

THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

EST. 1940

AN COSANTÓIR



44 CADETSHIP
REELING IN THE YEARS

LIBERIA

MULLINGAR
to MONROVIA

ARW **SHADOW WARRIORS**

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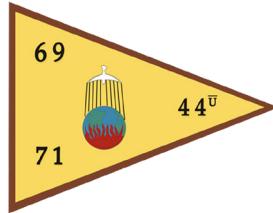
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The fact that an article appears in this magazine does not indicate official approval of the views expressed by the author.

© Published by
OIC Public Relations Branch
for the Defence Forces at
DFHQ, Block 5, Ceannt Bks,
DFTC, Curragh Camp, Co
Kildare, Ireland.
Tel: +353 (0)45 445312

FRONT COVER

ARW Member
By A/M Sam Gibney

EDITORIAL

Hello, and welcome to our seventh issue of 2020, continuing with our 80th volume – of the historic milestone the *An Cosantóir* magazine has reached.

With the changing times in the world around us comes a change for the magazine, as we further embrace the digital era, our magazine has changed format to a digital only magazine. We still want to provide you with the quality you have enjoyed over the decades.

We start off the magazine's content with our *Noticeboard* moved to page 5, containing our Sudoku puzzles and a Congo word search.

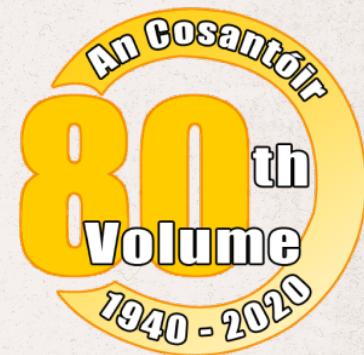
The *On Parade* pages have images from a duathlon event in the Aircorps and an NCO's course in Kilworth, being run through 1 Brigade.

The *Vets* news piece, provided by Colm Campbell, Chairperson on the board of directors at O.N.E. gives us an oversight of the organisation from the inside out.

Our *What I Do* piece on page 11, written by our own Cpl Lee Coyle who spoke to Trainee Technician Roy Noonan about his career in the Defence Forces to date and the current technician scheme he's on.

Our first main feature, *Reeling in our Cadetship Years 1969-1971*, written by Col Brian Dowling (Retd), takes us back to the 44th Cadetship class, and he tells us of their journey through the Cadet School back in the late 60's and early 70's.

In *Reserve Support to 'Operation Fortitude'*, Lt Col Julian Ensor (AR), the Director of Reserve Forces, tells us of the extent that some of the Reserve Forces members went to assist in the Covid-19 pandemic, the article features Comdt Hugh O'Callaghan & Cpl Colm Kerr.



Our part 2 of the *Mullingar to Monrovia* story continues from Lar McKevitt, finishing off his story of a trip to Liberia with the 88th Infantry Battalion.

Damien O'Herlihy takes a look at the Naval Service Reserve, and its efforts in the battle against Covid-19 in a nice short piece entitled "If we can winter this one out we can summer anywhere", aptly named from a quote by Seamus Heaney.

Our *Tac-Aide*, provided to us by Ansac Credit Union, giving us valuable information on managing your credit and budgeting issues and how they can help during these stressful times.

Cpl Lee Coyle speaks to members of the Permanent Defence Forces, who have been carrying out tasks on the front line of the Covid-19 pandemic in our final article *On the Front Line*.

Our *Curragh Pens* competition continues this month which is running for a limited time and could see you win 1 of 5 unique handcrafted pens kindly provided to us by Bill Dooley of *Curragh Pens*, see page 4 for further details.

Many thanks to all our contributors, and we hope to continue producing the magazine we know you've enjoyed through the years.

«Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving»

– Albert Einstein

Sgt Karl Byrne - (Stand-in) Editor



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Last month's winner of the PROTAC €50 Voucher was Padraig Hurley, Co. Sligo. Closing date is 18th Sept 2020.

WORD SEARCH

CROSS OFF THE WORDS IN THE LIST AS YOU FIND THEM

Word searches are fun, they also bring benefits you may not realise and can play an important role in keeping you mentally fit.

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R C Y P O X L G C B J H S L E
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MORTARS

ON PARADE

September
October 2020

Photos from the Air Corps Duathlon

Photos by Air Corps photographers



The Air Corps held its annual Duathlon in late July. Runners and riders competed in various categories and a successful event was had. Congratulations to all the winners and well done to all the participants and event organizers.



Photos from the 1 Bde Potential NCO's Course

Photos by A/M Sam Gibney

Students from the 1Bde Potential NCO's Course battle through terrain of Kilworth, completing section attack after section attack, learning the skills it takes to be a Corporal of the Irish Defence Forces. Well done to all the students and instructors on the course.



ONE

By Colm Campbell Chairperson Board of Directors



The origins Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann (ONE) are indelibly connected with the Defence Forces whose own geneses lie with the foundation of the Irish Volunteers, Óglaigh na hÉireann, in the Rotunda Rink in Dublin in November 1913. The first thirty-eight years of the Defence Forces' existence were marked by the achievement of independence, a divisive Civil War, mobilisation during WW2, and demobilisation of the Forces in the post Emergency period. ONE was formed to address the consequences of that demobilisation in the middle of the twentieth century on the 10th of March 1951 in the Mansion House, and has evolved into a charity that seeks to address the needs of veterans in the twenty-first century. These needs are complex and varied and because we use the collective term veterans, there is a danger that these essential requirements are wrapped up into a nice neat parcel. Generalisation is dangerous because it takes complicated issues and turns them into easy superficial figures of speech. The needs of our veterans, developed from difficult situations and the circumstances in which some veterans now find themselves are both real and challenging.

Every one of our veterans, whether Permanent or Reserve, volunteered to join the Defence Forces to defend our country, to protect vulnerable communities at home and overseas, and to support the other institutions of state. History teaches us that defence and security



doesn't just happen. It demands people of character and competence. It requires sacrifice, and generations of men and women willing to volunteer to serve their country at home and overseas. A plaque at the Korean War Memorial in Washington has the following inscription "Our nation honours her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met." We could use those same words about the volunteers who served in the Congo, Cyprus, Sinai, Lebanon, Syria, the Mediterranean and the many other missions around the world in which our veterans have served. This year is the sixtieth anniversary

of the deployment of the Defence Forces to the Congo. A total of about six thousand Irish soldiers served in ONUC (Opération des Nations Unies au Congo) between 1960 and 1964, of whom twenty-six lost their lives. The largest loss of life was in Niemba on 08 November 1960 when nine members of an eleven-man patrol were killed. ONE honours their sacrifice annually and will do so again this year on 07 November 2020 in Cathal Brugha Barracks. We also honour their memory in how we care for our fellow veterans in their time of need.

Our Patron, Michael D. Higgins



Tom Gunn of O.N.E.



Brú na bhFiann building

Uachtaráin na hÉireann referred to the spirit of comradeship in an address on 11th September 2019 in Áras an Uachtaráin when he stated that

"The spirit of camaraderie and solidarity among serving and retired soldiers, sailors and Air Corps personnel is an innate and vital part of the culture of serving in the Defence Forces."

The President went on to state that "It is something I have witnessed. I have, for example, had the privilege of visiting Brú na bhFiann, the residence for homeless former members of the Defence Forces. On the occasion I visited, I was moved by the spirit of kindness, compassion and solidarity ... in looking after their comrades and in extending that work into the local community." He further stated that "Your shared experience gives you perhaps a unique empathy and a deep understanding that men and women who have given so much in the service of the state should not have to experience such difficulty." The difficulties referred to by our Patron were exacerbated during the pandemic but ONE Hostels continued to operate in line with Government and HSE guidelines and directions. Our hostels have always worked to the highest standard possible and it is those very standards that enabled them to sustain the high quality of service that they continue to provide for our veterans. We owe staff of our hostels a deep debt of gratitude.

Robert W Cox, a Canadian Political Scientist, advanced the argument that there are three categories of forces that interact in a structure: capabilities; ideas; and the institution. ONE constantly examines its capabilities to support veterans and details of further developments will be outlined later in this article. There is no shortage of ideas in ONE and the

challenge lies in implementing the multitude of very good ones. The last element is the institution itself. Institutions have a predisposition to stay the same and take on a life of their own. ONE is resisting that by continually evolving, challenging itself to do more, and not standing still. ONE lives through action rather than relying on words. That action is represented in its foundation in the post Emergency period, the opening of its current three hostels, the development of fifteen veterans support centres and thirty-six branches nationwide, its plans for additional hostels. Plus other support for our veterans in its new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. ONE is a positive organisation, marked by a willingness not to blame others for the plight of our homeless veterans. Instead we have a host of volunteers and professional staff wanting to find solutions and accepting, in the spirit of comradeship, responsibility for their fellow veteran. Instead of asking questions about what others are doing, we must continuously challenge ourselves to do more.

ONE would love to forecast an end to the plight of homeless veterans but we believe the situation will continue to dis-improve. That is why we are constantly developing our services. Since January 2020, ONE has:-

- Increased the number of rooms for homeless veterans from thirty to thirty-five in Brú na bhFiann. The number of rooms provided is subject to the terms of a Service Level Agreement between ONE and Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and is not an arbitrary figure.
- Developed an Ante Room (Day Room) in Brú na bhFiann for residents.



St Michael's O.N.E. Veterans Centre on Duke St. Athy

- Employed a Veterans Support Officer to develop a counselling service in Brú na bhFiann for veterans in partnership with the HSE.
- Continued to improve the seven-bedroom facilities in Beechwood House Letterkenny and Custume House Athlone.
- Progressed the development of a further hostel in Cobh with five bedrooms for homeless veterans co-located with a Veterans Support Centre. A long-term lease has been taken out for the building with the Office of Public Works (OPW). Plans have been approved and the project is now out to tender. The development of a similar facility in Cork City (six bedrooms) is being considered, leading to the availability of sixty single bedrooms for homeless veterans countrywide.
- Furthered the development of fifteen Veteran Support Centres, eleven of which are located within a Defence Forces' installation, with four located outside - Athy, Cavan, Cobh and Limerick. The Programme for Government, which was agreed on 15 June 2020, provides policy imprimatur for our Veteran Support Centres in the event of Government formation.
- Completed a training/education course for Branch Welfare Officers in February 2020. ONE conducted four Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Courses in 2019, two courses in Dublin, one in Galway and another in Cobh. These courses are funded by the Leopardstown Park Hospital Trust and are open to veterans from all organisations. Sixty-three veterans trained as MHFA in 2019 and are operating throughout the country. Further training/education courses will take place when conditions allow.

- Cooperated with Section 38 Hospitals to create a pathway for veterans who need long-term care. The first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with the Royal Hospital Donnybrook in 2019. Having met the Leopardstown Park Hospital Board together with IUNVA and ARCO, an MOU is being developed between the Hospital and ONE. Discussions had also commenced with Clontarf Hospital but an arranged meeting was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Initiated a strategy to ensure that ONE is a diverse and inclusive Veterans Organisation that draws from the breadth of those who served in the Defence Forces; gains strength from that range of knowledge, experience and talent; and welcomes, respects and values the unique contribution of every individual.

