



THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

AN COSANTÓIR



Óglaigh
na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



SEP/OCT 2024



NS IPV's | COS INTERVIEW | EUBG

[STRENGTHEN THE NATION]





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Number 05
SEP/OCT 2024

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From the editor

— Cpl Eric Ryan

In our fifth edition of 2024, the Chief of Staff was interviewed by our outgoing editor A/CQMS John Rossiter and speaks about transformation and how he has delivered his priorities within the DF. We have an article on the new Inshore Patrol Vessels in the Naval Service which were commissioned this year. We get an insight into the EU Battle Group and the Military Police took part in Exercise Angel Guardian in Spain. We feature the photos and winners of the An Cosantóir 10k race this year which was another successful day in the Phoenix Park, the new Loaded March category was a great addition with 19 teams registering to take part. We also have an article from J4 on the logistical element of the UNDOF withdrawal in 2024. This edition's People of the DF features SCPO John McCormack who is having a fantastic career in the Naval Service. Comdt Conway writes about the history of DF Athletics including some profiles of the staff involved throughout the years. The 2nd article from Capt Cian Harte's series on the Irish Deserters of WW2 gives us further insight on a difficult time in history. We hope you enjoy this edition of An Cosantóir.

"We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The difference is discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons." — Jim Rohn



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AN COSANTÓIR



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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.

Front Cover

Photo provided
by NS Press Office

Back Cover

An Cosantóir
10k Race Winners

Print

Delivered to barracks bi-monthly

Online

Visit the link below for
current and past editions
<https://www.military.ie/magazine>

Social Media

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Branch for the Defence Forces

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to the Defence Forces can be
submitted to any of the above
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ON PARADE

Capt Fox addressing parade for the official opening of the new DFPP facility in McKee Barracks



Lt Col MacEoin on parade for the 123 Inf Bn stand down parade in Stephens Barracks Kilkenny



Members of RDF at the National Services Day



Members of 12 Inf Bn preparing to fire during the 1 BDE GOC's challenge in August



Coy Sgt Trevor McGahern (J7) supervising the 1km Combat Run in the Rifle Competition as part of the 2024 Defence Forces Small Arms Competition



Cpl Chloe Foy receiving her international cap from Brian Kerr



The Transport Corps held its 100 year centenary parade in VBWS DFTC in September



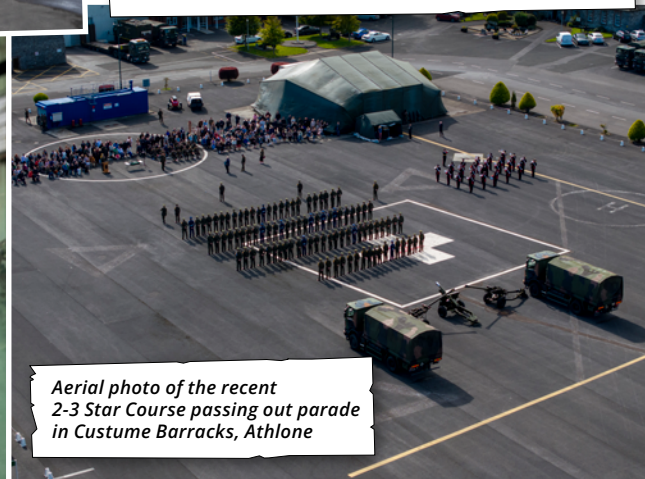
Members of CMU and the National Ambulance Service on a recent joint training exercise in the MTF, DFTC



A Corporal (RDF) from 1ACS covering off during MOUT exercise in DFTC



Aerial photo of the recent 2-3 Star Course passing out parade in Custume Barracks, Athlone



ON PARADE



Tpr Stulovas and Sgt Moore crewing a Mowag CRV for National Services Day



Lt Enda Cloake competing in Spain at the Skyrunning World Championships



Members of 2 BCS hosting a Cavalry display and career briefs for Christian Brothers College



Lt Behan briefing students from Gonzaga College in Ranelagh during a 7 INF BN recruitment visit



Lt Behan overseeing the Hyrox event organised by 7 Inf Bn in September



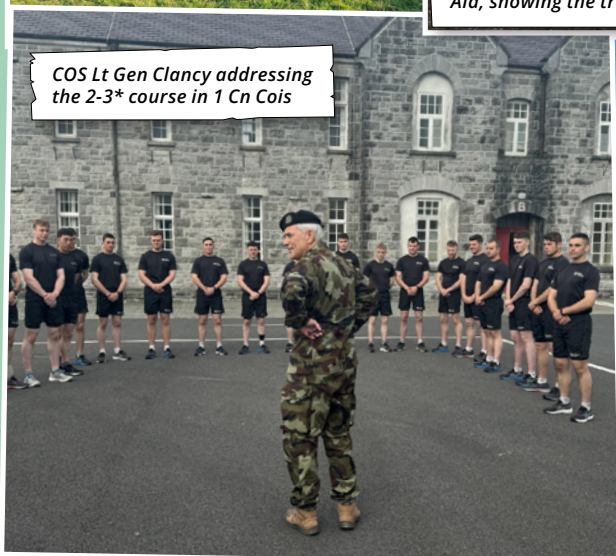
Members of 1 Cn Cois winners of the Infantry tactical competition held in The Glen Of Imaal



Jumping for joy and making a difference! The Navy Women's Network took on the Hell & Back adventure race and raised funds for Laura Lynn and Women's Aid, showing the true power of teamwork



Troops from the 59th PNCO course covering off during a MOUT exercise in Poolbeg



COS Lt Gen Clancy addressing the 2-3* course in 1 Cn Cois



Pictured are the flying and support crews from Number 1 Operations Wing and Air Corps College who took part in the 2024 Sanicole Airshow in Belgium. This marked the first occasion the Silver Swallows flew in the Sanicole Airshow. The Silver Swallow's display and the new Airbus C295MW were a big hit with the locals.

ON PARADE

DF Dive group providing support to the 59th PNCO course during a MOUT exercise in Poolbeg



TMAST Students from the Air Corps College Technical Training School carrying out Sheet Metal practical assessments



Sgt Matthew Carroll on parade



Recent passing out parade in Cathal Brugha Barracks saw 45 reservists promoted to 3 Star Privates



2/LT Masuku on parade in Áras an Uachtaráin during a state visit by the President of Vietnam

The DF Band on a rainy day in Áras an Uachtaráin



Members of 124 Inf Bn UNIFIL conducting a water resupply in UNP 2-45



The 3 INF BN team who secured silver at the 2024 Cambrian Patrol



FLT SGT Brian O'Keeffe (Retired) DJ'ing at this year's An Cosantóir 10k race



Comdt Paul McDermott OC FTS, Comdt Edward Snowden 2IC ACC and Capt Daniel McKeown FTS performing a manoeuvre at the 2024 Sanicole air show in Belgium

ON PARADE

Lt Col Raymond Kane became the first person to win the national air rifle and air pistol championships. Comdt Liam Crawford (AR) President TSI presenting the pistol gold medal to Lt Col Kane

Lt Col Raymond Kane in action at the national air rifle and air pistol championships at the National Training Centre in Wilkinstown, Co. Meath



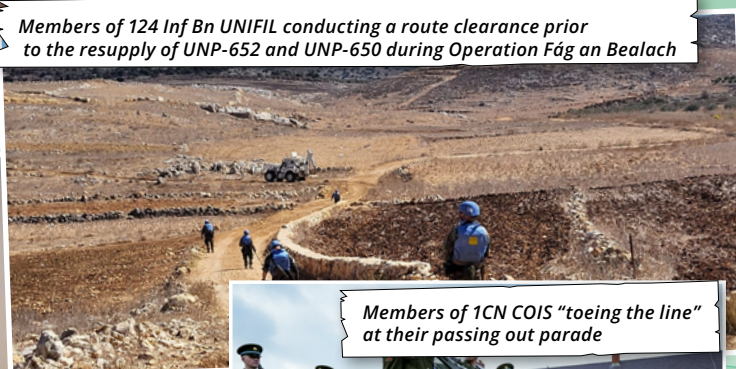
CS Lawler speaking to Cadets at the 101st Cadet Class intake, DFTC



Current and retired members of the Military Police Corps, at a mass for deceased members of the Corps, which took place in Cathal Brugha Barracks



Members of 124 Inf Bn UNIFIL conducting a route clearance prior to the resupply of UNP-652 and UNP-650 during Operation Fág an Bealach



Moving towards interoperability

Comdt Dr Martin Neary, Medical Officer
MFOM, MD, MB, BCh, BAO, MRCSI

Medical Officer Comdt Dr Martin Neary at a brief in UNTSI



Members of 1CN COIS "toeing the line" at their passing out parade



Sgt Keith Moran and Capt Adam Benson-Byrne completed Ironman Barcelona in October



The DF School of Music with combined bands and pipers from 1BDE and 2BDE performed at the 2 Brigade Gala Concert in the National Concert Hall on Saturday 19th of October



A/CQMS Tommy Gunn receiving a presentation piece from ex-Corporal Kevin Sharkey. Tommy has served over 42 years in uniform

INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF OF STAFF LT GEN SEÁN CLANCY

INTERVIEW BY A/CQMS JOHN ROSSITER

You took up the position of Chief of Staff in the summer of July '21, what have been your biggest challenges since taking up that appointment?

