2.
- 15 x minibuses (Ford Transit) delivered in the third quarter of the year, with a further 05 being delivered by mid-Dec 23.
- 07 x pick-ups (Ford Ranger) delivered during the third quarter of the year (05 in MP variant).
- A first replacement DROPS truck (Scania G500 8x8) delivered in Q4, with a further 06 to be delivered before year's end, and another 15 currently scheduled for receipt in Q2 2024.
- 03 x tele handlers (JCB) for Eng and Ord Corps being delivered in mid-Dec 23, with a further item due in Q2 2024)

In addition to the above, contracts have also been signed for the 2024 delivery of 04 x medium recovery trucks (Scania 8x8) for Formations, an all-electric and a conventional-powered large container handler for the NSRC, an electric de-icer vehicle for the Air Corps, and heavy forklift trucks for various end-users. These improvements will be augmented by the continued intake of electric saloons & vans next year, leading to a phasing out of fossil-fuelled vehicles for routine and administrative movements across the DF.

From a broadening of capability perspective, as well as receiving logs depots in DEU for the EUBG-RDC this year, Corps drivers started delivering small vehicle packets directly to the European continent in support of DF deployments there. In July, we delivered a new crew cab to our deployment in KFOR; in August, a Ford Ranger was delivered to DEU, followed by 02 low-loaded vans in September. Route planning was also completed for the anticipated movements of more DF equipment to the continent by Corps drivers in the New Year.

From a training perspective, the Corps currently has 50 x Trainee Technicians under instruction across Formation vehicle workshops, with some in training at both Athlone and Dublin Institutes of Technology or in commercial garages around the country (depending on their course stage). The Corps has also qualified 68 students on Young Officers, Standard NCOs, Driving Instructors & Driver Testers courses during the year, and tested a total of 1,009 drivers on various category of vehicle. In turn, we've issued 1,117 Certificates of Competency for the National Driving License Service to ensure that civilian licenses for eligible DF drivers reflect their AF154 Driving Permit vehicle qualifications.

The Corps looks forward to a continued level of investment in both its personnel and capabilities in 2024, and wishes all readers of An Cosantóir a warm, happy and safe Christmas.



**Tpt:** Tpt members after receiving new crew cabs



**Tpt:** Tpt Gp DFTC providing vital transport for recruits

# LEADERSHIP THROUGH PHYSICAL COURAGE

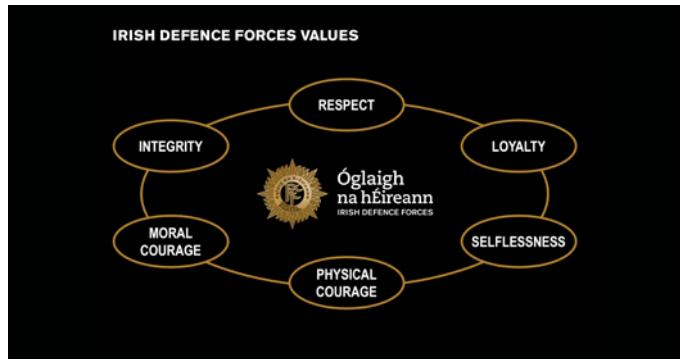
BY THE LEADERSHIP DOCTRINE WORKING GROUP

Whether you are the president of a company or the janitor, the moment you step from independence to interdependence in any capacity, you step into a leadership role. You are in a position to influence people.

— STEPHEN R. COVEY, DEFENCE FORCES LEADERSHIP DOCTRINE P.17

## LEADERSHIP

The quote above from Stephen R. Covey of the '7 habits of highly effective people' fame, reminds us that we are all leaders regardless of appointment. In the next in our Leadership series we continue with this thesis and remind ourselves of a number of historical examples of leadership demonstrated by members of our Defence Forces. As in our previous article, we have used our Defence Forces values as the basis to select these vignettes from our Leadership Doctrine.



## DEFENCE FORCES VALUES

Our Leadership Doctrine is values-based and tells us that our values must be developed, fostered and demonstrated by leadership at all levels and in all contexts. Defence Forces leaders instil values in individuals during their induction in order to meet the expectations of the organisation and Irish Society. In a fundamental sense effective leadership is about the creation, expression, safeguarding and preservation of values. Our values must be clearly known, understood and nurtured. We must live by them. In this edition we have used the Defence Forces value of physical courage as the theme to select historical examples of our personnel demonstrating leadership.

Everything depends on our values – they are the key factor in successful leadership, which drives transformation, which in turn enables capability and mission success. This is why values-based leadership is so important in everything we do.