Finance is required to support many of the foregoing initiatives, however all of the usual fundraising events were cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19. This includes the



Annual Fuchsia Appeal, Flag Days, Church Gate collections, etc. The Annual Veterans Ball, organised by the Swanbatt Group and which normally raises around €10,000 for development work in Brú na bhFiann, cannot take place in 2020. New fundraising initiatives will be launched and your enduring support is deeply appreciated.

In conclusion, the magnificent work of the staff and members of ONE during the pandemic is highly appreciated. Together with veterans of other organisations, they have provided outstanding support to other veterans and the wider community. The pandemic has reminded us about the value of comradeship and that the services of ONE are now more relevant than ever.

WHAT I DO



Roy Noonan

Trainee Technician
Engine Room
Artificer (ERA)

ERA Roy Noonan grew up in Carrignavar in County Cork and before joining the Defence Forces (DF) he was working in security on shop entrances and also on building sites as a labourer. Like most teenagers, he looked up to his older siblings, and his older brother decided to enlist into the DF. As Roy and his brother were close, the stories of the training and travelling overseas sparked an interest in Roy, so this was all the inspiration he needed to apply for the DF himself.

Roy enlisted into the DF on 19 Nov 2007 into the 12 Inf Bn, Kickham barracks Clonmel as part of the 121 Recruit Platoon. He had a great level of fitness on enlistment but still found parts of the training tough, but he said that this made it enjoyable and rewarding when he completed the challenges put in front of him. He also found friendship with his fellow Recruits and had great laughter and craic with them.

When he passed out as a Three Star Private he was posted to 1 BAR, Collins Barracks Cork, which is an Artillery Unit. Whilst here he completed a number of interesting courses, which included his initial Gunnery Course, a Light Infantry & Support Weapons Course, 12.7 HMG Course, 81mm Mortar Young Entry Course, Public Order Training Young Entry Course. Along with these he also completed a Forward Observation Officers & Fire Support Team Course, this standing out as one of the toughest courses he has completed, with most of it being stuck in a trench, but again he said it was rewarding when he finally passed it.

In Aug 2009, Roy travelled overseas for the first time with 101 Inf Bn MINURCAT Chad. This was a new experience for him especially being the first time he had been away from home for such an extended period of time, but not only that, it was a very different climate then our own and took him a while to get used to the heat, but despite that he found the trip enjoyable.

In 2014 Roy applied to transfer to the Naval Service as he

was living close to the Naval Base in Haulbowline, Cork and he was also looking for new challenges and courses. So, in December of 2014 he began his seamanship and branch training for the Naval Service. Once completed in July 2015 he was then transferred to the Basin and immediately posted onto the LE Samuel Beckett, where he was straight into patrolling Irish Waters.

While onboard the Beckett, Roy completed a Rib Coxn Course and while training on this he saw Naval Divers at work and he was impressed. This was going to be Roy's next challenge within the DF. He applied to undergo the Diver Aptitude Test and passed. But before he got the chance to proceed onto the Naval Diving Course he was given the opportunity to serve overseas with Operation Pontus. Here he really got a real sense of purpose, carrying out the rescues of the refugees; he found it really rewarding to be part of something so big.

When he returned from overseas, he then got the chance to undergo the Naval Diving Course, which was a tough 11 weeks, mostly spent in the water pushing himself. Once completed, he became a member of the Naval Service Diving Section (NSDS), which are part of Fleet Support Group (FSG).



From here Roy applied for a Trainee Technician Scheme to become an Engine Room Artificer, which is a qualified Mechanical Automation and Maintenance Fitter QQI Level 6, and was successful. This has seven phases; four phases are on the job and these are broken by three off-job phases in third level education in an institute of technology. Currently Roy is in phase five which is on the job. He will be either

working at sea gaining experience in roles such as watch keeper or monitoring and servicing engine room equipment, and responding to alarms on board for all the ships' Rhibs. When not assigned to a ship Roy is required to continue with career courses and also maintain the fleets' Rhibs, fixing faults or issues that might not have been possible while at sea. He would also have to service and test the Rhibs before they are cleared to be used at sea. The Rhibs are an important part of the fleet having been used for conducting boarding operations, approx. 780 of which were conducted last year alone.

Roy's plans for the future are to stay in the Naval Service as he finds the job very varied and rewarding, with the hope of progressing through the ranks as an ERA, but also hopes to become a dive supervisor. He added that he would recommend to anyone interested in the Naval Service to apply once it is advertised and not to miss out on a great adventure.

By Cpl Lee Coyle



REELING IN OUR CADETSHIP YEARS 1969-1971

With the 44th Cadet Class and 5th Air Corps Regular Cadet Class

By Col Brian Dowling, Retired

Events during summer of 1969 had brought the North of Ireland close to collapse. Forces of sectarianism and prejudice had been unleashed. Civil rights marches and protests met loyalist violence and resistance. Widespread riots ensued and British Army troops were deployed in the North for first time. One can recall Taoiseach Jack Lynch's August broadcast address to the nation on tragic events in Derry and Northern Ireland of previous days and the government's decision to deploy Irish Army troops (transported by CIE buses) for border duties.

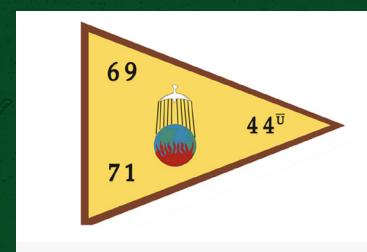
The Irish Government had at that time requested UN intervention and had set up refugee camps along the border. 1969 had also witnessed the UCD students' revolution and the Dublin Housing Action Committee's militant campaign, to highlight major social issues of homelessness, evictions and long waiting lists. In the United States, nationwide riots, protest marches and disturbances reflected hardening American public opinion in opposition to the Vietnam War. On 20/21 July the world had witnessed the historic Apollo 11 Lunar Module landing on the moon ('Eagle has landed ...' - 'One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind ...'). August 15-18 witnessed the historic music festival 'Woodstock' in Bethel, New York which would become a cultural touchstone. Such dramatic events unfolding in Ireland and more widely, at the time provided an interesting backdrop to our October 1969 registration in the Cadet School.

The 14 October 1969 cadet intake comprised 26 Army Cadets (44th Cadet Class), 6 Air Corps Cadets (11th AC Class, later re-designated 5th Air Corps Regular Cadet Class), 2 Naval Service Cadets (8th NS Cadet Class) and 6 Zambian Cadets (2nd Zambian Cadet Class). As individuals arrived in the Curragh from their respective counties and town-lands registration details were captured in the historic hand-written Cadet Ledger which had similarly recorded cadet class entries since the first cadet class intake back on 1st February 1928. Assignment of personnel accommodation in the Cadet Lines, by Passage (Pasáiste 1-8), Room (Seomra 1-8) soon followed, as did the first mentoring of each new junior cadet by his allocated senior cadet class mentor ('Comhairleor'). The task of the Comhairleor was to informally initiate the junior cadet into the new and mysterious world of cadet life.

Prescriptive senior-cadet wisdom was shared on specific

procedures for reveille, morning bed-roll assembly, check parades, room, kit or square inspections, 'brasso' and 'spit-polish' applications and on protocols of Cadets' Mess etiquette. Traditional cadet school tips were disclosed on maintenance of the highly polished linoleum floors of rooms and passages (using sections of old army blankets as 'sliders') and cleaning of sinks, baths, showers, toilets and marble-tiled floors of communal ablution areas.

The first of many severe haircuts ('bearradh gruaige') was summarily executed in a 'seomra agallaimh' at the Cadet Lines by Military College barber Pte Mossie. Memorably, the collective shock-and-awe response had the unifying effect of galvanising our group. It acted as the perfect catalyst for initial class interactions during which individual personality identities were revealed. Humorous exchanges and reactions were shared and enjoyed as our prized flowing locks were unceremoniously shorn. Thereafter regular visits to Reggie Darling's Curragh Camp Barbershop (still today a



44th Cadetship Flag'

4th generation family barbershop business) became routine inspection outcomes.

Cadet School NCO instructor and administrative staff quickly imposed their authority and influence on the new junior

cadet intake. Mountains of 'kit'; personal clothing ('bulls wool' uniforms, distinctive brown-coloured 'fatigues', sports gear etc) and ordnance equipment were issued from the Quartermaster's stores and the cadet class was organised into sections ('Gasrai'). Constant scrutiny of class activities and actions was sustained. Observations on individual performance assessments and progress would have been faithfully recorded and reported on for each cadet. When necessary and appropriate, Cadet School NCOs would dispense corrective direction and provide mentoring support and encouragement. We will fondly remember the unique leadership traits, management styles and personalities of these highly dedicated individuals, whose formidable mission was to slowly mould raw young civilians into soldiers and

future junior officers. To those unforgettable and special characters such as Coy Sgt Mick Roddy, Coy Sgt 'The Rua' O'Súileabháin, CQMS Mick Smullen, Sgt Pakie Burke, Sgt Sam Shannon, Sgt Joe Kelly, Cpl Martin (Mary) Hickey and others we owe a sincere debt of gratitude and respect – 'Míle buiochas agus Beannachtaí Dé orthu go léir'. Tributes to the unique legacy of the Cadet School and its dedicated staff during a 50-year history (1929-1979) are captured and celebrated in a dedicated September 1979 issue of *An Cosantoir Magazine*.

Less frequent exposure to our Cadet Master and assigned Cadet School Class Officers added to their mystique and to our perceptions of their individual personalities, leadership and authoritarian styles. Our Cadet Master (until June 1970) was Roscommon's Lt Col Cyril Mattimoe. During his weekly Pearse Hall class talks, he memorably regaled and inspired his young and impressionable audience. His successor for our senior cadet year was the Kingdom's Lt Col Eddie Condon. Our initial and imposing Class Officer for junior year was Carlingford-native Lt Brian ('The Bull') McKevitt. Sadly, Brian passed away following serious illness on 26 November 2018. Fondly remembered among our Cadet Class training officers is Lt Michael Nestor ('Dillinger').

Tragically, Comdt Nestor (R.I.P.) was killed by a roadside bomb on 25 September 1982 while on overseas service with UNTSO in Beirut. Corkonian Lt Barry Hayes (R.I.P.) was our colourful 'Teagascóir' for 'Modhanna Teagaisc' and 'Cúirtéis agus Béasaíocht'. Also among our Cadet School training officers was the inscrutable and perceptive Lt Terry Brown and the very attentive and rather stern Lt Don O'Keeffe. Capt Des Travers of the Curragh's 3rd Infantry Battalion ('The Bloods') was assigned Cadet Class Officer for our second and formative senior cadetship year. A prominent member and early associate founder of the national Association for Adventure Sports (AFAS), Des introduced 44th Cadet Class members to a novel and memorable variety of extra-curricular adventure sport activities such as sailing, canoeing, abseiling, orienteering and

mountaineering. Among our occasional external instructors was Lt Col Con O'Sullivan, who humorously and energetically instructed cadets on diaphragm and breathing exercises, communications, speech and drama. For memorable instruction on the Defence Act and 'Bunreacht na hÉireann' we always enjoyed highly entertaining sessions with Lt Col Pat Jordan ("Is féidir an t-Uachtaráin a tháinseáil as ucht mí-iompair a lúfar"). Among our weekly religious speakers was Church of Ireland's Canon Knowles ("I bought a boat...").