There are three areas that have been most challenging over the period. The first I would mention is recruitment and retention. Our recruitment has significantly increased in the last year with the JTC in Gormanston and our standardised induction program having had a really positive effect. We are seeing green shoots with regard to increased numbers of personnel being accepted into the organisation and successfully passing training to become valued members of our units. Retention is always a challenge. However, we have seen some very positive measures introduced



COS Lt Gen Seán Clancy speaking with An Tánaiste Micheál Martin at the RDF Regeneration & Development plan event at Cathal Brugha Barracks

over the last year to encourage retention. The recent increase in Mandatory Retirement Age, Private Healthcare for all DF members, increased promotion opportunities in line with the new structures being implemented in the DF and of course the dramatic increase in infrastructural development will all make the DF a much more attractive organisation for both those serving and future members.

Secondly I believe that the Women of Honour was a challenge which was extremely significant for our organisation. It was important for us to recognise that the behaviours and actions by a small minority were not only historical, but were still present in our organisation and it had to be addressed. Each step we took on that journey, from setting up the Organisational Cultural Standing Committee (OCSC), a group of men and women of all ranks and services which was brought together to be innovative in how to address this internally, to the external groups which are guiding us in implementing cultural change, will bring profound improvement to our organisation.

The third challenge I would suggest that I have found both interesting and rewarding are the challenges within the Naval Service. The Naval Service have had some unique issues such as the depletion of key skill sets and a reduction in their capability which we are trying to build back up. Some key initiatives which have been undertaken and have proven successful include increased Patrol Duty Allowance, new vessels and infrastructural development in the Naval Base. Without the support of the Tánaiste and DoD these initiatives would not have been successful and I can see the fruits of these initiatives impacting positively already.

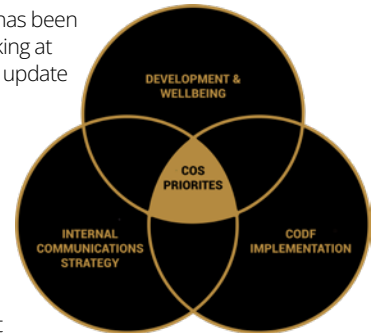
At the beginning of your tenure you set out your COS priorities, do you feel that you have managed to achieve most of them? What is your main priority now for the coming months before you move on from your appointment?

I have three clear priorities: Development and Wellbeing of DF Members (including Training and Education and Security of Tenure); Internal Communications; and the Commission on the Future of the Defence Forces. I undertake regular reviews of our progress across these areas to see where I can adjust emphasis and focus to drive improvements. In effect it is a campaign plan and I believe the vast majority of the plan has

been achieved. Communications has been hugely important, particularly looking at the Connect app and the monthly update video which summarises all of the progress we have made.

Despite those successes, communication remains a challenge. I was out to visit 3 Battalions in the last couple of weeks, and it's the thing I enjoy most as Chief of Staff, being able to go out and talk to people, I call it Chats with the Chief. When I am with the troops, for example a group of private soldiers, I ensure that they are afforded the freedom to speak openly and honestly. I try to engage at a level where we can understand each other and I think that is hugely important for both them and for me as Chief of Staff.

Part of our communication strategy was about the DF Board getting out and engaging with students at the end of every course as well as at our leadership seminars and Conferences with Formation/Service Commanders and Directors. I believe this gives really valuable insight into the thinking and approaches of the DF Board as well as giving the DF Board an understanding of the ground truth. It is hugely important that our leadership are communicating the messages they receive – when I speak to senior leaders it isn't good enough to take note of what I am saying, leaders have to understand it, embrace it and then in their own way and style, translate that and bring that information to those under their charge.



It's quite clear from the Commission on the Defence Forces that there's going to be huge transformation. Maybe you can discuss some of the positive aspects for the Defence Forces?

I believe we have achieved an awful lot over the last year and over the next 12-24 months we will begin to see things coming to fruition. We have spent a huge amount of effort and time to ensure that we have mechanisms in place to develop streamlined and accessible systems to guarantee we develop capabilities and have solid structures to utilise these capabilities.

With regard to capability, we have set up a CAPDEV unit with our colleagues in the Department of



Defence, and we're supporting them jointly with tendering processes, EOIs and analysing the potential of government to government procurement.

In the last couple of months alone, we've seen the Software Defined Radio rollout which will be issued out to all arms and all units over the next couple of years. The contracting around new uniforms is in place. The Individual Modular Body Armour System (IMBAS) is very close to going to contract and should happen very shortly.

There is a very clear priority both within the DF and Government on our primary radar systems. We are looking at primary radar in a holistic sense including air, maritime, coastal as well as Ground Based Air Defence. However, we must take this project one step at a time and allow the project evolve in a structured manner.



COS pictured with Head of Strategic HR Mr Declan Carville

We must look at all of these individual projects holistically. As an example we cannot just purchase armoured vehicles. We need to ensure we have the infrastructure to house it, the doctrine to implement it and the appropriate

kit for the soldiers who will work in it. This comprehensive approach to capability development enables us to become an interoperable force. In line with the recommendations of the Commission on the Defence Forces, we must strive to meet NATO standards and that's why we're engaging in OCC level 1 and will aspire to OCC level 2 into the future as these new capabilities reach full operating capacity.

We are and always have been a professional volunteer force with significant capability for our size commensurate with the resources we have. We remain a military that is a preferred partner for many countries, however, we must ensure that we maintain parity with our partners and stay agile in terms of our capabilities.

It is evident that the environments to which we deploy are becoming more hostile towards peacekeepers. Therefore, the upgrades in armour, equipment and force protection are required and well justified. Given the ongoing situation in Lebanon it is important to acknowledge the increases in force protection measures which have been implemented by the DF over the last year. These increases were implemented by all branches and Directorates of the DF and I am grateful for their support to ensure that our troops are well protected. The deployment of an extra force protection platoon, hardened TOC and increased provisions and supplies have proven their worth given the recent degradation in the security environment in UNIFIL.

My priority is and always has been the safety and welfare of our troops deployed overseas given the environments to which they deploy. I engage and maintain a very high level of situational awareness on a daily basis with regard to developments in Lebanon and the wider Middle East. I have huge confidence in our leadership deployed there, huge confidence in our troops and the utmost belief in what they are doing.



COS pictured with the members of CMU who won exercise Ardent Serpent

Implementing the recommendations of the Commission requires buy in from current and future serving members of the DF. It's worrying that we are still continuing to lose members. If that continues, will some of these changes become very difficult or almost impossible?

It is not just a question of saying we are going to transform, you have to have an understanding of what transformation means and what real transformation actually looks like. This is something that I engage in with troops during my Chats with the Chief. I think the word

transformation can have negative connotations. It reminds our personnel of previous times where the DF were downsized, barracks were closed and capabilities reduced. This transformation is very different and provides the organisation with great opportunity. The investment by government with a commitment to a 50% increase in our budget is unprecedented.

We have tried to capture as much of the low hanging fruit on the transformation process as we can to make some visible and physical changes. For example, we have been successful in increasing our CS4 establishment for the first time in over a decade from 9,500 to 9,600 last year and to 9,750 this year. It is a fair comment to make that we currently have 7,500 in the organisation but that is not the point. We have to create the structures such as CAPDEV, Cyber Command, Strategic HR, JITC, Office of Reserve Affairs etc. in order to populate them thereby ensuring our transformation. They didn't exist previously in our CS4 and they do now.

We will decide what is required to suit our new structural design to reach the goal of 11,500 personnel and build new structures such as our Strategic Headquarters, new Army Command and transition from the Naval Service to the Navy and the Air Corps to the Air Force and their subsequent new headquarters.

When I meet the troops I use the example that, 2 years ago, a private soldier was paid between €27,000 and €29,000.

Today, a private soldier is paid over €39,000, they now have private medical health care which they were not entitled to 12 months ago. Now our personnel can serve until they are 62. Just 2 years ago most personnel could only serve until they were 50 years of age. These are examples of key enablers to ensure retention of our people because it gives them security of tenure, and security of tenure is also captured in my priorities.

I'm very conscious that retirement at the age of 62 has closed the gap between 62 and 66 for the "post-2013 personnel" in particular. Now that that has been delivered, I can focus on the other stressors on people and what is pushing them out of the organisation.

Do you feel there's a place for a Retention Office within the Defence Forces?

I am aware of several examples of personnel being mandatory selected for overseas service that cannot serve overseas due to their family situation, and are instead being forced to leave. A lot of experience is being lost in these situations.