— MAJOR GENERAL ADRIAN Ó'MURCHÚ  
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF (SUPPORT)

## PHYSICAL COURAGE

Military duty by its very nature may require us to operate in physically demanding and potentially life-threatening situations. Physical courage means overcoming fear in those situations when faced with bodily harm. We must possess sufficient physical and mental endurance, toughness, resilience, perseverance and strength of character not only to survive, but to operate effectively in dangerous conditions and successfully complete the mission.

## HISTORICAL VIGNETTE 3

*Private Thomas Metcalfe BMC  
B Coy, 5 Battalion, 25 July 1981*

Leadership is about balance. It's knowing when to push yourself to the forefront, to lead by example. But somewhat counterintuitively, it is also about knowing when to take a step back and provide your team with the freedom and resources to achieve the mission. For a leader to be effective, those around them must trust their ability and judgement. This can be achieved by demonstrating the former, leading from the front. The Naval Service Diving Section combined diving course is a prime example. It is a course where students are pushed to their absolute limits physically and mentally.

Many people ask how or what set me apart. How was I able to pass a course that many men before me had not? The answer is simple, NOTHING. All candidates are held to the same exact standards, and are expected to be capable of conducting the same roles. Students are held to the highest standards of integrity, honesty and humility. For one to achieve in this environment, they must prove that they are able to thrive as part of a team under immense pressure. Leadership in this context must be displayed by everyone, be willing to push past all preconceived limits and bring their "buddy" along with them. The water is cold, dark and intimidating sometimes all that you have to hold onto is the reassuring pull of your buddy at the other end of your swim line.

— Pte Thomas Metcalfe BMC (Retd)

Pte Metcalfe was awarded the Military Medal for Gallantry (with Merit). Citation: "For an act of exceptional bravery and with little regard for his own safety, on the 25 July 1981, in Portlaoise Prison during an outbreak of fire, he voluntarily scaled a forty foot high drainpipe in darkness, and succeeded in rescuing a comrade soldier trapped on a blazing rooftop"



## HISTORICAL VIGNETTE 9

2004 Kosovo Riots

On St. Patrick's Day 2004, widespread inter-ethnic rioting erupted in Kosovo. My platoon found ourselves on the front line and isolated from other KFOR troops for up to 12 hours. EU security and police forces were deployed to assist us and as the only KFOR military commander, they all sought my direction. The physical and moral courage, espoused in the Defence Forces Values, demonstrated by each platoon member in this highly volatile environment was exemplary. This experience demonstrated the confidence we can take from our training. The overall success of the mission rests with the conduct, calibre and influence of the NCOs on the ground. Their discipline and mind set throughout set the standard and ensured the best from the troops.

— Lt Ed Holland, Pl Comd, 27 Inf Gp, KFOR



## THE LEADERSHIP HUB

To complement and support the introduction of our new Leadership Doctrine, we have developed a Leadership Hub on CONNECT. The Leadership Hub provides a Space where all within our organisation can access useful resources that can support our daily work. We have included all types of interesting and easily accessible resources including, an Audiobook version of the Doctrine, podcasts on leadership, associated articles and books, presentations, lectures and lots, lots more. The Leadership Hub can now be accessed on CONNECT with a QR code provided below.



# UNDOF THE 68TH INFANTRY GROUP

BY COMDT PAUL CONLON  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COMDT PAUL CONLON



## BACKGROUND

The 68th Infantry Group deployed to Camp Faouar as part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights on 05 October 2023 under the command of Lt Col Oliver Clear. The group consists of 130 personnel. There are 14 officers, one chaplain and 115 enlisted personnel. For 33 personnel this is their first overseas tour of duty. The lead unit for the mission was the 6th Infantry Battalion based in Custume Barracks, Athlone. The 68th Infantry Group was a joint-arms unit containing personnel from the Army and Air Corps. The 68th Infantry Group is a unit composed of soldiers with a wide berth of skillsets. The largest element of the unit is the Mechanised Infantry Company under the command of Comdt Paul Conlon. The unit contains two Mechanised Infantry Platoons and a Reconnaissance Section with both Cavalry and Artillery troops. The unit contains HQ staff with various roles including Signals, Medics, Engineers, Ordnance, Transport, Logistics and Military Police, who all serve to support the unit mission of being the UNDOF Force Commanders Reserve (FRC), who can be called on at any time to support United Nations elements situated within the Area of Separation (AOS). Prior to deployment, the unit underwent a period of focused training in areas such as Battlefield First Aid (BFA), Life Fire Tactical Training (LFTT) and Corps specific skills training such as Engineer Specialist Search and Clearance and Explosive Ordnance Disposal.