The second intake of six Zambians Cadets in October 1969 enjoyed full participation in the integrated training programme of the 44th Cadet Class. By and large, all instruction and activities in the Cadet School for the 44th Cadet Class were conducted through Irish. However while this policy certainly prevailed during 1969-1971, not all 44th Cadet Class instruction, whether or not under supervision, was conducted through Irish ("for the benefit of our Zambian cadets I will continue in English...").



44th Cadet Class 1969 - 1971



44th Cadet Class and 5th Air Corps Regular Cadet Class Group Photo 2019

Due to the impact of 'The Troubles', the 44th Cadet Class would have been the last class to enjoy an Irish Training Camp under canvas in Ring Co. Waterford during the summer of 1970. In January 1970 our army cadet colleague Alan Linehan (Stradbally, Co. Laois) voluntarily departed our ranks to take up a preferred civilian career choice. Later that year, Air Corps Cadet Frank Burns elected to

continue his cadetship as an Army Cadet while his 5 Air Corps colleagues departed for corps-specific training in Baldonnel.

The training regime of the Cadet School was rigorous and demanding.

"Schedules were tight, free time was limited, physical demands - including a strong emphasis on sporting activities by all cadets - alternated with

2 In 1967, in association with the 42nd Cadet Class, six young Zambians were enlisted for the first time as cadets at the Cadet School resulting from an agreement between the Irish and Zambian governments. All four Zambian cadet classes were trained in the Curragh, three between 1967 and 1973 and a fourth class between 1995 and 1997.

3 A legacy of former Minister for Defence Kevin Boland's 1957 'Usáid na Gaeilge' policy, which imposed Irish as the medium of instruction in the Irish Military College (An Coláiste Míleata) and the Cadet School (Scoil na nDaltaí)

4 Extract from 'The College' The Irish Military College, 1930-2000 by Colonel Tom Hodson, published by The History Press Ireland 2016



academic demands. Cadets progressively assimilated the overriding influence of the school, the importance of teamwork and mutual support not only for individual success and survival but also for future success in their chosen military career. Most graduates of the Cadet School will agree that loyalty to comrades was the single most enduring aspect of the training they received at the Curragh".⁴

A junior cadet quickly grew accustomed to being under constant observation by senior cadets, Cadet School NCOs, Cadet Class Officers and Cadet Master. In the early weeks and months one quickly adjusted to the daily rhythms of cadet life: 06:00 reveilles, dark morning check parades (in turf-smoke-infused Cadet Lines courtesy of fired-up Military College boilers), breakfasts hurriedly consumed in the Cadets' Mess to ensure timely attendance in correct 'dress order' for the first programmed event of a long training day. Rotation of designated Cadet Class appointments such as Cadet Captain, Orderly Sergeants, Section or Passage Commanders ('Ceannasaí Gasra') helped to regulate coordination and control of cadet life.

Junior cadets quickly adjusted to the daily and weekly inspection regimes, the physical activity [marching, drilling, the dreaded obstacle course ('cúrsa constaic'), running, cycling, sport parades, cross country running ('rith-treasnáitire'), route marches etc], tactics, weapons training, lectures and mass parades. Precursors to subsequent 'army ranger' courses were conducted from the Curragh at the time of our cadetship. This significantly influenced 44th Cadet Class modes of transportation. All movement to scheduled training activities throughout the Camp (gymnasium, swimming pool, sporting fields, sub-course visits) was undertaken either on the run ('ar sodar'), to the tempo and exhortations of a rather unsympathetic Cpl Ennis, or else aboard our issued 'High Nelly' service bicycles. Last-minute dashes to Kildare Railway Station for infrequent home visits were facilitated



44th Cadet Class 1969 - 1971

by enterprising 'Smullen' taxis. Voracious cadet appetites and nourishment needs were rarely satisfied by Cook Sgt Hannigan's culinary efforts in the Cadets Mess. Restorative energy-boosting essentials were regularly supplemented by way of treats from nearby Maginn's Shop and from the cadet-run tuck shop in the Lines.



2nd Zambian Cadet Class Pennant

The crisis in Northern Ireland continued to escalate throughout our Junior Cadet Year (1969–70). This period also witnessed the 'Arms Crisis' unfold in the South (May–July 1970) and the murder of the first member of the Garda Síochana (Garda Richard Fallon) while on duty in Dublin on 03 April 1970. Significantly, 1969 had heralded the beginning of an expanding aid-to-civil-power (ATCP) role for the Defence Forces with a commensurate commitment of additional resources for border duties.

Against this backdrop it was remarkable that a welcome government decision on the long-awaited policy of third level education for the Cadet School was finally made on the 22 July 1969.

Individual recollections of our two-year cadetship will range from the purely private and personal to those often-shared collective class memories. Most will retain indelible images

5 Up to half our senior 43rd Cadet Class (14 Cadets) with the necessary matriculation qualifications were selected as the first Cadet Class to attend University College Galway (UCG) in September 1969. Fifteen of our 44th Cadet Class would similarly depart for UCG in September 1970.

of the Curragh, the iconic twin skyline symbols of the camp, the striking and elegant Clock Tower, the ordered lines of red-brick barrack blocks, soldiers, sheep, horses and the vast expanses of the plains with its unique and distinctive



5th Air Corps Regular Cadet Class

flora and fauna. Personal memories of our time in the Cadet School may evoke specific emotions and highlights (and perhaps some lowlights!). First impressions of interactions with classmates, senior cadets, Zambian cadets and Cadet School staff will vary. Memories may have faded by now of the intensive Cadet School inspections regime, physical activities, legendary Glen of Imaal exercises and those full-battle-dress route marches from the Glen to the Curragh.

Marching in public at the Dublin Easter Parade would have been a major ceremonial event in the lives of both junior and senior cadets, as would participation in Cadet Guards of Honour occasions in Dublin's Garden of Remembrance. Respite foreign travel on International Military Pilgrimages to Lourdes would have been savoured by participating cadets. Familiarisation visits to operational, service support and combat service support corps schools and installations in the Curragh Camp would have been enjoyed by all. Annual 'Triangular' sporting events between the Cadet School, Newbridge College and Clongowes Wood College were fiercely contested.

Some of us may recall that on the eve of dreaded weekly room and square inspections some relaxed classmates would have routinely attended the Curragh Picture House's evening film with rooms already 'done and dusted'. Other tormented souls could still have room furniture contents out in 'Pasáiste' corridors long after their cinema-attending colleagues were back and tucked up in their beds! Ironically, as life would have it, subsequent inspection outcomes more often than not favoured the cinema goers.

The Cadet School's 'Curragh-Bounds' policy would have been strongly reinforced and policed. Therefore, eagerly anticipated (though occasionally cancelled) day or weekend passes were rare but valued cadet class concessions. Perhaps some classmate patrons of the Harp Bar close to O'Connell

Street Bridge may still have flash-backs of breathless efforts to catch the last bus back from Dublin in order to beat the mandatory curfew and 23:59 check-in at Cadet Lines.

As our senior cadet year progressed many of us would have missed the companionship of our Naval Cadet colleagues Mick Waters (Grange, Co. Sligo) and Liam Carey (Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo) when both 'slipped their moorings' from the Curragh in August and January of 1971 respectively. Major anti-Vietnam war movements and mass protest rallies still raged in the United States as we prepared for our September commissioning ceremony.

The introduction of 'internment without trial' in the North of Ireland (NI) on 9 August 1971 evoked widespread riots, gun battles, bombings and chaos in the 'province'. By mid-August 1971 thousands of NI refugees had fled to refugee camps along the Border set up by the Irish Government. At the time, Provisional IRA leader Joe Cahill had exhorted 'The Free State Army' to ignore orders of the Government and support the people of Northern Ireland. The Fianna Fáil Government of the time had clamped down on RT, curbing the national broadcaster's reporting of activities associated with illegal organisations. This period also heralded the introduction of the new currency and decimal system in the Republic of Ireland. It was against this background that families proudly witnessed the 44th Cadet Class and the 5th Air Corps Regular Cadet Class take the Oath of Allegiance at our commissioning ceremony in the Military College on 27 September 1971.

Postscript:

At the beginning of 2019 I had a chance encounter in the Curragh with an exuberant group of male and female cadets from the 94th Cadet Class. On proudly introducing myself as a member of a previous cadet class which was about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, one of the group, much to the amusement of his colleagues (and to my wounded pride), had rather cheekily sympathised with me saying, "***I'm struggling to find some appropriate and reassuring words of comfort for you***". On mature reflection, perhaps I should have had the presence of mind and composure at the time to have redressed his remark. I could have cheerfully reassured those members of the 94th Cadet Class that there was indeed great comfort to be found in the happy knowledge that all members of our October 1969 cadet intake are thankfully still alive and well, that we had thoroughly enjoyed our military service experiences during a period in the Defence Forces which could arguably be called 'the best of times', and that class loyalties, friendships and bonds forged over the past 50 years continue undiminished to this day.



RESERVE SUPPORT TO “OPERATION FORTITUDE”

By Lt Col Julian Ensor (AR)
Directorate of Reserve Forces

Lt Col Julian Ensor (AR)

With the lockdown of Ireland in March 2020 due to COVID 19 and as a newly appointed officer to the Directorate of Reserve Forces I volunteered my services to the then Director of Reserve Forces, Col Colm O’Luasa and within days I took up my role. After 5 years of the single force concept the Directorate was created in 2018 to further the commitment to the Reserve Defence Forces and ensure the success and development of the “Single Force” concept.

Having spent most of my career in 2 Bde CIS, being appointed to the J7 role took some time to get used to but it afforded me the opportunity of taking a critical look at the current array of syllabi for the RDF. I identified a number of key courses that needed to be updated and set about organising a working group to review them.

We were plunged into other projects that will hopefully bear fruit for the RDF in the near future. Initially we were tasked with assessing the voluntary availability of Reserve members plus a skills survey as we needed to ascertain certain skills that could be of value in support of Covid-19 operations, such skills as medical, driving & IT.

Lessons learned are a big part of what we do and one unexpected lesson for me was the training the Reserve should be doing as part of Recruit and 3* Training. These lessons learned have fed into our working group discussions on syllabi review which we have submitted for approval. The re-establishment of the Directorate of Reserve Training is in my opinion a major boost for the Reserve and I hope that members will shortly see some tangible results from the work done over the past few months. Needless to say we are concerned with future training opportunities for the

Reserve but we are planning for a Q4 return to training once circumstances permit but it will be more challenging due to the ongoing restrictions we will all have to live with.

Joint Task Force

When the Joint Task Force was established in March a Reserve SO appointment was identified as part of the Force and Lt Col Iain Conlon, Comdt Lar Joye and myself from the Directorate of Reserve Forces reported to JTF HQ in McKee Barracks. Later Comdt Flood from 2 Brigade Cavalry Squadron joined the team. As well as running the Reserve Desk, all of us worked as Task Force Information Manager. On our first day there, it was a shock to the system when we walked into the gym in McKee Barracks, we were faced with a fully functioning and very busy HQ. Something that Reserve Officers have trained for on various courses in the Military College but not had the opportunity to be involved in. The HQ was fully networked and with a Chief of Staff, Director and Deputy Director, formations liaison officers, watch keepers and J1, J2, J3, J4, J5 & J9 cells one would expect in such an operation. As well as the Reserve SO Desk there were liaison officers from Naval Service, Air Corps, Central Medical Unit, Engineers supported by Legal & PR Branches.