COS pictured with Head of Transformation Mr Brian Molloy

The new SDR Radio which is due to be rolled out in the coming months



I accept that we do have a retention issue. The Head of Strategic HR is currently working on a retention strategy and part of this strategy may well include a retention office although I do not want to pre-empt

any outcomes at this stage. Concurrently, we are creating family friendly initiatives overseas and on island. Bottom line up front, I don't want to see anybody leaving the organisation for reasons such as you just described.

There are a lot of demands on us as an organisation. Many people in our organisation have very legitimate reasons for not being in a position to deploy overseas and I'm very conscious of the fact that the organisation needs to facilitate that. Notwithstanding that, we are a military organisation with a command and control structure and you can't circumvent that by having alternative means of decision making. There is guidance for commanders around this issue when an appeal comes in and whether to uphold an appeal or otherwise.

I am always disappointed when somebody leaves our organisation. When I get the opportunity to talk to people who are thinking of leaving I always try to get them to reflect on the benefits and flexibility which the DF offers. We should not lose sight of how lucky we are to have colleagues and friends in our workplace that can support and help you in times of stress and difficulty.

The DF has suffered a lot in the public lately, and a lot of members have felt a bit voiceless.

What do you say to the excellent people in the organisation who felt a bit discouraged over the last 2 years given some of the negative media stories?

This is one of the key areas I address in my Chats with the Chief and I believe it's very important that people understand the standard that we uphold. When incorrect stories are published, we do our best to correct it.

However, the facts are that for every negative story that is written about the DF there are two and a half positive stories. We have a tendency to focus on the negative stories because they impact us, we take them personally, particularly when there's truth to them. Even if we are hurt by the actions of our own we must use them as opportunities to refocus us and push us to be better personally and as an organisation.

A recent survey conducted in August shows us that the perception and trust of the Defence Forces has increased. The number of citizens that would recommend a career in the Defence Forces has also increased and the number of people who would recommend a career to females in the Defence Forces has increased despite what we perceive as a very negative period of publicity. We remain one of the most trusted organisations in the state. I take a high degree of comfort from those figures, but I will not let it become a reason to sit on our laurels and think everything is ok in the organisation.

Each negative story based on inappropriate behaviours or actions by some in our organisation is something that we should all abhor and should never

try to defend or justify. We will always implement fair procedure and due process to ensure that the correct actions are taken at an appropriate time and appropriate place.

Rest assured that the Chief of Staff, the General Staff and the DF Board will always speak and advocate on behalf of the men and women of Óglaigh na hÉireann, either behind the scenes or directly in public. This will always be at a time and place that is appropriate and that upholds the standards that we expect from the uniform that we wear. I will not denigrate that by being reactionary to any inappropriate, uninformed or factually inaccurate commentary.

Behind the uniform, you have a family, like everyone in the organisation. You're a father and a husband. How do you balance the roles?

I am very fortunate to have three wonderful children and a very supporting wife. Like many others in the Defence Forces I have served overseas, conducted security and operational duties and of course undergone training courses which all entail time away from family. All of us in the DF are only able to succeed and achieve with the support of our families and we couldn't do this job without them. I am no different to every member of the DF in this regard. I am very privileged and very honoured to be Chief of Staff. Whilst it is very rewarding it is also a very busy role. I am very cognisant that I am able to be successful because of the support and resilience that I have at home, in particular from my wife.

I am very conscious of the pressure that service in the DF puts on families, no more so than those that are serving with 124 Infantry Battalion. Some of our personnel haven't been home on leave as a consequence of the ongoing security situation. I am mindful of not only them but of their families who had the expectation of seeing their loved ones and have been disappointed. This is a difficult and stressful time for our deployed personnel and in particular for their families and I want to acknowledge that.

In May 2025 you will move to your new appointment as Chair of the EU Military Committee. What do you hope your legacy will be?

I am very grateful for being appointed as the Chairman of the EUMC. That the Government agreed to nominate me for the position in the first instance was a huge honour. And the fact that I've been chosen by my peers in a secret ballot to succeed the current chairman was a great honour for Ireland and for the DF.





The release day for the Commission on Defence Forces report

We should be under no illusion that we are in a very complex and pivotal moment in history. Defence and security are hugely important within the EU given the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East and further afield. The EUMC demands consensus from all countries in terms of decision making, I believe I have the skillset to be able to drive and achieve that consensus with the support of a great team that will deploy with me as well as the team that are already in place. My main role will be to advise the High Representative and Vice President of the European Union, EU Political Security Committee and make an impact in terms of the military advice that focuses on security and defence right now. I'm truly looking forward to this unique challenge.



It will be bittersweet to leave the DF. As Chief of Staff, I have always tried to serve the people of the DF. I wanted to focus on the individual person, the soldiering and the DF to try and make it better. Have I achieved a lot? Others will judge that. I believe we have made positive, tangible progress. I have focused on what I wanted to achieve and my leadership style has always been one of participative leadership where I seek the views of others and collaboratively move towards the correct solutions. Given the fact that I was the first Air Corps Chief of Staff, following on from the first Naval Service Chief of Staff, I believe the DF has truly broken the ceiling in terms of the possibilities for the future of a truly joint force. I hope that whoever succeeds me continues the good work we have achieved to make the DF a better organisation for our troops and fit for purpose to serve the citizens of Ireland.

Final Remarks

If I may make a final remark. I wish to pay tribute to our soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen whom are deployed with 124 Inf Bn, UNIFIL HQ and OGL. Our overseas peacekeeping is a tangible expression of Irish sovereignty and our values as a Nation. It is, I believe, a source of great pride for our citizens. The success of our deployments comes down to the character and training of our personnel. The force protection and welfare of our troops is always our first priority. I remain in regular contact with our leadership on the ground getting updates on the ongoing situation in our three mission areas in the Middle East: UNIFIL, UNDOF and OGL.

I am immensely proud of our deployed troops and again wish to pay tribute to their families for whom this is a particularly difficult and stressful time. They should trust, as I do, in the professionalism and training of their loved ones who remain focused on their mission.

Our personnel deployed are the embodiment of Ireland's commitment to peace and the risks that they accept for those less fortunate than we are admirable. I am happy that our troops remain vigilant, focused and committed to continuing to uphold the UNIFIL mandate and represent the Irish people and the DF with honour and distinction.

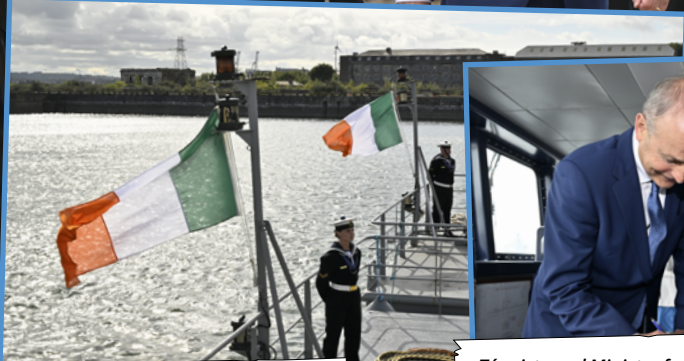


INSHORE PATROL VESSELS: LITTORALY CAPABLE

ARTICLE BY CDR FRANK O'CONNOR



Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Michéal Martin TD inspects the Naval Service Guard of Honour



The Ensign is raised on both Inshore Patrol Vessels as part of the Commissioning and naming ceremony



Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Michéal Martin TD signs the visitors book with Officer Commanding LÉ GOBNAIT Lt Cdr Aisling O'Flynn



The Naval Service Guard of Honour in position

The Commissioning on 4th September 2024 of two Inshore Patrol Vessels (IPVs), LÉ Aoi bhinn and LÉ Gobnait, was a milestone in the regeneration of the Navy, and marked the beginning of a new chapter in the life of these warships. Both have previously served with the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) as, respectively, HMNZS Pukaki and HMNZS Rotoiti. But why has Ireland acquired these ships, what can they do, and what will they do?

The White Paper on Defence Update 2019 envisaged the replacement of the two Coastal Patrol Vessels (CPVs), LÉ Orla and LÉ Ciara, but required consideration as to the nature of their replacements. Both vessels were built for the United Kingdom's Royal Navy in 1984, acquired by Ireland in 1988, and had by 2021 almost four decades of seagoing service. Normal wear and tear and the obsolescence of systems and equipment meant that maintaining these platforms to continue to serve in the fleet was not economically viable, and the options of purchasing new ships or acquiring existing vessels were explored.

An analysis was conducted of the capability gap resulting from the retirement of the CPVs, and the operational requirements resulting from Brexit, which created a border between the EU and Britain in the Irish Sea. Accordingly, any replacement ships would have to be suitable for operations primarily in the Irish Sea and Celtic Sea. Additionally, there has been growing awareness of the vulnerability of Critical Underwater Infrastructure (CUI) – the seabed cables and pipelines which transfer power and information between countries – and the requirement to provide a secure environment for the burgeoning Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) field – windfarms, wave or tidal energy generators. The Navy needed ships which could patrol off the east and southeast coasts, maintaining Maritime Domain Awareness and the ability to secure its maritime in the eastern littoral.