## The UNDOF Area of Operations

In order to carry out its mandate, since 1974 (after the Israel-Syrian conflict) UNDOF has maintained an AOS between Israel and Syria. The AOS is approximately 80 kilometres long, and ranging from 10 kilometres wide in the centre, and as little as 200 metres in the extreme south. The terrain in the Northern section of the AOS is mountainous, and dominated by Mount Hermon, which is where the highest manned UN post in the world is situated at a height of 2,814 metres,

"Hermon Hotel". The AOS is broken into three sectors, North, Centre and South. Camp Faouar, which is the home of the 68th Infantry Group for the next six months, is located in the North Eastern area of Sector Centre.

## Unit Operational Readiness and Situation

The security situation in the region is dynamic and complex. Violence occurs regularly, with a large portion of security related incidents occurring

in the Southern section of the UNDOF AOS. Targeted killing, IED attacks and shootings are a weekly occurrence. The 68th Infantry Group maintains a high level of operational readiness during their deployment in order to be able to respond to any potential incidents occurring in the area.

## Recent Events and Activities

Since arriving in UNDOF, the 68th Infantry Group has carried out a wide spectrum of tasks. The Unit conducts daily Observe Monitor and Reporting patrols to observe any violations that may be seen within our Area of Operation. The Unit has also trained and practiced their ability to conduct Contingency Planning (Con-Plan) Operations in the Event other UN groups become distressed and require evacuation. The unit continues to upskill its soldiers in Tactical Techniques and procedures in relation to medical, movement, communication and operating as part of a Mechanised Infantry Company. In November, a vast proportion of the unit signed up to "Movember", to raise awareness surrounding men's mental health, suicide awareness and male specific cancer awareness. The are three-unit values which are, and will continue to be the unit mantra for the deployment. They are, "Give of our Best, Do the Right Thing and to Take Care of Each Other".



# UNIFIL 122 INF BN

PROVIDED BY COMDT  
BARRY HANNON

This article follows the recently published feature in the Jul/Aug edition of the An Cosantóir which followed troops of the 122 Inf Bn, UNIFIL. This unit recently returned to Ireland and was replaced by the 123 Inf Bn. Tensions have escalated in the region in the intervening time, and troops describe their experiences below.



**CPL RAY THOMPSON, BTA CPL,  
RECCE COY**

I am now coming to the end of my 4th overseas mission serving with the 122nd Inf Bn in UNIFIL. My appointment is Command Post Ack with Mortar Platoon in Recce Coy. My role is to survey into position a Battery of 120mm mortars before they are fired.

One of my main tasking's during the tour was being a Patrol Commander. As Patrol Commander, I was tasked with conducting vehicle and foot patrolling in our Area of Operations on numerous occasions, working in conjunction with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) while building relations and strengthening our ties. Patrolling the AO gives the battalion an understanding of what's happening in the local area and builds up relationships with the local population. As we entered the last two months of our deployment the tensions between Israel and Gaza escalated which had a knock-on effect in Lebanon and especially within our AO. This meant that as things escalated daily, we had to enter groundhog (into a bunker) and defensive positions on most days during our final few weeks, this is just a reminder of how serious we as peacekeepers need to know our roles and to be competent at our job. All of the training that we had gained pre-deployment came into effect when these real-life situations became our reality.



**LT CLARE MURPHY, CAV TROOP  
COMDR, RECCE COY**

Coming to the end of my first deployment, I have a lot to reflect on. The learning curve was steep but rewarding. We completed many inter-contingency exercises and operations such as Familiarisation Deployments (FAMDEP) and Permanent

Deployments (PERMDEP) with the French and Finnish components of the Force Commander Reserve (FCR) and one large Mass Casualty (MASCAL) exercise with our own Polish colleagues called 'Angel Rescue' which included a heli medevac. The exercises included Personnel Recovery (PR), RTA, EOD and MASCAL. These were excellent to do as we had exercised our own MASCAL and RTA drills in the Glen of Imaal on Pre-Deployment training. As we are coming to the end of our Deployment, we find ourselves conducting OPs and reacting to real life HIGHFIELDS (QRT Callouts), MASCAL operations, firefighting support and multiple GROUNDHOGS, in light of the kinetic activity between Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and Non-State Actors (NSA). Recce Coy QRT were tasked with providing OP screens, reporting on fall of shot and strike or launch locations. Recce Coy also had the additional task of creating Emergency Response Teams. These teams were created and trained to deploy as AUVs and MOWAGs to help evacuate civilians from towns in our AO. These ERTs were also used to provide security to B Coy during a breakdown and security for firefighters in SW. The training and exercises ran during Form Up and throughout the Deployment have proven invaluable to prepare us. Recce Coy personnel were excellent in their reaction times, standing up on immediate notice and never faltering in their determination to do their job. Recce Coy personnel's work ethic, resilience and drive never wavered during the hours spent in OPs, including the hours often in an OP while the rest of the camp were