Working with SSO Information Management, Lt Cdr Conor Kirwan an agreed a rota was put in place and training quickly undertaken. Start time was 08:30hrs and once a handover was done we could set about the day's business supporting the JTF Director and the rest of the staff. The role meant that any requests from the HSE or Local Authorities came

through one e-mail so that all requests could be monitored and managed. Inevitably there is always a crunch time each day and for us it was dealing with any incoming requests, confirming receipt and circulating the information to the relevant cell for information and necessary action. Each request was logged on a Task Manager and if it was agreed that the Defence Forces could assist a FRAGO was quickly issued. This FRAGO tied back to the original request on the Task Manager for ease of future reference if required.

Each evening a Commanders Update Brief (CUB) took place and we were responsible for ensuring the daily SitRep was ready for approval and signing by Brigadier General Cleary as well as inputting information for the actual brief. Generally, 2 hours was allocated for this work and some days no matter how prepared one felt a last minute FRAGO could suddenly see you under pressure for completing the report. Teamwork is essential for the brief as multiple people are inputting information and one needs to be sure that the correct information goes into the SitRep before submitting it for approval.

The evening brief was an essential way of keeping up to speed on past events but also future intentions. Without this knowledge and a proper handover each day the system would potentially fail. In many ways the mantra of the Reserve is Training, Training, Training but it was an honour to serve in a fully operational Task Force as part of the Single Force Concept during the COVID 19 crisis. It was a privilege to have this opportunity and I know that many members of the Reserve were also making a contribution to the DF effort or were more than willing to do so if required.



COVID 19 and the Medical Reserve

Comdt Hugh O'Callaghan (AR), 2 Brigade Med Det

My name is Hugh O'Callaghan, I joined the Defence Forces in 2005 as a Direct Entry Medical Officer. At the time the Defence Forces were recruiting Medical Officers for overseas service and my first deployment was with the 93rd Infantry Battalion to Liberia. I think it's fair to say that my initial time in the PDF was eye opening. After getting back to Ireland I returned to civilian medical practise and joined the RDF and later served abroad as a Medical Officer with the 99th Infantry Battalion in Chad.

In civilian life, I am an anaesthetist. As part of my specialty training scheme I had spent some time working in intensive care medicine. In pre-pandemic times I would have had limited work in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and the majority of my time would be spent working in the operating theatres. However, elective surgery has been radically curtailed since the pandemic hit and I have been reassigned to work in the ICU.

My working day begins at 8am in the ICU here in University Hospital Limerick with a clinical handover meeting. The clinical condition of all our patients are discussed in detail with the team from the previous night and any overnight

changes to their condition are highlighted and new admissions discussed. Plans are made for the coming day at this morning meeting. Patients are assigned to each clinician and the day's duties are divided. Oftentimes, COVID-19 patients are already inpatients in the hospital who deteriorate and need urgent admission to the ICU for assisted ventilation. Sometimes they are emergency admissions that present in extremis via the Emergency Department. In all cases they have proven to be clinically complex and you can never be sure just what the next moment holds. The day ends when the work is done, unless I have on-call duties in which case I spend the night in the hospital. Long hours invariably come with the job I do.

The ICU is the area of the hospital where the sickest patients are cared for. The level of support needed by a critically ill patient varies and it is usual to have patients who require multiple organ support in the ICU. They may need a ventilator if their lungs cannot work sufficiently, they usually need medication infusions to maintain their blood pressure and heart function and they may need dialysis in the event of renal failure. COVID-19 has made the tough job of keeping these critically ill patients alive even tougher. The level of PPE we now wear in the ICU makes practical procedures difficult. On a more human level, it can be hard to communicate with patients when both are wearing masks in a noisy environment. Visitors to the ICU are forbidden due to the risks of virus transmission which is particularly hard on patients. Unfortunately, I have had colleagues who have contracted COVID-19 in the course of their work and it is an ever-present worry for those of us who treat these patients.

Similar to the military, the intensive care unit relies on teams of staff all working seamlessly together to function well. The Intensive Care Unit is analogous to a chain of care, where doctors make up only a single link. The other links in the chain are nursing staff, physiotherapists, dieticians, microbiologists, healthcare assistants, clinical engineers, right through to cleaners. It is quite humbling to realise the sheer number of essential workers that I work alongside.

Aside from my civilian duties, I am the CO of 2 Brigade Medical Detachment (Reserve). We have been deploying alongside PDF colleagues testing for COVID-19 in residential institutions. It has been particularly gratifying to see the Army Reserve used in support of the PDF during a national emergency. I have been both hugely impressed by, and deeply appreciative of the readiness of unit personnel to volunteer their time to fill duties despite the demands of their civilian jobs. I have spent the last few years trying to expand the medical capability of the Army Reserve, in the wake of the reorganisation of the RDF in 2012. There remains a lot more work to be done on that front but progress is being made with interviews due to take place soon to induct new RDF Medical Officers.

At the time of writing, we have been extremely lucky that we haven't experienced the surge of patients as in other

countries. Instead we are receiving a steady number of Covid-19 patients. Work in the ICU during the pandemic is busy, sometimes hectic, but not as yet overwhelming. As we wait to see what the future holds, it is a source of pride knowing that the Defence Forces are playing a crucial part in stamping out the pandemic.

Cpl Colm Kerr (AR)



My name is Colm Kerr. I've been a member of the Reserve Defence Forces since 2002, having joined what was then the 1st Field Medical Company in County Cork, soon to be followed by my brother Maurice and later my brother Brian. My father had recently retired from the army and it was through him that I developed my interest in medicine and the military from an early age. Joining the Reserve Defence Forces helped me pursue this interest further, as well as giving me the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and forge great friendships too.

Being a member of the RDF gave me the opportunity from an early age to learn the basics of first aid right up to pre-hospital medicine skills such as CPR and defibrillation use. Providing medical cover for RDF Summer Camps and field exercises in the wilds of Bere Island and further afield gave me my

first taste of the privilege of looking after real patients. We were blessed to have fantastic members, both PDF and RDF, among the ranks of the medical company whose knowledge and professionalism in pre-hospital medicine spurred many of us on to pursue careers in healthcare. Several past and current members of the medical companies are part of the current national and international COVID-19 response, working as paramedics, pharmacists, nurses, healthcare assistants and doctors at home and abroad.

I initially studied microbiology in college before undertaking medicine. The pre-hospital and first aid skills that I learned through the RDF stood me in good stead throughout. After graduation I embarked on a career in hospital medicine where I got to experience working as part of the Infectious Diseases specialty. I enjoyed getting to know and look after the wide variety of patients, many of whom can have complex medical and social needs that require the expertise of the infectious diseases team. I also enjoyed working with fantastic, dedicated and enthusiastic colleagues and consultants, many of whom are now at the forefront of the national COVID-19 response. This experience, coupled with my interest in microbiology, led me to embark on a career as a trainee specialist in Infectious Diseases.

As part of my training, I have been based at St. James's Hospital, the largest teaching hospital in Ireland, for the past 3 years where I have been a member of the genitourinary medicine and infectious diseases (GUIDe) department. For the last 2 years I have been undertaking research in the area of human papillomavirus infection in HIV positive people at St. James's, and in the last year I have been lucky enough to marry this research with a teaching post in Trinity College Dublin, where I am currently a clinical lecturer for medical students.

With the arrival of COVID19 to these shores my research work has been postponed and I have come back to the clinical fold to work alongside members of the fantastic GUIDe department at the frontline. We have restructured our service at St. James's Hospital, and along with our respiratory and intensive care colleagues, have been looking after patients with COVID19 since March. At the moment we have between 60 and 100 patients with COVID-19 under our care on dedicated COVID wards. Approximately 80% of people diagnosed with this illness suffer a mild disease course and get better on their own,

however, up to 20% end up requiring hospital admission for supportive care and, in severe cases, ICU admission. Unfortunately, there is as of yet no evidence-based treatments available for patients with COVID-19 and a vaccine is, at best, months away. As infectious diseases physicians, our role is to look after and offer supportive care to those who need it and to identify patients who are deteriorating and facilitate ICU admission when needed.

My colleagues in infectious disease are at the forefront of COVID-19 research in Ireland, with all of us in the specialty helping to contribute to ongoing research into antibody testing and immunity to the virus. We are also looking to understand the immune system's response to COVID-19 infection to help find out why some people suffer far more severe illness than others. In the coming weeks, our hospital and several others around the country will be participating in international clinical trials to compare the efficacy of different treatments for hospitalised patients with severe COVID-19 illness. It's a privilege to serve with colleagues throughout the healthcare system, the Defence Forces and all the public services in looking after the most vulnerable and helping to protect the country in these challenging times.





By Lar McKevitt Photos by Lar McKevitt

MULLINGAR TO MONROVIA - A SOLDIER'S MEMOIR

PART 2

Reveille happened at 6am sharp. This wasn't the playing of pipes or a bugle, but the siren of the medical ambulance. It rang out for a good minute or two until you could see dead tired faces moving out of the unzipped tents. Time to get up and face day two of our six-day patrol. Quickly you could see soldiers setting up shaving areas outside their tents, though shaving was optional while on a long-range patrol, I left it to every other day. Teeth were brushed, hexamine cookers pulled from our backpacks to boil some water for a brew or a coffee, the bagged beans were prepared and placed over a small flame. After everyone was shaved, fed and watered, we made a single file to collect our ration packs from the Quartermasters truck for the next 24 hours. This was operated by CQ Pat Ganley from Galway, a mild-mannered man and a decent sort, he was good for an extra ration pack if you were up for it. After that it was time to chill out until we got the order to mount up and to move out of our position.

At 9.45am local time, the order was sent out to prepare ourselves, mount up and be ready to move out. At 10am sharp we started to roll again. Next stop: Gbarnga. This trip would be a big push and our ETA was around 3pm local time. The plan once we got there was to patrol as frequently as we could and our orders were to remain alert at all times. We would spend 72 hours at Gbarnga and on Day 3 into the patrol, a platoon would be transported by air in M-18 military helicopters from the base camp at Gbarnga to be flown by Ukrainian military pilots to a village named Vahun which was

close to the border of Sierra Leone. So, because the Company Commander, Commandant Ryan was to travel, this meant that I would travel too as I was technically his communications person for reporting back to both the base camp at Gbarnga and to our HQ at Camp Clara in Monrovia.

By mid-afternoon the patrol was pulling into Gbarnga and the very same as before, a forward reconnaissance team was deployed to seek out an ideal position for our stay. We pulled into a base camp, it was noticeably a larger amount of ground but not with as much cover. Same as before, the armour faced into two hourly positioning, personal tents were erected and a logistical area and Basecamp HQ was set up. I remember asking Captain Paddy Kelly to unload my magazine of live ammunition, which is military procedure to have an officer or senior NCO dismount a live weapon. I wanted to clean my rifle as it was a very dusty drive to get here and it was important that our rifles were clean and ready to be used effectively should we require. The truck in this terrain was not to use any bottled oil, but more so a used oil rag to clean it down so that sand or particles from the terrain wouldn't stick to important parts of our weaponry.