At this time, New Zealand was seeking to sell two of its four Lake Class IPVs, designed and built to carry out Maritime Law Enforcement tasks and to patrol the coastal waters of the country, which, like Ireland, has a

maritime Area of Interest many times the size of its landmass. Analysis concluded that these ships met the above operational requirements, and, further, were designed to operate with half the crew numbers of our Navy's larger Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs). In a time of significant personnel challenges, these ships represented a viable platform for

Maritime Defence and Security Operations to the east and south-east, allowing the larger OPVs, which have greater range and endurance, to patrol the southern and western parts of our maritime domain, and to deploy on maritime missions Overseas, such as Operation IRINI in the Mediterranean.

Purchase of these vessels would address the capability requirement in an economical and timely way, and a Government to Government sale was agreed with New Zealand in early 2022, contingent upon a programme of works to ensure both ships met Lloyd's Special Service Class rules – that is, externally certified as being fit-for-purpose and safe to operate as warships. A naval team of Subject Matter Experts, both operational and technical, deployed to New Zealand in July 2022, while the ships were being regenerated to that standard. They recommended a number of equipment modifications and upgrades to the ships, in order to standardise the fit with the wider fleet, thereby saving money on maintenance, parts and training, over the expected decade or more of service of these ships in Ireland.

A second deployment of largely the same SMEs took place in February 2023, to monitor Harbour and Sea Acceptance Trials, following which the Department of Defence accepted the ships on behalf of the State in March. The ships were transferred by heavy lift ship to Ireland, arriving in the Naval Base Haulbowline in May 2023, upon which a programme commenced to complete the military fit-out and to integrate them with the DF network. The fit-out of P71, then unnamed, was prioritised, as was her crewing, in order to focus resources on bringing one of the two ships into operation as soon as possible.



The name plate of LÉ AOIBHINN is uncovered as part of the Commissioning and naming ceremony

The lean crewing of the ships imposes a different way of operating them from the larger, more heavily-crewed, OPVs. In particular, specialist technicians, chefs, etc. are required to participate in deck evolutions, including

berthing and unberthing, launching and recovery of boats, and anchoring. Additionally, whereas OPVs maintain a two-person "watch" in the Machinery Control Room whilst the ship is at sea, the IPVs have Unattended Machinery Spaces. This requires the bridge watchkeepers to maintain increased awareness of the state of the machinery and to carry out immediate actions in the event of an alarm, fault or failure. Considerable effort went into identifying, developing and delivering training for the crew, and a team of IPV experts from the RNZN travelled, by request, to Ireland, to mentor in these areas during the first work-up patrol in May of this year.

Learning how to operate an unfamiliar class of ship is difficult, and the Ship's Company of LÉ Aoibhinn, many of whom only embarked five weeks before the ship sailed as an Irish warship for the first time, displayed dedication, professionalism, and downright doggedness, in achieving Initial Operational Capability in July. Their forerunners aboard the CPVs always had a different internal dynamic than aboard larger ships, and those who interact with them have heard the motto "smaller ship, tighter team" more than once.

Initial Operational Capability means that the ship is worked up to a level where it can safely navigate, patrol, and deal with any onboard emergencies. Since achieving that, LÉ Aoibhinn has continued to work up towards achieving Full Operational Capability by the end of the year, when she will be capable of carrying out the full range of operations expected of our ships. Meanwhile, she is delivering defence outputs aligned with her continually increasing capability. She assumed the role of On-Scene Coordinator during a Search and Rescue operation off the south-east coast on 12th and 13th June, and this experience, in challenging weather conditions, was a marker of her progress. Between patrols, the last of her systems are being fitted out, and training continues. It is intended to complete the fit-out of LÉ Gobnait, and, as personnel numbers improve, begin to crew her and work her up, learning from operational experience of LÉ Aoibhinn to streamline that process.

The ships are compact and well-designed. They are capable of transiting across their intended Area of Operations in several hours, and will make use of ports and anchorages to conserve fuel and provide for crew rest during patrol, whilst being ready to respond to, and reach, any incident rapidly. They carry mounted 12.7mm Heavy Machine Guns, with the potential to fit a larger-calibre weapon (20-30mm) being examined in

the context of a fleetwide armament review. They have an integrated suite of sensors to allow maintenance of Maritime Domain Awareness. Despite being significantly smaller than the CPVs they replace, they are as just as fast, carry larger boats, and have significantly improved crew accommodation. Gone are the two 11-berth cabins on the CPVs; most IPV cabins are 3-berth en suites. As with larger ships, web connectivity for personal devices allows our sailors stay in touch with family and friends, consistent with operational security and emissions control policies. Onboard systems can be put into standby mode when off patrol, removing the requirement for an onboard duty watch outside working hours.

The Commission on the Defence Forces Report in 2022 noted that patrolling effort could be maximised by the development of naval support bases away from Haulbowline. In view of the Area of Operations of the IPVs, it is planned to base and operate them from an East Coast Naval Base. Additional to the economies of time and money in terms of patrolling, this will give the Navy an enhanced footprint and visibility on the highly-populated east coast, aiding public engagement and recruitment. Furthermore, and in tandem with the growing numbers of appointments available for naval personnel as the DF transforms into a Joint organisation, it will allow sailors to base their families in the greater Dublin area, while realising a long and fulfilling career in the Navy. This will aid both recruitment and retention.

Given the high volume of maritime traffic in the Irish and Celtic Seas, the high operational tempo of these ships, and the lean crewing, there will be scant time in the patrol day for the crew to attend to administrative or planning responsibilities, normally carried out during transits between patrol areas on OPVs. Accordingly, a shore-based Squadron Support Section has been established, which provides administrative and logistical support to the IPVs. When the ships are re-located to the East Coast Naval Base, this Support Section will re-locate also, adding a number of technicians, so that the ships can be maintained at the Base, and the crew can take time off between patrols. Moving these support and coordination functions to a shore-based team will be a necessary enabler of double-crewing of our ships in the future, and the development of the Squadron concept required by the IPVs will teach the Navy valuable lessons as we move to increase patrolling effort without increasing the strain on our sailors aboard ship.

LÉ Aoibhinn and LÉ Gobnait are two fast, agile, and capable warships, which will provide Ireland with the means of carrying out Maritime Defence and Security Operations in coastal areas, primarily on the eastern and south eastern coasts. They are an exciting opportunity for the Navy to "do seagoing better", maximising operational return whilst reducing the strain on our sailors, and to engage, recruit and retain in our largest population centre. Fair winds and following seas to all who sail upon them.



Tánaiste, Chief of Staff, Flag Officer Commanding the Naval Service, Secretary General of the Dept. of Defence, OCs LÉ AOIBHINN and LÉ GOBNAIT, Ships Company LÉ AOIBHINN



IRELAND'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) BATTLEGROUP

ARTICLE BY LT COL BARRY HANNON

Through its continued involvement in the EU Battlegroups, Ireland has advanced its contributions to collective European security. This participation underscores Ireland's commitment to European peace and security whilst enhancing its reputation as an active contributor to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) framework. In support of EUBG 25, Ireland has committed 182 personnel in the form of a Mechanised Force Protection company, a National Support Element (NSE) and a deployment of ten Irish Officers and NCOs to the EUBG (F)HQ within EUROCORPS in Strasbourg.

The EU Battlegroup Concept

EU Battlegroups (EUBG) are multinational, military units, ordinarily comprised of 1500 personnel and form an integral part of the European Union's military rapid reaction forces to respond to emerging crises and conflicts around the world. Established in 2004, the EUBG system aims to enhance the EU's ability to respond swiftly across a broad spectrum of situations, ranging from humanitarian assistance to peacekeeping and conflict prevention. In line with the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) concept, EUBGs must be capable of deployment to a wide variety of theatres with a guide of a 6000km radius around Brussels within 5 to 10 days, furthermore they must maintain the sustainment capacity to conduct and support operations for a period of up to 120 days.

Ireland's participation in the EUBG is part of its broader commitment to international

peacekeeping and crisis management. Ireland has been a long standing and active contributor to EU CSDP missions namely Operation Artemis, EUFOR Chad, EUFOR BiH, EUTMs Mali and Somalia, EUMAM-Ukraine as well as several Naval deployments to the Mediterranean under Op PONTUS/SOPHIA and most recently EUNAVOR MED in 2023. Ireland also proudly maintains 66 years of unbroken

overseas service with the United Nations (UN) and has developed extensive experience across a broad spectrum of Peace Support Operations (PSOs) across a range of diverse operational environments including urban, desert, jungle and mountainous terrain. Ireland's commitment to the EUBG and the EU RDC concept enhances Ireland's support and contribution to the EU CSDP framework whilst ensuring that its forces are prepared and equipped for rapid deployment across a wide spectrum of operations and international theatres.