continuing with daily life. Recce Coy personnel did themselves proud doing their best with their accurate reporting, attention to detail, caring for each other and doing the right thing and owning their responsibilities while maintaining excellent standards and performance. The support and guidance offered by all ranks for the duration of the Trip was consistent and invaluable to me to learn and do my job to the best of my ability. I could not have asked for a better Coy to work with on my first deployment.



**UNP 6-52 PLATOON POSITION  
DURING THE CONFLICT LT DYLAN  
CADOGAN**

UNP 6-52 is Platoon sized post situated approximately four hundred meters from the Blue Line, which is the internationally recognised line of separation between Northern Israel and Southern Lebanon. The post consists of thirty A Coy and BSG, IRISHPOLBATT personnel who monitor and report activities along the Blue Line on a twenty-four hour basis. In addition, the post conducts routine operational patrols and has an Immediate Reaction Team on standby to deploy at short notice.

The weeks following the attack on Israel on 07 Oct have seen the situation and relations between North and South of the border deteriorate rapidly. Over the last few weeks, troops in UNP 6-52 have observed and reported rocket and artillery fire, tank and small arms fire and airstrikes in both Lebanon and Israel on a daily basis. The location of the post and proximity to the fires have highlighted the importance of the location and purpose of UNP 6-52. During this time, the post has been subject to a significant number of Groundhogs, where troops must immediately seek shelter in bunkers due to nearby fire, and Danger Close situations, where incoming artillery, rocket and tank fire is sufficiently close to risk wounding troops.

Our drills and procedures have been frequently put to the test, which has highlighted two distinct areas. Firstly, recent events have highlighted the resilience and professionalism of the Irish soldier. In times of extreme pressure and uncertainty it has showcased the reliability and determination of the 122 Inf Bn members. We as a group have had to adapt to an ever changing environment ranging from shells and rockets flying over the post, to providing medical attention to civilians caught in the crossfire. Secondly, situations like now have made everyone appreciate the importance of the Pre-Deployment Training which was received in the Glen of Imaal back in April. The long hours of planning for every eventuality has proven to be of the upmost importance.



**Blue line patrol**



**UNIFIL troops  
taking part  
in MASCAL Ex**



**Defence Sparx**  
Learn innovation mindset and skills to improve Defence  
Open to all ranks and grades across the Defence Forces and the Department of Defence.  
Runs part-time (mostly online) from 05 Sep to 30 Nov 2023.  
Apply now for this immersive training programme using the QR code below or by e-mailing RTI@defence.ie  
Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) Unit

programme emerges as a beacon of creativity and solution-oriented thinking. In early October 2022, 24 dedicated members from both entities converged at the prestigious Guinness Enterprise Centre to embark on a transformative journey of collaborative problem-solving and creative exploration.

DefenceSparx is not just a program; it is an exciting journey towards innovation. It is designed to empower participants to develop creative and effective solutions to the real challenges encountered by the DF and DOD. The programme is a dynamic blend of structured learning, immersive experiences, and hands-on problem-solving.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Structured as a collaborative effort, DefenceSparx brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. Participants work in small teams guided by experts, all driven towards a common goal – developing innovative solutions to specific challenges currently faced by the DF.



Participants immersed themselves in the intricacies of the challenges, brainstorming ideas, and working collectively to craft effective solutions. The culmination of their efforts takes the form of a pitch to decision-makers within the DF. This pivotal moment determines who has the best pitch and whether the solution gets the green light for further support and the opportunity to develop a prototype.

## KEY FEATURES OF DEFENCESPARX

- Hands-on Learning:** Participants engage actively in the problem-solving process, applying their skills and knowledge in a real-world context.
- Guidance from Experts:** Seasoned experts in innovation and problem-solving guide and support participants throughout the programme.
- Broadened Perspectives:** DefenceSparx is not just about solving specific challenges; it's about developing a mind-set. Participants gain important innovation skills and a broader perspective.

# DefenceSparx

BY COMDT MARIE PIGOTT  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COMDT MARIE PIGOTT

- Blended Learning:** The programme is delivered through a blend of on-site and virtual programme days. This flexible approach allows participants to engage with the programme regardless of their location, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity.

- Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC):** On-site days take place in the GEC, a leading business incubator and start up hub in Ireland.