Just as I removed the barrel and the main housing and gun-lock group from my rifle, the loudest order was sounded. "STAND TOO" – "STAND TOO" – this was a warning order given where a threat was imminent or something suspicious was in sight. I speedily put the weapon back



together again and mounted my ammunition before moving into cover and taking up an arc of fire. It appeared to be two pickup loads of armed rebels from the local area. As they got within 10 metres of our perimeter, I was called into the centre of the base camp and told to prepare to move forward with the Company Commander and his team who would engage in talks with the leaders of this rebel clan. As we moved forward, a team of six, the closer we got, the angrier these rebels became, so we stopped short until what appeared to be their leader called us towards him with a wave of his hand. We knew that we had more soldiers than they had, we also had far better equipment and additional ammunition should we need it, so that gave me peace of mind.

Their leader spoke with very little English as he grasped what looked like a well-used rifle. The closer we got it appeared that these men were mostly stoned on drugs, what exactly, I’m not sure, but it was a good time for self-realisation and to watch their every move. As a conversation ensued regarding our business in their town, we assured them that we were here not as an enemy, but to assist their people whilst representing the United Nations and that we didn’t seek trouble. Ten minutes or so passed and an agreement was called. The agreement was that we were allowed to enter the nearby villages whilst patrolling, but only once per day. This would affect the objectives of this six-day patrol, but what was not agreed was how long we could stay in the villages at any one time. So in order to gather up as much information about the area and the ground as we could, it was agreed that any patrols into nearby villages, both by vehicle and on foot, would remain a little longer than scheduled, meaning we could achieve our objectives of this patrol. We would also remain alert and where a threat was deemed, we would remain extremely vigilant and adhere to our Rules of Engagement under this mission. The rebels withdrew and drove away towards the nearest built-up area and we carried

on about our business. The order ‘Stand Too’ was moved to ‘Stand Down’ and we got back to basics, relaxed, napped, cleaned our weapons, wrote a letter, read a book – that was all for now.



Being presented with my shamrock by Commandant Murphy, Logistics Company Commander, 90th Infantry Battalion, Liberia

After six days of driving, walking, sleeping, flying, eating, bird-bathing and patrolling, we arrived back at our HQ at Camp Clara in Monrovia. A three-minute shower never sounded so good. Due to the daily water allowance to the camps from the water truck, each soldier was only allowed a 180 second shower so you had to make it a good one. My first long range patrol in the bag, I quite enjoyed it. This is what it was all about. This was the nature of this mission. My body was worked, though at 21 years young, I had enough youth in me to recover faster than the older soldiers. My torso sported sporadic ant bites from my nights on the ground, in the wild. My stubble looked good in the sense that it suited my face. I hadn’t shaved in 3 days at this point, but I knew it had to go as I wouldn’t get away with it while at camp. It was back to daily fresh shaves.

Over the coming weeks I would be part of all sorts of patrols. One day air patrols, more long-range patrols spanning between 3 and 7 days, local patrols lasting a couple of hours. No two patrols the same. No matter how tough these patrols were or had the potential to be, you always had a good mix of soldiers and good characters were always about and everyone looked out for each other – genuinely. This mission had camaraderie more than anything I’d seen in service to date both at home and abroad.

“It is one thing being Irish, another being born in the heart of it, but for me, to serve my country, there was no greater feeling.”

– 857954, Gunner L. McKevitt



Wilfred from Gambia and I at the UN Airfield in Monrovia

We are halfway into our tour of duty. It's a Monday and it's Saint Patrick's Day 2003. There is a shamrock parade at 10am followed by mass at 11am, followed by lunch between 12 noon and 1.30pm with our medal parade at 3pm. Today all men and women of the 90th Infantry Battalion from Ireland will receive their medal of peace for their contribution to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Post medal parade and dinner, there will be a drinks reception at our canteen and music will be provided by the battalion band, a group of musicians providing entertainment for us all with the odd good, bad and average singer who'll give a bar or two. All welcome!

As we march from the Logistics part of camp to the main square area at the centre of the camp to be presented with our shamrock, which is a ritual overseas with the Irish Defence Forces, two Army pipers lead us along the way to the tune of Mull of Kintyre, Privates McLoughlan and Devereaux, both from the 28th Infantry Battalion, Donegal. Everyone is proud to be here. Backs straight, heads erect, rifles tight to our chests and each step in sync. It is one thing being Irish, another being born in the heart of it, but for me, to serve my country, there was no greater feeling.

"The DDRR process is critical to improving the well-being of Liberian Children."

– Ms. Angela Kearney, UNICEF

As our tour of duty closes in on month six, it is nearly time for the handover from our battalion, the 90th Infantry Battalion drawn from the 4th Western Brigade back home to the incoming 91st Infantry Battalion drawn from the 2nd Eastern Brigade, on April 16th, 2004, the re-commencement of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) of fighters of Liberia's warring factions

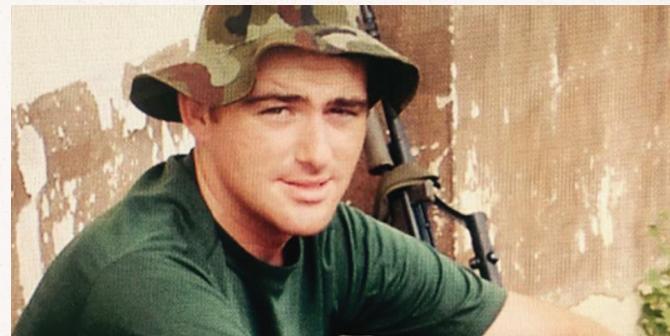


One of the many queues of young adults lining up to hand over their arsenal of weapons as part of UNICEF's DDRR programme. Liberia, April 2004

is introduced. Like all wars, it is a great thing when they come to an end. This programme is a decommissioning phase for the war-ravaged Liberia. Most Liberian citizens want an end to the terror and the fear, but there are dissidents who don't want to let it go. To anyone contributing to peace and to this programme, they are promised a pay-off, medical assistance and an employment role or scheme. You would think it a good

enough incentive to pack it all in and to reset, to restart and to try something more refreshing. A normal life.

UNICEF personnel are heavily present, mainly in and around Monrovia. We are patrolling robustly, sending 2 to 3 patrols out from our HQ daily to provide security to members of UNICEF who are naturally unarmed and to assist in policing.



Lar taking a rest at the Basecamp at Gbarnga

Ms. Angela Kearney of UNICEF releases a statement which leads with, "The DDRR process is critical to improving the well-being of Liberian Children," – an impactful introduction considering that children were used in the wars in Liberia, being used as child soldiers for little or nothing. Every child deserves a childhood, but sadly not every child has such a luxury, not in these parts.

There are lines of men and women queuing up with weapons and ammunition in exchange for a better and a more civilised way of life. My mind is racing. I am looking at these people, they're looking at me, they bare a smile and I return it, I return it in the hope that they will finally realise that I am on their side and that my face from a place far away wishes the best for them and their people. We are on their side. Our comrades coming to relieve us soon will be on their side too. Our UN colleagues from Sweden, France, Bangladesh and Ukraine and so on are on their side too.

As the tour of duty for the 90th Infantry Battalion closes in, I will rotate with chalk one out of here after a six-month tour of duty which I took no leave from. This is my last weekend here and I have volunteered for yet another patrol. This patrol is a day trip to a town called Ganta. We are providing a dozen soldiers as part of a security party for DDRR events taking place there this weekend. We will be transported by air.

As the flight out today will not leave from Camp Clara, we must make our way to the UN airfield in Monrovia, about fifteen minutes from our HQ by car. We mount up and set off on our way. At the UN Airfield in Monrovia there are various different military helicopters. I notice one over to my left, so while I have the time prior to our flight on the M-18 chopper, I head over to a small group of soldiers from Gambia, very small talk, but very friendly towards each other. We are both brought together by the fact that we are both serving here under the same United Nations mandate and mission. We shake hands, share a brief introduction of our first names and



our nationality. He is Wilfred from Gambia, a friendly chap, very happy to talk to me. He asks me to step into his photo, I agree, of course. I do the same, I pass over my camera to his colleague to snap us. I think they are blown away by our equipment as he points to my headset and then to my rifle and gives a firm thumbs up. A quick snap and then Irish patrol flight UN421 to Ganta is called out over the tannoy system. We shake hands again, part ways, never to be seen again.

“Because I’m leaving on a jet plane, don’t know when I’ll be back again.”

– John Denver, songwriter

This opening trip at the start of a new mission was far from an easy one and far from an idle one. Robust patrolling, camp duties, dealing with an early tragedy and fatality, dealing with extremely high temperatures and terrain we were unfamiliar with. A very different mission to past Irish missions in Lebanon, East Timor and Kosovo. Mechanised patrolling for days at a time. Calls home, physical fitness, a shower, a bed and the odd bottle of beer in the canteen which was open for alcohol for two hours 3 nights a week. These pleasures were not a thing when you were miles and miles in country on a long-range patrol and well away from the comforts that we made at our HQ at Camp Clara, so as you can imagine, the mission in that sense required adaptability and mental strength.

So, the time has come and it’s the night before we leave Camp Clara for Roberts International Airport to catch a flight out of this West African war zone and back to our normal lives, friends and families back in Ireland. A quick gathering in the canteen where it’s opened for 90 minutes so that we can grab a beer and share a drink with our colleagues before we all go back to our home units in Ireland. After each of my four tours of duty, I always found this part of the mission particularly strange, in the sense that you’d bonded with these soldiers you may not have known prior to the trip, you’ve become familiar with every face, what their role was, how physically fit they were and what quality of soldier or character they were. A gathering of troops like this is always temporary, but you always keep the memories.

Naturally there is a playlist on in the background and songs such as Homeward Bound, Tie a Yellow Ribbon and My Heart is in Ireland are part of that, but it’s when John Denver’s Leaving on a Jet Plane comes on that almost everyone in the canteen gets involved.

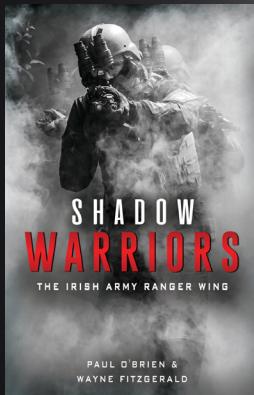
This is like a ritual and the done thing for Irish soldiers overseas just before they rotate with the new soldiers enroute to relieve them. It’s like an end-of-trip anthem. “So, kiss me and smile for me, tell me that you’ll wait for me. Hold me like you’ll never let me go. Because I’m leaving on a jet plane, don’t know when I’ll be back again.” The volume is turned up a notch and everyone gets involved. There’s a certain happiness

that we can all relate to, plenty of smiling and hand shaking. What we’ve been waiting for since the day we got here. Our job is done here.

It’s 9am on a midweek morning. We mount up on UN coach buses and make our way to the airport to welcome the incoming troops from the 91st Infantry Battalion and to catch our connecting flight out of here. We will stop off at Gran Canaria, a quick refuel and then it’s next stop, Dublin airport. As we gather in a hangar at Roberts International Airport, we see the lights of the incoming chartered plane in the distance, it is descending to land. Within seven or eight minutes, it hits the runway and the excitement for us mounts some more. As the soldiers of the 91st Battalion leave the aircraft and move in single file towards another hangar about 50 metres from where we are, you can’t help but notice how pale-skinned they are, which gives you the harsh reality check that you too are pasty Irish white when you’re not under the hot sun on a six month tour of duty in the Middle East or on the African continent, or on holiday in Cyprus or Tenerife. We wave towards them, they vaguely wave back, as they perhaps feel that we are rubbing their noses in it, not to mention that they’re more than likely experiencing what I wrote about earlier when stepping off that aircraft. The searing heat, the stench and the unimaginable humidity, so they can be forgiven. We shortly mount the aircraft, take our seats, remove our heavy boots and relax as best we can. We’re out of here!