Engagement with EUBG25 will be Ireland's eighth EUBG participation since its first commitment to the concept in 2008. Ireland has previously participated in the Nordic Battlegroups in 2008, 2011 and 2015, the UK-led EU Battlegroup in 2016 and the German-led Battlegroups in 2012, 2016 and in 2020.

Ireland's engagement with the EU Battlegroup initiative provides the opportunity to demonstrate Irish Defence Forces willingness, capability and readiness to act within the framework of the EU's CSDP and further enhance its commitment towards collaborative European security.

This participation also allows Ireland to engage with and support the EU's defense and security policies and to promote the values of international law and humanitarianism. Irish Defence Forces contributions to the EUBG concept have typically included logistical support, medical, and infantry

units, underscoring Ireland's versatility in its capabilities across combat and combat support functions. Most notably being the provision of an Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)

company highlighting the high level of infantry soldiers that the Irish Army is proud to lead. The experience both contributed and gained from these periods of participation has enhanced the operational readiness and international experience of the Irish Army, positioning Ireland as a valued and reliable partner in EU military operations.

Deployment to EUROCORPS

In support of Ireland's EUBG25 commitment, ten Irish Officers and NCOs have deployed to EUBG (F)HQ EUROCORPS in Strasbourg, France. EUROCORPS is a multinational headquarters established in 1992, which provides a framework for rapid deployments. It serves as a headquarters for coordinating the activities of the EU Battlegroups and ensuring interoperability among the various national contingents.

Irish personnel are deployed to EUBG (F)HQ in a number of key roles that enhance the capabilities of this multinational force and are important

contributors to the effective functioning of the EUBG (F)HQ. The Irish commitment to EUBG (F)HQ is broad and personnel are employed across a variety of domains, including Intelligence, Operations, Training, Logistics, Strategic Communications and the Political Advisor to the EUBG Force Commander. These roles leverage the specific skills and range of experiences that the Irish Army have and

contribute to the operational planning and preparation together with the operational readiness of EUBG (F)HQ.

The deployment of Irish personnel to EUBG (F) HQ enables the Irish Defence Forces to work co-operatively in a multi-national environment alongside counterparts from other EU member states, enhancing mutual understanding and operational coherence. Furthermore, support to EUBG (F)HQ provides the opportunity for Irish personnel to gain valuable experience and training opportunities, which will contribute to the enhancement of capacity and capabilities of the Defence Forces in any potential multi-national military operations and engagements in the future.

Conclusion

Ireland's engagement in EUBG 25, through the provision of 182 personnel and support to the EUBG (F)HQ, illustrates its commitment to the EU's Strategic Compass, the CSDP framework and a proactive approach to its support and contributions to global peace, security and stability. Ireland's involvement will provide an effective platform to provide important contributions and support to the shaping and development process whilst enhancing its reputation as a valued partner and provider of collective European security.



EUBG Crest



IRCON GP Photo

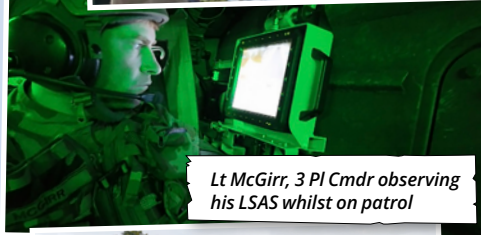
No.2 Pl during an interoperability exercise in Germany



EUBG Mech Coy after a mechanised infantry exercise



Lt McGirr, 3 Pl Cmdr observing his LSAS whilst on patrol



Mowag Gunners loading their weapons before a shoot



DEFENCE FORCES CONTINGENT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION BATTLEGROUP 2024-2025

ARTICLE BY CAPT LIAM LUNDON

On foot of the Government's decision in 2019, the Defence Forces is providing a contingent of personnel to participate in the German led European Union Battlegroup in 2025.

2 Brigade was selected as the Lead Formation and provides the majority of the personnel for this Unit. The Irish commitment to the Battlegroup primarily consists of a Mechanised Infantry Company, supported by a small Command Group and a Platoon sized National Support Element. The Contingent Commander remains under Irish Command while the Unit is in Ireland, but in the event of an operational deployment the Irish Contingent will come under the command of the French Force Commander, Major Gen De Larouzere.

Ireland's participation in European Union Battlegroups demonstrates Ireland's commitment to the development of EU capabilities in the area of Crisis Management Operations. Battlegroups typically bring together Member States with different characteristics, traditions and capabilities. Not only have such deployments enhanced the Defence Forces capability, interoperability and training; it demonstrates that Ireland is an active partner in delivering on multi-lateral objectives within the European Union and supports Ireland's security and defence policy.

The Irish contingent (IRCON) was established on the 1st of January 2024 and will remain in a "Stand-Up Phase" until the end of 2024. The primary focus of the "Stand-Up Phase" is to generate and train the contingent. The "Stand-Up Phase" will be followed by a "Stand-By Phase" where the contingent will be maintained at full strength and at high state of readiness to deploy on Crisis Management Operations throughout 2025.

Personnel from across the Army volunteered to join the latest iteration of the Battlegroup. As this unit is primarily a Mechanised Infantry Company, the majority of the personnel come from the Infantry Battalions located in Dundalk, Athlone and Kilkenny. The Battlegroup has been a hub of training since January 2024. One aspect that differentiates a Battlegroup from other overseas units is that it has a significantly longer pre-deployment training period. As a result the IRCON has had the opportunity to run numerous courses to upskill our troops. Courses on the topics of public order, urban terrain warfare, and counter improvised explosive device are only some of the training that has been conducted to date.

IRCON have had the opportunity of being the first members of the Defence Forces to receive new kit and equipment that is due to come into service in the coming years. Items such as laser light aiming devices for the Steyr Rifles, tactical radios and upgraded ballistic plate carriers are but some of the equipment that has been prioritised for the contingent. There is still a significant amount of equipment to be integrated into the unit, such as upgraded night vision equipment and designated marksmanship rifles which will be rolled out in the next months.

In advance of this month's National Certification Exercise, the Battlegroup has organised numerous exercises on mechanised infantry tactics in Kilworth Camp, urban terrain tactics in the Curragh Camp and most recently a logistics exercise in Gormanston Camp. The National Certification Exercise that began in early September assessed and evaluated the contingent on its ability to perform it's assigned task, as the Force Headquarters' Force Protection Company.

At the end of the National Certification Exercise, the entirety of the Battlegroups vehicles, heavy equipment and logistics were forward deployed to the Battlegroup's logistic hub located near Frankfurt in Germany. This base will host a small team of Defence Forces logisticians who will oversee the battlegroup's equipment throughout the year and manage its distribution in the case of a deployment or exercise.

IRCON will deploy in full to two multinational exercises with our international partners in the Battlegroup. The first exercise in Germany is an International Certification Exercise, where all the eleven participant EU Member States of the European Union Battlegroup in 2024/2025 will come together for the first time. The Irish Contingent will also be taking this opportunity to make use of the training areas that the German military has to offer. In April next year the Battlegroup will conduct a deployment readiness exercise in Hungary. The Contingents capability to deploy in a timely manner will be tested, as will its ability to be logistically self-sufficient for a thirty day period.



Distinguished visitors day



EXERCISE ANGEL GUARDIAN 2024

ARTICLE BY CAPT MUIRIS Ó MURCHADHA

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPT MUIRIS Ó MURCHADHA

CRC Exercise



In June 2024, the Defence Forces Military Police (MP) Corps sent nine members including two Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) personnel to participate in "Angel Guardian", an annual exercise held in Spain. The Irish Defence Forces have been participating in this MP exercise since 2019. The exercise site was located in the Bétera and Marines military base in Valencia.

"Angel Guardian" aims to train and exercise MP units on NATO and national TTP (tactics, techniques and procedures) on the execution and conduction of MP operations. It promotes the strengthening of ties amongst MP units of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Military Emergency Unit (UME), Royal Guard, from Spain and NATO Allied and PfP (Partnership for Peace) countries. This year the exercise's planning and operations have expanded from platoon to company level. The scale of the exercise



The exercise was divided into two 48hr blocks within which the Platoons would rotate through different scenarios. It was required that information was communicated back to the Coy Comd cell which would allow them to build an accurate intelligence picture of the AO (Area of Operation). After the first 48hr block was completed, the two Coys switched AOs and commenced again. Working alongside colleagues from different nations it was clear to see and attest that Irish MP TTPs matched that of the NATO and PfP countries.

Personally, I rotated between Coy 2 I/C and Coy Comdr of Alpha Coy. The Irish section was assigned to the 5th Pl, Alpha Coy and equipped with



Combined Irish and Bulgarian Section dismantling a blocked entrance during CRC exercise

was reduced in comparison to previous years in order to facilitate more resources to the Company (Coy) and Platoon (Pl) Commanders. 300 international MP participants attended the annual exercise.