## FORMATION OF TEAMS AND ONSITE COLLABORATION

Divided into five teams, each team immediately began identifying challenges within their respective domains and exploring the potential of their ideas. Rigorous validation and evaluation ensured that proposed solutions were not only innovative but also practical and impactful in addressing identified challenges.

## PITCHING TO SENIOR LEADERSHIP

After weeks of hard work, the teams faced a pivotal moment - the presentation of their final propositions to the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and the Secretary General of the Department of Defence. This high-stakes pitch was the opportunity for teams to showcase the potential of their ideas and the transformative impact they could have on specific areas within the DF and DOD.

## SUCCESS AND FUTURE IMPACT

The DefenceSparx 2022 teams demonstrated exceptional ingenuity, with three of the five teams securing Senior Leadership support for the prototyping or trialling of their proposals. This critical endorsement ensures that these projects will move forward and the outcomes of these trials will inform future decisions regarding scaling and roll-out, potentially shaping the future landscape of Defence operations.



## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To join DefenceSparx, interested individuals must be recommended by their Commanding Officer (CO) or Branch Lead. This endorsement ensures that participants not only have the motivation to learn and the desire to take on challenges but also align with the goals and values of the DF and DOD. The 2023 Defence Sparx programme commenced in September and culminated with the Final Pitch Day on the 30th of November in Baldonnel. The next DefenceSparx Programme will take place in late 2024 or early 2025. Visit [defencesparx.com](http://defencesparx.com) for more information.

## THE FOLLOWING ARE REPORTS FROM THREE OF THE TEAMS:

### Team 'Collabor8' by Eimear Ní Fhállúin

Team: Comdt Barry Hannon, Comdt Ronan O'Reilly and Capt (AR) Niall Stringer.

The Challenge was 'To Improve Employee Relations in the Defence Organisation'. The proposed solution was based on research about the Military-Civilian interface in international Defence Organisations. We looked at negative culture influences such as tribalism, control, group dynamics, and also learned about human-factor needs in the work-place such as psychological safety, as well as inclusion and personal and professional development, in an aesthetic and modern environment.

Some of the aspects we covered are mentioned in the draft Defence Forces Civilianisation Policy 14 JUL 23, which is great to see and I look forward to it impacting the day-to-day work-life for Defence Organisation employees.

Some of the highlights of the programme were getting to meet a broad range of people from diverse backgrounds who had volunteered to undertake the challenge and were motivated to work together to achieve a positive outcome.

At first I was sure I could not be of help, as I felt that I knew nothing about employee relations. It had almost nothing to do with my background or my day-job, I thought. As I began to learn more about the topic and apply it to the Defence Organisation I could see the relevance it held for all Defence Organisation employees. I felt it was really important work which was very motivating.

We were really happy with our work and proud of our solution because we understood the value of it and the potential positive effect it could have for all employees of the Defence Organisation.

### Team Collabor8

Comdt Barry Hannon, recently returned from serving with 122 Inf Bn UNIFIL.

Comdt Ronan O'Reilly, recently promoted Defence Forces Data Protection Officer in J1 DFHQ.

Capt (AR) Niall Stringer, currently serving with J3/5 Current Ops, whose civilian role is as a Consultant with high-potential start-up businesses and established companies seeking growth opportunities.

Ms. Eimear Ní Phallúin, Defence Forces Senior Physiotherapist.



### Team 'SCIA'

Team: Lt (AR) Shane Dunne, Armn Aaron Crampton, John Hackett (DOD)

The SCIA framework seeks to revolutionise and enhance installation security for Defence Organisation facilities. By optimising, modernising, and standardising security practices, SCIA intends to provide a comprehensive framework that will transform how installation security is currently managed.

The SCIA framework holds the potential to significantly improve security outcomes by

- preventing more security incidents.
- enhancing responses to ongoing incidents.
- facilitating more effective learning from past incidents.

Ultimately, the goal is to fortify the Defence Organisation's Security Culture, leading to better protection for installations and the personnel, assets and sensitive information contained within them.



Key components of the SCIA framework include:

- **Access Control Management:** The introduction of advanced access control measures, involving the use of ID cards, fixed scanners, handheld scanners and various digital identity technologies. This system ensures that all entrants, whether pedestrians or vehicles, are verified, even during high-volume periods.



*Team SCIA with their presentations*

- **ANPR for Vehicle Tracking:** Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology will be employed at entry gates to record and track vehicles entering and exiting the installation. This data can be correlated with CCTV footage and access control records for further verification.

- **Visitor Management:** A visitor management system will streamline the process of managing visitors to Defence Organisation installations. Pre-booking, thorough checks upon arrival and the issuing of visitor IDs will enhance security.