After about 11 or 12 hours of travelling, two flights and some waiting around in-between, our plane hits the tarmac at Dublin Airport and as it does, the cheer that goes up is a loud one, lots of clapping and a few ‘yahoos’. I’d experienced this feeling previously from my earlier trip home from Lebanon with the 88th Infantry Battalion, but it was nice to see the excitement on the faces of those coming home from their first tour of duty. This mission was made up of a lot of young soldiers on their first tour of duty as around that time there was a lot of recruitment within the Defence Forces, but trips of this size in numbers were not a thing since we pulled out of Lebanon (Mark 1) in 2001, there was a small number of troops in areas such as Kosovo, Eritrea and East Timor, but not of battalion size.

As we came through the arrivals gates there was a great reception from the families of soldiers who had gathered to welcome their sons, daughters, husbands, wives and partners home. It was a lovely feeling. All of my family were here so that was great. They’d noticed how much weight I’d lost, though there wasn’t much on me to begin with, it was clear that we would all lose additional weight from this mission due to patrolling, general humidity and our own physical fitness regimes when at our HQ. It was coming into summer 2004. Within a year from now I would have completed my NCOs course and be promoted to Corporal. I would also be headed back to Liberia for a second time on a six-month tour of duty in May 2005. But that is another story for another day.



SHADOW WARRIORS

Lifts the lid on Ireland's Special Forces



By Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald

A new book **Shadow Warriors: The Irish Army Ranger Wing** published in April 2020 which lifts the lid on this secretive special forces unit and is the first and only authoritative account that looks at their inception, their advanced training and a look at their operations at home and overseas – without breaching their operational procedures or tactics, which still remain secret.

In March 1980, the Irish Defence Forces' Special Forces Unit the Army Ranger Wing or ARW was established - this year marks their 40th anniversary. The ARW was officially designated as 'Sciathán Fianóglach an Airm' as there is no English translation of 'Fianóglach' the internationally recognised designation of 'Ranger' is used. The word 'Fianóglach' links the traditions of the ARW to 'Na Fianna', the

Forces, serving in the Army, Naval Service or Air Corps, both male and female. The SOFQ is a 36-week modular training course that requires a high level of physical fitness and mental fitness. The SOFQ syllabus is designed to test and assess all aspects of the candidate's character, military skills, ability and general suitability to become a member of the ARW. Successful completion provides the potential unit member with all the skills and knowledge necessary to function in the role of a Special Operations Force (SOF) assault team operator. The failure rate is very high, with only a small percentage make the cut to be the 'best of the best'. The ARW train hard and continuously work on their SOF tactics, techniques, and procedures or TTPs. Where they use the unit's now 40-years' of evolving knowledge and experience of operating at home and overseas, along with their cooperation with other security services and foreign special forces units.

ARW assault team operators are held in a state of readiness 24/7, 365 days of the year, where operators are on call to their command centre in the Curragh Camp, Co Kildare. Operators are put into platoons and teams as per their skill sets. They are constantly training and upskilling in all different types of special forces tactics like HALO parachuting, amphibious assault craft, fast-roping from a helicopter, sniping and assaulting in their Ford F-350 Special

"Glaine ár gCroí, Neart ár nGéag, Agus beart de réir ár mbriathar."
"The cleanliness of our hearts, The strength of our limbs, And our commitment to our promise."

legendary Irish warriors, and also with Óglaigh na hÉireann or Irish Defence Forces.

What do they do? The ARW's roles are divided into conventional warfare, i.e. offensive operations behind enemy lines, like long-range patrols (LRP), raids, ambushes, sabotage, counter-insurgency, and other tasks, and specialist aid to the civil power (ATCP) in anti-terrorist taskings including anti-hijack, hostage rescue, airborne and seaborne interventions, close protection (CP) of VIPs and counter terrorist/subversive threats, amongst others.

Army Ranger Wing's Special Operations Force Qualification or SOFQ Course is open to all serving members of the Defence



An ARW member of the Special Operations Maritime Task Unit (SOMTU) emerging from the water, 2016.



ARW Operatives during a joint Exercise 'Ullamh' with An Garda Síochána, December 2017.



ARW initial entry force on patrol in a Special Reconnaissance Vehicle (SRV) in EUFOR Chad/CAR in 2008.

Reconnaissance Vehicles (SRV). Which other members of the Defence Forces can only hope of doing, someday, if they pass SOFQ.

The ARW started out in the early 1980s on operations during the Troubles, conducting patrols and manning Observation Posts or OPs while watching subversive activities along the Border area with Northern Ireland, right up until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. They are also on hand for ATCP



ARW Sniper team deployed with an Accuracy International .338 rifle and a MOD A3 Steyr rifle with short barrel in Chad, 2008.

duties with An Garda Síochána, like the operation involved in the kidnapping of Don Tidy in 1983. Most recently they would have provided snipers in air support and on the ground as Close Protection to VIP visits such as HM Queen Elizabeth II and other royals and other visiting heads of state like US President Donald Trump and US Vice President Michael Pence in June and September 2019.

As some might know, the Defence Forces have an unbroken record of 62 years of peacekeeping service with the UN since 1958. Individual members of the ARW will have served overseas during the unit's 40-years of operations, but they cut their teeth as a unit in Somalia in September 1993 just before the Black Hawk Down incident in October 1993, where 18 US Rangers operating independently of UN, were killed.

From there, the ARW has served as an initial entry force to

missions such as East Timor 1999, Liberia 2003, Chad 2008, up to their present mission in Mali since September 2019. Two ARW teams were deployed in a response to an upsurge in violence in northern Mali, which is led by Al Qaeda affiliated militant groups.

The ARW teams are conducting long-range reconnaissance patrols, with direct action. This requires speed, mobility and flexibility, the ARW have continuously trained for these types of mission. The UN's MINUSMA mission is considered by security experts as its most dangerous. Since July 2013, 216 MINUSMA peacekeepers and law enforcement personnel have been killed, and another 360+ seriously injured (as of May 2020). In February 2020, three Irish ARW SOF operators suffered minor injuries when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated near their vehicle while conducting a patrol in eastern Mali.

More ARW operatives are currently training for the UN approved German-led EU Battlegroup, which is due to go on operational standby for six months soon. If the Battlegroup were to be called into action the Irish contingent would only be deployed with the Irish government's 'triple-lock' authorisation. To date, no EU Battlegroup has been deployed.

The ARW missions and operations are not well known or regularly discussed within the media, nor are the identities of ARW operatives, who remain in the shadows in order to protect themselves and that of the unit. Thus, the unit and its members are shrouded in secrecy both within the Defence Forces and to the public.

About the authors: Paul O'Brien, a military historian, works for the Office of Public Works at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. An author of 16 books, Paul has written extensively on the military strategy of the 1916 Rising, as well as the British Army in Ireland. Two of his books, *Blood on the Streets* and *Crossfire*, were turned into the critically acclaimed drama-documentary *A Terrible Beauty*. He lives in Santry, Dublin with his wife, daughter and two cats.

Sergeant Wayne Fitzgerald joined the Defence Forces in 1990, serving initially with the 5 Inf Bn, in his 30+year career he has worked in a number of roles within the Army and Air Corps. In 2011 he was detached to Defence Forces HQ to work on www.military.ie, and in May 2011 he was appointed editor of *An Cosantóir* (The Defender) The Defence Forces Magazine, until May 2020. Wayne has served overseas as a peacekeeper with the UN, EU and NATO PfP in Lebanon (1991), Kosovo (2002, 2010) and Bosnia i Herzegovina (2008).



ARW Special Operations Maritime Task Unit (SOMTU) conducting boarding drills in the Naval Base, Haulbowline, 2016.



"IF WE CAN WINTER THIS ONE OUT WE CAN SUMMER ANYWHERE"

- Seamus Heaney

Normally around this time of year the planning phase of the preparation for the periods of full time training for the summer period would be coming to an end in many of the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve units around the country. The planning cell would have been set up and would have taken the training outcomes from the commanding officer. Exercise scenarios or training courses would be discussed to try and achieve the commanders' intent on the training outcomes from the period of full time training. Vehicles would be applied for as well ration packs for the periods on the ground would also be applied for. Tasks like submitting applications in the requisite time frames for access to lands for tactical exercises as well as indents to feed those attending would also be allocated from the



planning group.

The date of the training would have been set well in advance to allow the members of the reserve to apply to their employers in sufficient time for annual leave to partake in their commitment to the Reserve Defence Forces to undertake a period of 7 days full time training. Other criteria like having completed their Annual Personal Weapons Test would have been done on a weekend earlier in the year. Fitness tests would also have to be carried out should a career course be available to apply for if the applicant was a successful nominee from the unit. With all these prerequisites achieved, the remaining focus was spent on making sure that personal kit was in perfect order and ready for inspection by eagle-eyed NCO's to make sure



that the appropriate standard was achieved.

But as we all know at this stage, this isn't the normal middle of May that we are all used to experiencing. Reserve Defence Forces training has been placed on hold during the Covid emergency. The last time that this happened was during the foot and mouth outbreak from March 2001 to September



2001. The country went into lockdown and yet again the Defence Forces unselfishly and willingly answered the country's call. Many PDF personnel were deployed to the border to help bolster the hastily set up check points that ensured no infected livestock were transported into the Republic that could have devastating effects on the National herd. Many reservists also answered the call and filled in the



gaps left by these personnel and carried out multiple barrack duties the length and breadth of the country to ensure that day-to-day operations were able to continue.

Today nearly twenty years later this is being repeated. Members of both Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve have been called up to assist their colleagues in the PDF whether it's assisting in JTAF or transporting PPE from Dublin airport to various distribution centres around the country or transporting medical personnel or Covid tests. The Naval

Service Reserve personnel have assisted in the support and operation of HSE test sites co located with Irish Naval vessels in Dublin, Cork and Galway. This doesn't take away from the fact that there are numerous members of the Reserve who through their civilian occupations are working on the front line as medical personnel, shop workers, delivery vehicle drivers



or business owners all of whom are contributing to the fight against Covid 19.

However, the work of the planning cells will not go to waste as there are plans to return to training in line with the return to work protocols as directed by the government. The timeframes and dates will have changed to reflect the current situation of course, but the essentials to ensure that the



required permissions are obtained will still have to be carried out in a timely fashion to ensure that all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed.

As the Irish Poet Seamus Heaney said "If we can winter this one out we can summer anywhere" the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve will be back training again and as ever we will be ready, willing and able to answer the call to serve our country and citizens again.

By (AR) Damien O'Herlihy

ANSAC CU TALK COVID-19 AND YOUR CREDIT

ANSAC Credit Union which has been available to members of PDFORRA and their families for over a quarter of a century, share they have received a volume of calls from members addressing a drop in household income since the pandemic reached our island.