On arrival, there was general administration and preparation before the exercise commenced at 2000hrs on Sunday. It began with the Operations briefing for the company cell and details of various scenarios which would take place the following day were provided. Coy and Pl Commanders were directed to develop and issue orders.

The exercise scenarios were realistic and well planned out, testing a wide range of MP skills. Some of the scenarios included; refugee displacement camps, active shooter situations, Bn (battalion) HQ security, WIT (Weapons Intelligence Team), CIED (Counter Improvised Explosive Device), CRC (Crowd and Riot Control), CPERS (Captured Persons) and RTC (Road Traffic Collisions) investigations.

5th Platoon and exercise troops after the CRC exercise



Spanish H&K pistols, G36s rifles and vehicles. Within the Pl there was a section of Spanish Navy and Bulgarian MPs. The exercise scenarios built mutual trust and readiness by exposing troops to diverse environments and situations, fostering adaptability for real world operations. This mutual trust and confidence was ultimately tested during an arduous CRC exercise, where the Pl had to extract a highly valued target from a highly resistive force.

The MP Corps has a very active RDF element and this year we were able to continue to practice our interoperability by integrating two members within the section. CS Carroll (2 BDE) and Cpl Kinsella (DFTC) were able to demonstrate abundant levels of interoperability throughout the exercise. Both NCO's leveraged their civilian expertise to enhance our military operations, bringing valuable skills and fresh perspectives. By giving their own time to the organisation, they demonstrate a deep commitment to service, while balancing their civilian responsibilities.

It's essential for RDF troops to participate in exercises with PDF (Permanent Defence Forces) troops to ensure seamless integration during real-world operations. Under the Single Force Concept (SFC), "the RDF is intended to be fully integrated with PDF units". These joint exercises ensure the RDF are aligned with the latest tactics and procedures used. They also foster strong relationships and mutual understanding, which are crucial for effective coordination and rapid deployment when RDF personnel are deployed. Both members of the RDF and PDF were able to progress their skills they learnt on exercise and enhance their respective units with them.

Exercise Angel Guardian Flash



Although a robust and challenging exercise it was a highly positive experience for all. At the end of exercise debrief it was noted by exercise control and other nations that the Irish performed to a very high standard. This exercise is an exceptional opportunity for members of the MP Corps to demonstrate their skills and drills in a multinational setting.

Members of the RDF Cpl Roy Kinsella and CS Michael Carroll shared their views on the exercise



Cpl Kinsella enjoying a quick break from the exercise

CPL ROY KINSELLA

How were you selected to participate in the exercise?

I joined the RDF in 2002, originally a member of 6th MP Field Coy, back then the Military Police was divided into two groups, 'Garrison Policing' (PDF) & 'Field Policing' (FCA/RDF). The RDF trained consistently in the Green Role so permanent MP's could focus on real policing within the Defence Forces. Over many years and amalgamations the RDF transitioned into the PDF role. Since 2006, I began undertaking training to help me upskill. I participated in a year long integration programme,

certifying me to operate with my PDF colleagues both at home & overseas. In 2021, I transferred from 2 Bde MP Coy, to the MP Group, MP School, in the DFTC.

Today I am qualified in various roles within the MP Corps, including Baton & Restraint, and Crime Scene Photography. Along with being an MT driver, I'm also qualified as a DR Motorcyclist. I participate regularly with MP Group taskings & responsibilities, along with instructing within the MP School. Since the Defence Act was amended in 2021 to allow reservists overseas, I started looking at some options. Earlier this year I saw Angel Guardian advertised & I applied for it. Shortly after, I was informed that I was selected as first Sub in the event of anyone dropping out, which ultimately happened just a few weeks later.

Cpl Kinsella, Cpl Gallagher, CS Carroll (Back row), Cpl HYNAN and Cpl Moran (Front row) following the CRC exercise



What was your initial reaction when you found out you would be travelling abroad for this exercise?

I was delighted with the opportunity to participate in this popular NATO exercise. I was keen to see how other nations were operating in their respective Military Police roles & I relished the chance at putting two decades of training & experience to task.

Did this exercise change the way you view your role as a reservist in any way?

I think so, I've had a lot of time to reflect on my week since returning from the exercise and I look back at Angel Guardian as an incredibly positive & rewarding experience. There were many Reservists from other nations there on the exercise. Many were leading into long deployments overseas later and it was interesting to listen to their experiences & learn from their knowledge too. Like most nations across Europe, the ability to train in large exercises today is limited by manpower challenges that obviously exist. To travel to a NATO exercise that solely concentrates on Military Police units, offered me an opportunity to test my own abilities in a more challenging environment than I would be familiar with at home. I would suggest this annual exercise isn't just beneficial, it's essential today. As a result of my participation here, I am certainly more focused now & the experience has allowed me significant insight into where we need to be regarding our training moving forward. As an MP School Instructor, I hope to bring some of my experiences here & the lessons I learned to enhance future courses that I will be instructing on.



CRC Exercise

What advice would you give to other reservists who may have the opportunity to participate in an international exercise like this in the future?

I would highly recommend RDF personnel applying for any overseas exercise that they believe they can commit to. There was teething problems regarding basic administration for RDF here, but this was to be expected in any organisation that is evolving. Talking to people who have been on these exercises before is critical, learn from others who have gone before you. Learn from their experiences and their mistakes. Prepare, Prepare, Prepare & when you get there, stay positive, no matter how big the challenges are, most importantly stay at your best and enjoy the experience.



CS Carroll on the Spanish terrain

CS MICHAEL CARROLL

How were you selected to participate in the exercise?

I had known about the exercise and the PDF MP's involvement over the years, this year it clashed with the MP Standards Course so there were vacancies for the exercise.

Cpl Kinsella had told me he had applied, I had holidays to take from my civilian job and decided to apply.

What was your initial reaction when you found out you would be travelling abroad for this exercise?

My initial reaction was both delighted having been selected and surprised that we as reservists were going on a NATO training exercise outside of the state.

How did the Spanish environment and local conditions impact the exercise compared to training at home?

The conditions were very hot, but it was nice to train in the sunshine instead of our damp weather. It was challenging with battle vest, helmet, rifle and pistol all day in the heat but you just got on with it and drank plenty of water.

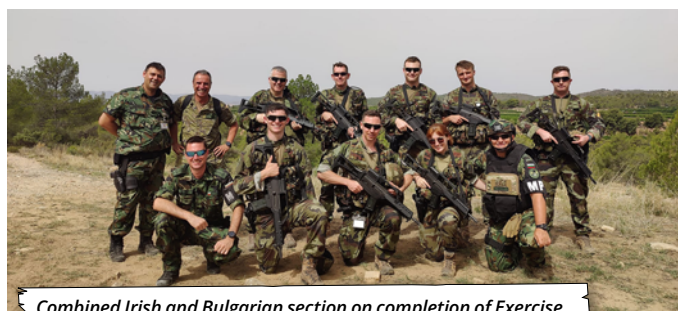
What was the most challenging part of the exercise for you personally?

For me it was the long days, very early starts sometimes 0530hrs and lights out was 2300hrs, the room was large and crowded, over 100 bunk beds in the room with very little space between each set of bunk. The language barrier was sometimes difficult, receiving orders from people who's first language is not English could be challenging and important details sometimes missed.

After saying that all nationalities got along and shared a laugh and a joke.

Did this exercise change the way you view your role as a reservist in any way?

Yes, most other armies had reservists in their ranks, we (as reservists) need to look at our training with the view to updating and upskilling so we can better support the PDF in their role.