- **Security Reporting Digitisation:** The transition from paper-based reporting to digital systems will simplify and improve incident reporting. Security staff can use handheld devices to submit incident reports, attaching relevant media and therefore enable greater visibility of collected security data.

- **Security Patrol Verification:** A system that mandates security staff to verify their presence at specific check-in points during patrols. NFC tags or similar technology will be utilised to confirm the completion of patrols.

- **Security Staff Training:** Enhanced training opportunities will be provided to security staff, enabling them to identify suspicious behaviour and respond more effectively to potential threats.

- **Civilianisation of Security Staff:** Transitioning gate guard duties from Defence Forces personnel to civilian staff can enable military personnel to focus on their core duties. This potential change is projected to lead to improved security outcomes and potential cost savings for the Defence Organisation.

In a constantly evolving threat landscape with resourcing challenges, the SCIA project represents a proactive response to meet security needs. By investing in this framework, the Defence Organisation will be better prepared to adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining adaptable security measures and leveraging practical technological solutions to secure its installations effectively.



### Team 'Evolution Bridge'

Team: Pearse Dunne, Capt Sean Maguire, Capt Dr Lisa McNamee, CS Willie Moran, Lt Cdr Cathal Quigley

Justin Trudeau said that "the pace of change has never been this fast, yet it will never be this slow again" (World Economic Forum 2018). Defence must keep pace too, and the promotion of innovative thinking is one way in which the Defence Organisation can accelerate and begin registering larger magnitudes on the change-o-meter.

"Exceptional ideas which have been researched to an elevated level by motivated Defence employees, through academic research and other means, are not being developed into exceptional contributions. The organisation's innovation engine needs to evolve to pull these exceptional ideas into a dedicated risk tolerant incubation habitat which will function as an organisational catalyst to accelerate strategically aligned, high value, high impact solutions.



**Team Evolution Bridge in the GEC**

This will strengthen Ireland's existing Defence innovation capability and make Defence a flagship for innovation in Ireland." This was the vision of the 'Evolution Bridge' team, one of the teams who took part in SPARX 2022.

The team thoroughly enjoyed the SPARX 2022 experience. The team was hugely passionate about innovation and were committed to bringing about high impact transformation within Ireland's Defence sector. The most enjoyable part for the team was "getting out of the barracks" to work in a non-rank environment where any idea was valid unless proven otherwise – in this way creativity flowed whilst not being bombarded by the "day-job" – space was created by the organisation.

### MEET THE TEAM...

**Pearse Dunne** is a HEO in the Department of Defence where he works as Accommodation Manager.

Captain **Sean Maguire** is a highly experienced infantry officer. He is currently completing a business and strategy orientated master's programme. He is passionate about the transformation agenda and believes that fostering a culture of innovation is a key part of this.

Captain Dr. **Lisa McNamee** was a medical officer with the Irish Defence Forces. She is a co-founder of Space Medicine Ireland, sits on the committees of the European Society of Extreme Environment Medicine, Women in Medicine Ireland Network and is medical logistics lead with the Irish Paramedicine Research and Education Network. She recently developed a multi-lingual medical emergencies app, called Fluent Medic.

Lieutenant Commander **Cathal Quigley** is an STCW qualified marine engineer with eighteen years' experience as a military officer of the Irish Navy. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree from CIT and a Master of Engineering Management (MEM) degree from UCD. He is currently serving shore side in a fleet technical management / ship superintendence function and is responsible for planning major maintenance and dry docks.

### Team 'SMAART'

Team: Comdt John Murphy (PDF), Comdt Tim Cunningham (PDF), Joyce Fagan (DOD), Pte David Flood (RDF), Sgt Kieran McKenna (PDF)

The experience the SPARX programme offered was very worthwhile as it provided us the opportunity to identify challenges the Defence organisation have and the time and space to come up with innovative solutions. We effectively conducted a civilian version of MDMP (Military Decision Making Process), used by entrepreneurs to start and grow a business. We were guided through this process by the professional staff of Furthr in the Guinness Enterprise Centre in Dublin. In the military we are given a mission to complete with specific resources/constraints. As part of this innovative process



**Team SMAART in the GEC**

there was no mission, no limit on resources which was unusual for us as we had to establish where we wanted to go with our project. Most of the teams started with an initial idea which changed as the process was followed and the end result might look nothing like where you started. This took a bit of adjustment from the military mind set. This programme was the first iteration of this concept so we had to adjust to the civilian methods of planning but this also gave the civilian facilitators an insight into the military mind set and our way of doing business. It is the combination of both of these methods of doing business which lead to quick simple solutions to problems within the Defence organisation.