"As you'd expect we've had calls from a number of members where their partners have had wage cuts, experienced temporary layoffs, job loss or disruption to their own business." Says Gillian Dunne, ANSAC CEO. "And by and large, despite the anxieties they're facing, it's been really commendable how pragmatic this group are being in relation to their financial obligations."

The Credit Union's key message to this group is to take control as much as possible and follow these 5 key action points.

- React early & be mindful of your credit score
- Do an adjusted income & expenditure statement – MABS has a good self-help tool for this.
- Act to reduce expenditure
- Contact your credit provider to find a workable solution
- Avoid high cost debt offered by moneylenders

How ANSAC can specifically help

- Review your new circumstances and offer an altered repayment schedule.
- Help set you up on their EZ BillPay Service. This is a bill payment service which assists with budgeting.
- Help you determine if their new Debt Consolidation Loan would help save you money. Launched on July 1ST in response to the Covid-19 crisis, ANSAC report that the new loan offering has had a strong uptake to date.

When to Consolidate?

Since the launch of its new Debt Consolidation Loan, ANSAC says it's fielded many calls from members uncertain as to whether it's a good option for them or not. "We welcome these calls." says Gillian, "and our experienced loan officers can certainly walk you through it."

"At the end of the day, it comes down to whether or not you'll end up paying less interest overall by rolling several of your existing loans into one single one with us. We do however warn people to resist the temptation if possible, of having lower monthly repayments but a longer loan term, as usually they'll end up paying more in the long run."

ANSAC provides the following illustrative example:

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE ONLY

Sample existing loans:

Name of loan	Amount still owing	Remaining term	Typical APR*	Mthly repayments	Cost of credit
1. Credit Card Debt	€2000	3 years 11 months	19.2%	€60	€772
2. Personal Loan	€15100	5 years	11.5%	€327.56	€4,653.60
TOTAL	€17,000			€387.56	€5425.60

*Annual percentage rate (APR) The APR is the annual rate of interest you will be charged on a loan. It takes account of all the costs involved over the term of the loan, such as any set-up charges and the interest rate. You can use the APR to compare different loans, as long as you compare them over the same term, for example 3-year loans.

Sample calculation, generated via our online loan calculator:

Name of loan	Amount still owing	Remaining term	Typical APR	Mthly repayments	Cost of credit
ANSAC Debt Consolidation Loan	€17,000	5 years	10.39%	€367	€4897

HOW TO CONTACT ANSAC:

Should you wish to discuss your existing loans or consider taking out a Debt Consolidation Loan, call 018554489 or email info@ansaccu.ie and a member of staff will be happy to assist



ON THE FRONT LINE

By Cpl Lee Coyle and Front Line Workers

Before the year 2020, when the words "Front Line" were spoken, most people's thoughts - members of the DF and people across the world - drifted to the terrible events of World War One and the muddy trenches of Eastern Europe. But today when we think upon these words, we think of something completely different, something that until this year many thought impossible.

Today we think of the men and women who, through all the fears of an unseen enemy like Covid-19 that has brought terror and despair, have continued to work tirelessly to provide essential services that many of us have taken for granted until now. Today we look at some DF personnel who have stepped up to provide whatever has been asked of them, in assistance from the government; crucial tasks to help combat this global pandemic. Here are some of their stories:

Capt Barry Faulkner



My name is Captain Barry Faulkner, Engineer Officer within 2 Brigade Engineer Group based in Cathal Brugha Barracks. From the early stages of the Covid-19 crisis in mid-March, the Corps of Engineers have completed various projects in support of the HSE nationwide.

Internally, the Covid-19 JTF installation, McKee Bks Gym was the first project completed by 2 Brigade Engineer Group in conjunction with CIS which included electrical design & build, data distribution, barrack services, work stations (x37), and break-out rooms. Additionally, Engineers carried out site and building upgrade works in the Glen of Imaal, Kilworth Camp, Kilbride Camp and Gormanston Camp in preparation for Covid-19 Isolation Centres, which remain in reserve.

A significant project in support of the HSE was the installation and services fit-out of a recreational facility and a large-scale storage area in support of the HSE's Step-Down Care Facility (Field Hospital) in Citywest,

Dublin. Initially a one-week project for Engineer and Ordnance teams it developed into a four-week duration involving 7th Inf Bn personnel which included the complete assembly, fit-out and testing of the 300-bed facility. A similar Step-Down Care Facility has been completed in University of Limerick with 1 Brigade Engineer Group taking project-lead.

The Corps of Engineers have also supported various other HSE projects including the full services installation of Covid-19 Test Centres such as Sir John Rogerson's Quay and the Aviva Stadium, Dublin as well as Hospital Triage Receptions such as the Mercy University Hospital, Cork and Connolly Hospital, Dublin.

Sgt Bridget McCormack



My name is Sgt Bridget McCormack, I have served almost 20 years in the DF and I'm a paramedic within the CMU 2 Bde, based in Gormanston Camp. At the beginning of Covid 19 when faced with uncertainty of what lay ahead, here in Gormanston Camp as in other Barracks around the country and keeping within HSE Guidelines, we introduced a change in procedures for our soldiers presenting for sick parade, this was mainly to minimise any potential outbreaks in our facilities but also for the safety of the medical personnel that have been putting themselves on the forefront throughout this pandemic.

While CMU HQ and JTF were preparing operationally for the upcoming taskings in assisting the HSE, our logistic staff were not only sourcing and supplying PPE for medical personnel but continuously working on preparing St Bricins hospital along with other military locations as Step-Down Care Facilities for the HSE.

CMU have had multiple taskings in assisting National Ambulance Service (NAS), they vary from testing in a number of different locations, the Quays, nursing homes, residential care homes, testing centres, providing live ambulances in Cork, Kildare and Dublin and a medical officer for call centre. More recently CMU medical personnel along with the involvement of a number of different units within the Defence Forces have set up a testing centre in the Aviva Stadium with the capacity of

completing 400 tests per day.

Directly I have been involved with testing in nursing homes and residential care homes during this time we were tasked from NAS base in Cherry Orchard. I assisted with testing in Sir John Rogerson Quay and the Aviva Stadium and also working Live Ambulance out of Davitt Road, also I was involved with the training up of Health Care Assistant Teams in a number of barracks.

To date we have assisted in over 27,000 tests, responded to over 400 ambulance calls and our MOs have up to 100 deployments.

I am extremely proud of the Defence Forces' efforts assisting to combat Covid 19, we have pulled together and worked long hours to get the job done.

Cpl Cathal Mathews



I am a member of the 27th Infantry Battalion. During the Covid 19 lockdown, we have completed numerous ATCA tasks including assisting the HSE at DKIT College in Dundalk, helping out in both security and traffic control, so the redeployed HSE staff could effectively swab the patients coming in as swiftly and safely as possible. This assistance was greatly appreciated by the nurses and HSE staff. This task is still ongoing successfully to date at DKIT.

We also were tasked with logistical assistance for Dublin airport re-supply convoys of PPE coming into the country to assist with the immediate shortage and distribution for the HSE. This operation is still continuing and is a great opportunity for the Defence Forces to show their logistical chain in operation in helping the country at such an unprecedented time.

During the lockdown, members of the 27th Battalion were attached to CMU in order to assist NAS with COVID-19 testing nationally. Others, including myself, completed a Nursing Home Training course to assist Health Care Assistants if required. During this course we learned about CPR and defibrillator training, PPE donning and doffing training, refreshed our Manual Handling and were introduced to patient moving skills. HAACP training was completed and we also covered some of the healthcare soft skill aspects and how to interact with the nursing home residents. There were also lectures on the mental health aspect of the Defence Forces working in a nursing home environment. This was a

very interesting course and for most soldiers to enter a totally new role from than the one they previously trained for, but it's an example of how quickly we adapt to overcome any situation that we are faced with in our ATCP ATCA roles.

Tpr Colm Moore



My name is Colm Moore and I am a Trooper in the 2 Cavalry Squadron based in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin. During the month of March, the JTF was tasked by the HSE to help assist in the Covid-19 pandemic. Our primary role in the 2 Cavalry Squadron is the transferring of patients from their homes to testing centres in the Dublin and Wicklow area. Before each patient we do a full clean down and sanitize the transport to ensure maximum safety for the patients and ourselves. It can be dangerous to our family and friends if we do not take the proper precautions. When we arrive at the patient's house, we introduce ourselves and talk them through the procedure which is going to take place. We sanitize their hands and they are given a mask and pair of gloves.

Once we arrive at the testing centre the nurses take over and look after the patient. When they have been seen and are ready to leave, we take them back home in a safe and friendly manner.

It can be a challenging job as most patients are of older age and need help getting in and out of the transport plus they need that extra bit of help and reassurance. We never forget that we are in close contact with potential Covid-19 patients and take the role we are given during this time with great responsibility. I am extremely glad and happy to help assist during this challenging time.

17th Century Poet John Milton once wrote "Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world." I think these words sum up the feeling of thanks that the people of Ireland have for all those that have persevered through this worrying time, on the front line, providing the anchor of hope through these troubled waters. We at An Cosantóir would like to thank each and every member of the DF for the tireless work that has been carried out over these last six months.

LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

with General Stanley A. McChrystal,
retired US Armed Forces

By Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald

Highly decorated retired four-star General Stanley A. McChrystal US Armed Forces speaks on leadership values.

«The temptation to lead as a chess master, controlling each move of the organisation, must give way to an approach as a gardener, enabling rather than directing. A gardening approach to leadership is anything but passive. The leader acts as an 'Eyes-On, Hands-Off' enabler who creates and maintains an ecosystem in which the organisation operates.»

– General Stanley McChrystal, Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World

On the 29th July 2020, I took part in an exclusive webinar with General McChrystal, titled 'Leadership in times of crisis' which was organised and hosted by City Security and Resilience Networks (CSARN). CSARN is an award-winning UK based not-for-profit business security and resilience membership network, that brings public and private sector leaders together. This was the fourth webinar in a series with others titled: #1 Pandemics without borders - protecting our people; #2 COVID-19 / Critical discussions for the new normal and #3 Are we fully prepared for the next biological event? The webinar had over 150 participants from around the world that included private companies, government organisations, members of the UK Armed Forces, UK Police Forces, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Defence Forces.



Afghan and American soldiers blew up a Taliban firing position in the village of Layadira, in Kandahar Province, in February 2013. Photo: Bryan Denton/The New York Times



Four-star General Stanley A. McChrystal, US Armed Forces. Photo: US Department of Defence



General McChrystal at the Pentagon giving a briefing regarding the Iraq War, in April 2003. Photo: www.defense.gov

General McChrystal, a graduate of West Point and the Naval War College has served in the following theatres of war: Operation Desert Shield, Gulf War, War in Afghanistan and the Iraq War. He has commanded US and international forces in Afghanistan with NATO's International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF), which included 150,000 troops from 45 different countries. The General was previously the commander of the US military's counter-terrorism force JSOC or Joint Special Operations Command. He has been described as 'creating a cohesive counter-terrorism organisation that revolutionised the inter-agency operating culture' in Afghanistan. During a very impressive military career, he commanded a number of elite organisations, including the 75th Ranger Regiment. From the aftermath of 9/11, he was deployed in a number of leadership positions in combat over a 6-year period. His awards and decorations include the Defence Distinguished Service Medal (2), Army Distinguished Service Medal, Defence Superior Service Medal (2), Legion of Merit (3) and a Bronze Star Medal. General McChrystal retired from the US Armed Forces on the 1st August 2010.