Combined Irish and Bulgarian section on completion of Exercise

45TH DF AN COSANTÓIR 10K RUN AND 5K WALK

results



MALE RACE

1st Place Josh O'Sullivan-Hourihan (32.15)

2nd Place Conor Tiernan (32.31)

3rd Place Nathan O'Leary (33.27)

O/35

1st Place David Redmond (34.01)

2nd Place Terence Garland (38.23)

3rd Place Barry Smyth (38.44)

O/40

1st Place Michael Colohan (37.03)

2nd Place Nial Smith (38.48)

3rd Place Denis Dunne (39.30)

O/45

1st Place Paul Buckley (36.59)

2nd Place Andrew Darcy (38.05)

O/50

1st Place Colin Merritt (34.58)

2nd Place Pat Byrne (38.33)

O/55

1st Place Declan Madden (43.03)

VETERAN

1st Place Paul Grennan (40.35)

VET O/40

1st Place Paul O'Beirne (35.52)

VET O/50

1st Place William Dowdall (41.00)

FEMALE RACE

1st Place Elizabeth Carr (38.09)

2nd Place Nicole Moorehouse (39.42)

3rd Place Stacey Davitt (45.36)

O/35

1st Place Tina McKeever (48.57)

2nd Place Siobhan O'Sullivan (49.23)

O/40

1st Place Louise Oprea (46.17)

2nd Place Dorota O'Brien (49.13)

VETERAN

1st Place Marie Gleeson (50.59)

TEAM RESULTS

MEN'S TEAM

1st Place 27 INF BN

2nd Place 6 INF BN

3rd Place 1 BDE HQ

WOMEN'S TEAM

1st Place 3 INF BN

2nd Place Mil Col

LOADED MARCH WINNERS

1st Place 12 INF BN

2nd Place EUBG

BLOCK WINNERS

100TH Cadet Class, Cadet School





J4 UNDOF WITHDRAWAL

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

ARTICLE BY COMDT RICHIE BARBER - J4
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COMDT RICHIE BARBER

On the 07 Mar 23 the Government issued a direction for the withdrawal of the IRCON FRC from UNDOF in the Golan Heights in Syria. J3/5 was tasked with creating a plan and an initial Planning Group was held with J4 and other key players. J4 was tasked with the strategic planning of the withdrawal as the Logistical lead. Monthly meetings ensued from this point, 12 months in advance of the withdrawal to prepare for a logistics operation, the likes of which the DF hadn't conducted since withdrawing from MINURCAT, CHAD, in 2010.



Comdt John Gaffney led the Planning Groups from the J3/5 side as the UNDOF Desk officer. In J4 we commenced planning immediately using the MDMP Process with an Ops room being established and whiteboards filled with information for Mission Analysis. As the SSO Overseas Logs Ops/Plans my team took the lead on the COA development and operational planning side, beginning with researching previous withdrawals and the lessons learned from such. SQMS Ben Dunne was 2IC, based on his

previous CHAD and LIBERIA withdrawal experiences which were invaluable. One key lesson cited was the return to island and how equipment had not been taken back to Org owner stores and in some cases was in Gormanston Camp in containers for years. This expanded our planning considerations and analysis further in that we had to both physically move the Unit but also from a governance perspective ensure we accounted for the stores and equipment as per DFR S3 and ensure it was back in home stores for further use immediately on arrival from UNDOF and to manage the €20m worth of stores/vehicles.

Comdt Oisín Branagan, as the SSO Inventory Management J4, became the lead for this aspect with BQMS Jake Doyle as his 2IC. Early in the planning

phase we identified the need for the 3 strands of planning required to merge – Air Bridge (Personnel), Land Bridge (Personnel and Stores), and Sea Bridge (Stores). It was evident that a high degree of co-ordination between all was going to be required to ensure mission success. In these early planning sessions, the concept of the reverse RSOM (Reception Staging and Onward Movement – logs term for deployment / withdrawal to/from forward areas) was taking shape. In addition to this the inventory side had mitigated the identified stores risk of when arriving back in IRL with the advanced receipt concept, in essence DF Unit Logistics Staff travelling to UNDOF and sealing their own containers and being collected from the NSRC on return to IRL as they were on their books already, with the J4 teams taking ownership “in transit”. This concept was briefed at the Q2 J4 meetings with formations and directorates, to allow all stakeholders have input and give advance planning knowledge.

As a UN unit withdrawing is entitled to have the UN conduct the withdrawal, we included this in our Mission Analysis but early in the process decided against it for key reasons including the below:

- We would lose control of the timelines and co-ordination (the Irish Government had set a withdrawal date and J3/5 set a cease of Ops date of 22 Mar 24 with a date for withdrawal of personnel of NLT 05 Apr 24).
- In our strategic assessment we knew we would be deploying the EUBG in Q3/4 2024 at a minimum participating in an Exercise, with planning to establish a forward Logshub for the EUBG in Germany from Aug 2024 and that the armour would be required by the DF.
- The DF needed to take ownership of the Operation as we had not conducted an Operation of this scale since CHAD in 2010. We needed to enhance our skills in particular with our Strategic planning for the linked PESCO Logshub/EUBG. (RSOM)

This was briefed at the next JOPG and approved. As such we began the process of submitting the Annex A to UNHQ-NY. At the time (Q2 2023) we were preparing to deploy the 67 Inf Gp to UNDOF and included them in our early planning concepts. We tasked them with RFIs and to feed information back into the MDMP in particular in the area of the land bridge, the border restrictions, inventory assessments and container information (Numbers, seaworthiness certs etc.). By June/July 2023 we had established COAs and made contact with our colleagues in DOD Contracts Branch to seek approval to conduct shipping and air tenders. The cooperation between us was excellent and it was agreed DOD would conduct the Air tender while J4 would conduct the sea bridge tender and through mutual planning and J4 taking control of the air bridge post contract award to coordinate the timings of both to ensure the successful outcome of the mission. We identified the need for contingency in the contracts to allow



Vehicles in Camp Faouar being prepped for move





Mowags were moved by crane onto ships

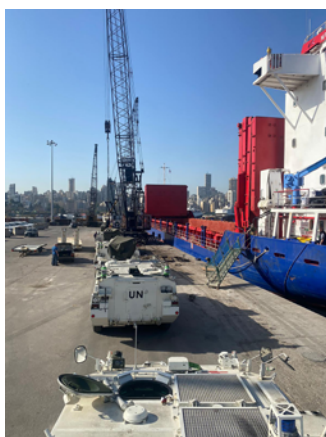
flexibility in a region known for geopolitical instability. We agreed to have alternate APODs (Airport of Departure) and SPODs (Seaport of Debarkation) included on the tender which we could shift to at short notice (namely APOD – AMMAN JORDAN, SPOD - TARTUS/TRIPOLI). The nature of the security situation allowed us both to successfully apply for negotiated/restricted tender processes using defence exemptions. Through both the J3/5 led JOPGs and the briefings/discussions with the Directorates/Fmns at the J4/ G4 quarterly meets potential issues were mitigated and confirmed most notably the inventory plan to ensure

we completed the operation to the last point and it demonstrated that this was a whole of DF Level operation with input in the planning from all areas.

From June the Logs Ops and Plans cell sent monthly progress key information slides out. This included Factor Deduction Task elements and was updated based on returns to mitigate risks and confirm elements of the planning process. The planning team widened at this point to include SMEs from DF Customs (actions on landing in IRL) & the NSRC (Dangerous Goods (DG) and movement experts).

At this point in the planning we had come to a 9 phase Withdrawal Plan as follows:

1. MDMP, planning and preparation, contracts and UN Liaison. From Q1 2023.
2. Advance Recce to UNDOF MA and Lebanon by J4 planning team to Co-Ord with 68 Inf Gp. 28 Nov 23 - 03 Dec 23.
3. Deployment of J4 & Tech teams NLT 18 Mar 24. 2 x separate teams 1 on UNDOF side led by Comdt Branagan (Inv) and one by Lebanon side led by Comdt Barber (Ops).
4. Movement of 4 x convoys from Camp Faouar via the MASNAA Border Crossing to BEIRUT PORT. Final convoy Mil Led with Class 1 DGs – Load vessel and depart for Dublin. (18 Mar – 04 Apr).
5. Movement of the 68 Inf Gp to BEIRUT APOD for air bridge to IRL. 05 Apr 24.
6. W/D of J4 Logs Teams – NLT 06 Apr 24.
7. Arrival of Cargo Vessel to Dublin Port. Meet by J4, NSRC teams NLT 01 May 24.
8. Movement of all equipment from Port to NSRC & Ammo Depot. Secured pending clearance by Revenue and Customs. Ship arrival date + 3.
9. All equipment stores returned to Org Owners and in locations. Ship arrival date + 10.



It was evident that clear communication and co-ordination between multiple elements was going to be mission essential in terms of achieving the objectives. The JOPGs, monthly updates and J4/ G4 conferences were key in this in addition to direct comms with the overseas units. J4 also conducted meetings with Dublin Port and potential shippers to assist in the planning and shaping. We also began liaising with UNIFIL for 2 key reasons, firstly that we were moving through Lebanon and although not



Members of the work party involved in the logistics move of the withdrawal from UNDOF in Camp Faouar

the UNIFIL AO support could be required, and secondly J4's job is also to support UNIFIL so we began assessing if there were elements we could move from UNDOF to UNIFIL to reduce the supply chain requirements for their Logs Sp. The 68 Inf Gp were now forming up and being fully included in the planning process. During their form up there were meetings and briefings based on the plans and updates. From our work with the 67 Inf Gp it was clear that the land bridge element was best controlled by the unit on the ground. This view was shared by OC 68 Inf Gp Lt Col Clear and his team. J4 would resource the land bridge elements and set co-ord dates etc to ensure the key links with the air and sea bridge aspects being prepared by the Branch. On 05 Oct 2023 J4 conducted the rotation of the 67 & 68 Inf Gps to/from UNDOF. The countdown to the withdrawal was now on. The Oct 7th attacks in Israel brought our concerns about regional instability back to the front of our concerns and our contingency planning in contracts was now a key component of our planning mitigations. The 68 Inf Gp were heavily tasked, they had to conduct all operations as per previous groups in a high state of tension due to the above and also conduct the



preparation, planning and actions required for the land bridge element of the withdrawal with J3/5 and J4 looking to liaise and co-ord with the strategic plan. On top of this they had to prepare to conduct a HOTO of the FRC role to Kazakhstan.