Our team was drawn from the DOD, PDF and RDF. This ensured there was no siloed thinking and we could draw on the experience the team members had based on their backgrounds. Our project



**Members of the DefenceSparks programme being briefed in the GEC**

looked at the possibility of bringing RFID tagging into the Defence organisation in order to streamline logistical procedures. This required us to establish lines of communication within the Defence organisation in order to develop support for the project as well as external

to the Defence organisation such as companies who provide RFID solutions to other militaries and state organisations who use this very effectively like the Dublin Fire Brigade. The final stage of the project was to present the problem and the solution to the Secretary General of the Department of Defence and the General Staff seeking approval for funding to conduct a trial.



**Capt Eddie McGuire pictured during Sparx training –  
Capt McGuire was instrumental in setting up the Sparx programme**

# HEADSPACE & TIMING

BY LT COL JOHN MARTIN, PSS

## Christmas Already!

Christmas has come around fast this year, I'm sure you will all agree! Christmas is a good time for us all to remind each other of the need to take care of our mental health. There are a lot of things that we can do. The first is to make sure that we are in good physical condition – controlling our diet and our alcohol intake, as well as giving up smoking, all provide a good basis for good mental health. You should also make sure that you take care of any health worries that you might have in good time – Don't put things off. Taking action early reduces your worries and, in most cases, helps you to a better outcome.

Planning your Christmas, and how you will spend your time over the break, is a good idea. You should aim to spend time with the people you really want to share your Christmas with - use the time together to really catch up and listen to what's really going on in each other's lives.

On the financial side, now is a good time to make sure that we have planned for Christmas. It is a really great idea to have a realistic and workable budget in place before the season really kicks off. Identifying available resources and having a list of priorities is always a good idea to ensure that we don't lose control of our finances – if you would like to know more, please contact your local PSS team.

A quick word about our colleagues deployed overseas: Christmas can be particularly difficult when a loved one is away and sometimes the support of colleagues can be really appreciated. If you have friends who are deployed at this time of the year, be sure to check in with them and their families – even a simple WhatsApp message to people who are away, or to their families left behind can mean a lot!

## SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

Suicide is a subject that we sometimes like to avoid discussing, which is understandable. At the same time, it affects almost all of us in some way or another during our lifetimes. We know now that being open about suicide, and not being afraid to talk about it, can help reduce the risk and make it more likely that vulnerable people will get the help they need in time. The PSS works closely with the National Office for Suicide Prevention to minimise the risk of suicide to our personnel and their families. This gives us access to really high quality suicide awareness and prevention training, and I would like to briefly describe some of them.

START is a ninety minute online interactive training programme which you can access and complete in the privacy and comfort of your own home. It is designed to give you the skills, knowledge and the confidence that you need to keep others safe from the risk of suicide. You can complete the training all in one go, or you can do it in stages, depending on what suits you best. You can register to do START free of charge through your local PSS team – just supply a civilian email address and your first and second name and we will do the rest. The next programme that we use is SafeTALK. Our PSS team members are qualified SafeTALK trainers and you can access this training through your chain of command or by contacting your local PSS team directly. SafeTALK is a really

If you are in emotional distress or despair call Lifeline on **0808 808 8000** and speak to a counsellor immediately.

For support or information about mental health, call our Advocacy for All team on

**0808 189 0036**



effective half-day of face to face training using a mix of trainer-led and multimedia presentations. When you have finished SafeTALK training, you can expect to be able to more easily identify people who may be at risk of suicide. You will know how to intervene

in safety and with confidence and how to get people to the right help and support. ASIST training is an acronym for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. It is a two-day workshop and is especially useful for people whose role may bring them into contact with vulnerable co-workers or others. In the Defence Forces context, ASIST is appropriate training for NCOs and Officers in training institutions or who are employed in command appointments either at home or overseas.

All training opportunities are available to serving personnel and to adult members of their families. We are also able to facilitate training veterans through our veterans associations. Remember that suicide awareness training may NOT be suitable for everyone. It depends on where you are at in your life, your state of mind and recent life experiences. PSS teams are available to talk with you, to ensure that all personnel are protected. We need to talk about suicide and to keep ourselves, our friends and colleagues and our families safe!

## FINAL MESSAGE

So, the message is clear! It has been another tough year, and we are all looking forward to moving on with positivity into 2024. In the meantime, we have managed to get this far by taking care of ourselves, and by taking care of each other. We succeed as a community - let's make sure that we do the same for our mental health by being more aware of each other, by being prepared to reach out if we think that someone needs our help, by knowing the services that are available within the Defence Forces and the Community, and by being willing to get the right training to ensure that we have the skills, the knowledge and the confidence to help each other when we most need it!