General McChrystal was more than happy to be called Stan during the webinar by the host Brett Lovegrove MA FRSA FSyI FICPEM, who was the former head of counter-terrorism for the City of London Police Force and is the Chief Executive of CSARN. General McChrystal started by discussing the challenges he faced in leading JSOC through one of the most difficult periods in his country's history, most notably the war on terror after the 9/11 attacks on the US. He then went on



US Army soldier on patrol in Iraqi suburb in 2007. Photo: Spc. Daniel Herrera, 55th Signal Co. (COMCAM)/US Army

to look at how the lessons he learned are still vital today as leaders fight to bring their organisations through the current Covid-19 pandemic.

General McChrystal is a senior fellow at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, where he teaches a course on leadership. He also sits on the boards of a large number of businesses and organisations. His own McChrystal Group has partnered with organisations in financial services, oil and gas, healthcare, energy, engineering and the public sector for a number of years. Helping them turn the lens on themselves is a major part of what they do. He is a successful speaker on leadership and the author of a number of books on the same subject, including his memoir 'My Share of the Task' which was a New York Times bestseller in 2013. Another New York Times bestseller in 2015 was his 'Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World' and he co-authored 'Leaders: Myth and Reality', a Wall Street Journal bestseller.



General Stanley McChrystal, commander of ISAF with US Army Major General Michael T. Flynn, chief of intelligence for ISAF, listen to a briefing by 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team commander, Colonel James Johnson, during a visit to FOB Shank, March 2010. Photo: Pfc. Michael Sword, 173rd Airborne Brigade/US Army

General McChrystal started by comparing the Covid-19 pandemic to a terrorist threat, in how it grew very quickly and was deadly. He spoke about his experience in Iraq and when he took command in Afghanistan, he was also asked what three big things he could take away from his experience, he explained that there were actually four.

Firstly General McChrystal discussed the importance of intelligence in the battlespace, saying they spent a lot of time looking at how Al-Qaeda operated, and that they needed to understand how they operated themselves. He explained that you need to find out what works before trying to solve the problem, and what you are not going to be able to solve.

The second was to understand the problem – US Forces did not just want to take out the leadership of Al-Qaeda but understand them. He further explained that Iraqi civilians, even those who didn't support Al-Qaeda fundamentals, were still assisting them. So they needed to look further back on why the Populus was doing this.

Thirdly it was adapting, early in command you need to have the ability to adapt – starting with an assumption – we have to change our mindset and start with ourselves. This is based



on decision making.

His final point was good people; he asked if those in leadership positions need to look in the mirror? Then he added yes, that they need to do so a lot.

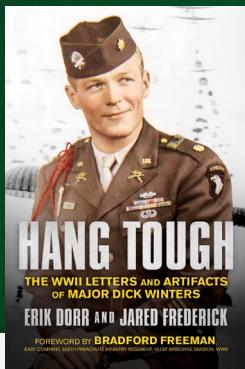
Speaking about devolved leadership and pushing it down the chain of command he explained that we need to provide the inspiration to hit them every day and that in the absence of leadership the organisation will fail. He added that it can be quiet leadership, but it must be continuous. He finished by saying that someone down at ground level can make a decision on the ground that could be harmful to the main intention and so 'the mission' needs to be shared down the chain too.

Looking at Covid-19 he explained that to defeat a pandemic you have to make decisions early, that may look irrational but must be scientifically based, and to get in front of the pandemic because once it has passed you, you are losing.

One final point that he made which relates to all militaries around the world was that every soldier now has access to a smart phone with internet access. They can contact home during an operation and discuss information. Commanders now have to compete with that and understand that they have to give a consistent flow of information down the chain. He concluded by saying people can sniff out spin and that the information can then be discounted – so to use less spin when passing down the mission and orders.

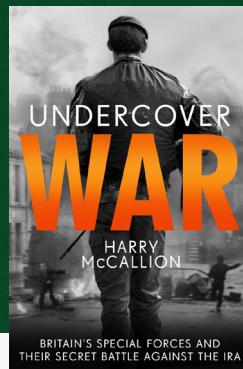
This was a great discussion on leadership and many thanks to CSARN for the invitation. To learn more about CSARN or to see further talks visit: www.csarn.org. Visit www.mccrystalgroup.com to learn more about the McChrystal Group.

About the Author: Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald joined the Defence Forces in 1990, serving initially with the 5 Inf Bn. During his near 31-year career he has worked in a number of roles within the Army and Air Corps. He has served overseas as a peacekeeper with the UN, EU and NATO PfP in Lebanon (1991), Kosovo (2002, 2010) and Bosnia (2008). He has served as the editor of An Cosantóir Magazine from May 2011 until August 2020. Wayne along with Paul O'Brien is the co-author of Shadow Warriors, which tells the story behind the creation of the Army Ranger Wing from its origins in the 1960s and 70s to its formation in 1980 and subsequent 40-year history at home and overseas.



Author: Erik Dorr & Jared Frederick
Publisher: Permuted Press
ISBN: 9781682619179
Pages: 288
Price: £22.94 (Hardcover)

BOOKS



Author: Henry McCallion
Publisher: John Blake Publishing
ISBN: 9781789462852
Pages: 320
Price: €11.99

Hang Tough: The WWII Letters and Artifacts of Major Dick Winters

The compelling WWII correspondence and artifacts of Major Dick Winters, commander of the Band of Brothers.

Major Dick Winters of the 101st Airborne gained international acclaim when the tale of he and his men were depicted in the celebrated book and miniseries Band of Brothers. Hoisted as a modest hero who spurned adulation, Winters epitomized the notion of dignified leadership. His iconic World War II exploits have since been depicted in art and commemorated with monuments.

Beneath this marble image of a reserved officer is the story of a common Pennsylvanian tested by the daily trials and tribulations of military duty. His wartime correspondence with pen pal and naval reservist, DeEtta Almon, paints an endearing portrait of life on both the home front and battlefield—capturing the humor, horror, and humility that defined a generation. Interwoven with previously unpublished diary entries, military reports, postwar reminiscences, private photos, personal artifacts, and rich historical context, Winters's letters offer compelling insights on the individual costs and motivations of World War II service members.

Winters's heartfelt prose reveals his mindset of the moment. From stateside training to the hedgerows of Normandy, his correspondence immerses readers in the dramatic experiences of the 1940s. Via the lost art of letter writing, the immediacy and honesty of Winters's observations takes us beyond the traditional accounts of the fabled 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment's Easy Company. This engaging narrative offers a unique blend of personal wit, leadership ethics, and broader observations of a world at war. Hang Tough is a deeply intimate, timely reflection on a rising officer and the philosophies that molded him into a hero among heroes.

Taken from www.amazon.com

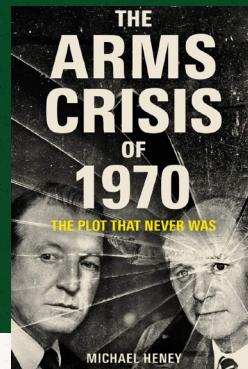
Undercover War

When British troops first deployed to Northern Ireland in 1969 to keep apart rioting factions of loyalists and nationalists, they could not have known that they were being drawn into the longest campaign in the British Army's history, a battle against the threat of a new rising force - the Provisional Irish Republican Army. While patrols, vehicle bombs and incendiary speeches are the defining memories of the Troubles, the real war was fought out of sight and out of mind. For thirty years, Britain's Special Forces waged a ferocious, secretive struggle against a ruthless and implacable enemy. Harry McCallion's deep experience across the theatre of Northern Ireland offers a unique insight into nearly every major military action and operation in the Province. Having served seven tours with the Parachute Regiment, undergone selection for 14 Intelligence Company, completed six years with the SAS - including two tours with their anti-terrorism team - and received two commendations for bravery during service with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, there are few more qualified to tell this astonishing story. This book is his blistering account of the history of Britain's war against the IRA between 1970 and 1998. From new insights into high-profile killings and riveting accounts of enemy contact, to revelations about clandestine missions and the strategies used in combating a merciless enemy, Undercover War is the definitive inside story of the battle against the IRA, one of the most dangerous and effective terrorist organisations in recent history.

Taken from www.easons.com

BOOKS


Author: Ben MacIntyre
Publisher: Viking
ISBN: 9780241408513
Pages: 400
Price: €21.00



Author: Michael Heney
Publisher: Apollo
ISBN: 9781789545593
Pages: 480
Price: €21.99

Agent Sonya

The incredible story of the greatest female spy in history, from one of Britain's most acclaimed historians - available for pre-order now. In a quiet English village in 1942, an elegant housewife emerged from her cottage to go on her usual bike ride. A devoted wife and mother-of-three, the woman known to her neighbours as Mrs Burton seemed to epitomise rural British domesticity. However, rather than pedalling towards the shops with her ration book, she was racing through the Oxfordshire countryside to gather scientific intelligence from one of the country's most brilliant nuclear physicists. Secrets that she would transmit to Soviet intelligence headquarters via the radio transmitter she was hiding in her outdoor privy. Far from a British housewife, 'Mrs Burton' - born Ursula Kuczynski, and codenamed 'Sonya' - was a German Jew, a dedicated communist, a colonel in Russia's Red Army, and a highly-trained spy. From planning an assassination attempt on Hitler in Switzerland, to spying on the Japanese in Manchuria, and helping the Soviet Union build the atom bomb, Sonya conducted some of the most dangerous espionage operations of the twentieth century. Her story has never been told - until now. Agent Sonya is the exhilarating account of one woman's life; a life that encompasses the rise and fall of communism itself, and altered the course of history. 'Macintyre does true-life espionage better than anyone else' John Preston.

The Arms Crisis of 1970

The number one Irish Times bestseller. 'An original and textured history of one of the most controversial and misunderstood episodes of modern Irish history' Diarmaid Ferriter. The arms crisis of 1970 came about when two Irish cabinet ministers, Charles Haughey and Neil Blaney, alongside an army officer and other figures, were accused by Taoiseach Jack Lynch of smuggling arms to the IRA in Northern Ireland. The criminal prosecution that followed, the Arms Trial, was a cause célèbre at the time; while it resulted in the acquittal of all the accused, the political crisis it generated was one of the major events of late twentieth-century Irish history. In the fifty years since, myth and controversy has surrounded the trial and its aftermath. Was the country really on the brink of a bloody civil war involving North and South? Did the two Ministers sacked by Lynch help generate the bloody campaign of the Provisional IRA - or were they set up by the Taoiseach as fall guys for an arms plot that was unofficially authorized but always deniable by Lynch? Was there, as is often claimed, a kind of coup in preparation that Lynch's prompt action foiled? A great deal of astonishing new evidence has been uncovered by Michael Heney in his research for this book, raising serious questions about Lynch and his relationship with future Taoiseach Charles Haughey. The book also contains the first comprehensive investigation into how the arms trial prosecution was mounted, and how the jury came to their verdict of acquittal. Heney's meticulous scholarship challenges much of the conventional wisdom about these sensational events. The Arms Crisis of 1970 is a major contribution to our understanding of a pivotal moment in postwar Irish history.

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Years 1969-1971

With the 44th Cadet Class

Events during summer 1969

Col Brian O'Donnell, Retired

REELING IN OUR CADETSHIP YEARS 1969-1971

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