You can contact your local PSS Team directly for support or information on anything written above or for any other matter. If you would like details of how to contact your local PSS Team please email [pss@military.ie](mailto:pss@military.ie)

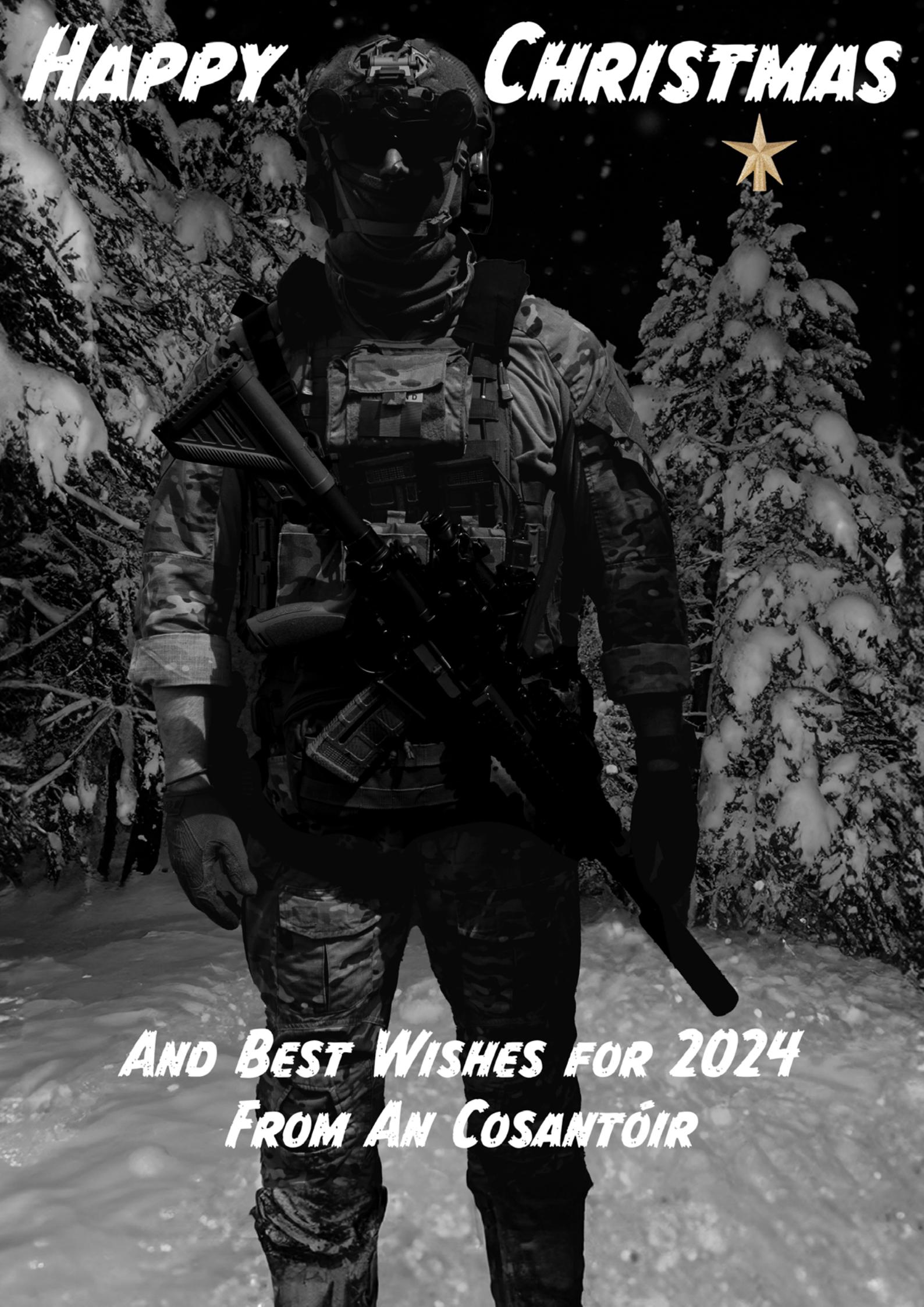
## Contact a Samaritan

If you need someone to talk to, we listen. We won't judge or tell you what to do.

Call us any time, day or night

Whatever you're going through, you can call us any time, from any phone for FREE.

Call 116 123



**HAPPY CHRISTMAS**



**AND BEST WISHES FOR 2024  
FROM AN COSANTÓIR**