The J4 Ops and Inventory teams conducted a Recce to the Mission Area (MA) to meet the unit and discuss the planning and progress. This recce was mission essential; it allowed the

unit understand that they had freedom of action in the planning of the land bridge once it was co-ordinated with our sea and air bridge and also the contingencies we had built for contracts. And that we would resource this plan. It set the parameters that the J4 Ops team would take control of the land bridge elements from the MASNAA crossing to Beirut Port and IRL allowing the S4 team focus up to the Syrian border. From the unit side it allowed them reinforce the lack of flexibility on the Syrian border and that from a strategic perspective we could not just change plans at short notice. We also got to see the huge amount of work being conducted in preparation for the withdrawal under the guidance of the S4 Cell in Capt Andy O'Neill and BQMS Colm Donnelly. Another key aspect of the Recce was meeting with UNIFIL Movcon, Port officials, Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the movement contractor by the Ops Team. This was a key aspect in ensuring co-ordination and support across the strategic pillars. Both the unit and the J4 teams left the MA with a stronger link to make the mission a success and I believe we had built trust removing potential silos. Contracts were signed over the coming months with the MV Meric being selected as the LOLO vessel (Load On Load Off – type of ship) and ACS (Air Charter Services) being selected as the air bridge provider. J4 began linking these moves together and working with UNIFIL Movcon and both the APODs and SPOD in Beirut in advance of the moves. There was almost daily communication between J4 and the S4 team in UNDOF, as they continued their excellent work. On island JOPGs and meetings continued between J3/5 and J4 to coordinate the overall move and update the directorates. Due to the changing threat in UNIFIL in the period they

Sgt Johnny Hyland preparing a Mowag for transport

requested more armoured lift capability and other stores. This gave us an opportunity to both support UNIFIL from UNDOF but also test the land bridge convoy routes in advance of the main withdrawal. J4, working closely with UNIFIL and UNDOF coordinated this move in Feb 2024, which fed more information into our continuing planning process.

On 18 Mar 24, the J4 led teams deployed to the MA with the Ops Team (J4/NSRC team) working from the Lebanon side and the Inv team (with Personnel from all directorates) working with the G4 Cell in Camp Faour, there was a HQ team based from J4 in DFHQ in a co-ordination role and linking the ground teams with J3/5 with twice daily updates led by EO J4. The Inv team worked day and night with the unit S4 cell to ensure the HOTO of every single item was accounted for to ensure governance. The land bridge move was conducted over 3 x convoys escorted by UNDOF to the MASNAA crossing and met by the Ops team and escorted and secured in the port after moving via night LAF escorted convoys to minimise contact with the civilian population. All vehicles had to move from Syrian Low Loaders to Lebanese Low Loaders in a 200 m2 yard 1km inside Lebanon by the 4-man team. During this we also conducted a HOTO of 2 x CRVs to UNIFIL at MOVCON BEIRUT by splitting our teams on convoy 2. The final convoy with DG Class 1 and weapons was a UN led convoy to Beirut Port and met by the team. The co-ordination of this convoy was essential as the DG could not be stored in the port on the ship for more than 24 hours and must be last loaded onto the ship. We completed the loading of the vessel on the night of the 02 Apr 24 and the ship departed for IRL on the morning of the 03 Apr with a team led by Capt Dermot Hoey on board for governance and security.

On the night of the 4th into the 5th of April the Personnel from the 68 Inf Gp moved to Movcon Beirut and were air bridged back to IRL under the control of the air bridge team led by J4 with NSRC support. At this point we had only completed Phase 6 of 9. 1/3 of the mission was still to be completed. The J4 teams returned to IRL and prepared for the arrival of the MV MERIC in Dublin. At 0400hrs on the 22 Apr 24 the MV MERIC docked on the North Quay in Dublin Port met by myself, Sgt

The containers were moved by ship to Dublin, escorted by J4 staff

Johnny Hyland (J4), Capt Jen Larkin and Sgts John Dillon and Butch Halpin from the NSRC. An immediate DG and weapon escort was dispatched on unloading while the remaining containers were stacked and the vessel moved to another berth for unloading the vehicles. Capt Larkin and Sgt Halpin co-ordinated an exceptional rolling Tpt movement plan meaning all containers were moved from Dublin Port to the waiting teams in the NSRC in under 12 hours, whilst myself, Sgt Hyland and Sgt Dillon

co-ordinated the unloading of the vehicles and armour and moved them to a requisitioned staging area in the port before handing over the armour to a DFTC team lead by 1 ACS & 1 Mech for a double convoy movement of the armour. The NSRC Team then took the remaining vehicles to the DFTC. This high level of cohesion between multiple DF units resulted in all vehicles and stores from UNDOF withdrawal were lifted from the vessel and

A dog handler from Customs conducting a search on mowags**UNDOF vehicles being prepared for the heavy lift**

back in the DFTC within 18 hours of docking. (41 x TEU containers, 15 x Vehicles including 10 x APCs and 2 x HX 60 trucks). All of the equipment and stores, in addition to the airside access unaccompanied stores from the air bridge had to remain sealed &

secured until cleared by revenue and customs in the NSRC and the Ammo Depot respectively. Excellent preparation work by the DF Customs team of CQMS Ciaran Scully and Cpl Ciaran Hynes meant that the plan was in place and structured, including working dogs to enable a clear and speedy process of clearance.

The exceptional attention to detail of the 68 Inf Gp meant that this was a seamless process, and all aspects of the withdrawal were cleared by Customs on the 24 Apr 24. As such I was then able to authorise the J4 inventory team led by Comdt Branagan to commence the HOTOs of the Stores back to Org Owners. The directorates and the J4 Team iccw the NSRC completed the HOTO of stores within 10 days of Customs clearance with all equipment back under location. This was of huge credit to the work done by the Directorates and their staff throughout the process. It was also a tribute to the planning model created by the J4 planning team based on lessons learned from previous withdrawals. Overall, this was a highly successful operation with a whole of DF approach and a team of teams mentality implemented by the strategic planning group. It was all aspects of the DF at its best working together to achieve its mission. The 68 Inf Gp were an exceptional unit and it was brilliant to work with them to achieve this. The lessons learned from the WD were of huge benefit to J4 as we conducted the forward RSOM of the EUBG equipment to an established IRCON forward Logs Base in PFUNGSTADT Germany in October 2024. From here the NLSG Team will plan, prepare & co-ordinate the movement of all the equipment to be in Place for EUBG Exs in both DEU and HUN in the coming 9 months (and of course in the event of a deployment). This was approx. 50% bigger than the UNDOF withdrawal and therefore the lessons had been invaluable.

GLEN OF IMAAL MARKS 125 YEARS IN THE FIRING LINE

ARTICLE BY LIAM KENNY, MA IN MILITARY HISTORY - MAYNOOTH

"The peace of the historic Glen of Imaal was much disturbed by the thundering of artillery"

... so ran the opening line from a report in a local newspaper 125 years ago which described the first salvos to be unleashed in the west Wicklow firing range. A century and a quarter later the Glen of Imaal remains the primary training ground for the Defence Forces.



Ordnance Survey Map dated 1943

How did this expansive corner of the Garden County become so associated with the arts of warfare? It's military origins date from the closing decades of the 19th Century when armies were making the transition from short-range canons to the longer-range rifled barrels made possible by the precision engineering of the industrial revolution.

Such potent weapons demanded ranges with a safety margin greater than could be found on the Curragh plains of Kildare and, in a country which had a dispersed rural population, such clear expanses were difficult to come by. From the 1880s the Royal Artillery decamped to the distant location of Glenbeigh on the west Kerry coastline to complete its range practices - much to the consternation of the local cockle-pickers. However, the sandy Glenbeigh peninsula was unsatisfactory as its flat terrain meant that the gunners were not challenged in finding the firing solution to hit the target. As one commentator noted the artillery officers knew the elevation needed for the guns before they began their fortnight's practice. And there was further pressure to vacate when the dangers to the coastal population were raised in the House of Commons.

Faced with these limitations some artillery officers on their own initiative surveyed Ireland for suitable gunnery terrain. The specification was daunting: a valley five or six miles long, absolutely clear of houses, and into which far-ranging projectiles might be fired with impunity.

Scrutiny of the Ordnance maps pointed in the direction of Co Wicklow which had the advantage of being close to the military concentrations at the Curragh and Dublin. Initially, Aghavannagh on the east side of Lugnaquilla seemed promising and permission was secured from Earl Fitzwilliam and Charles Stuart Parnell, MP and landowner, to position two field pieces for experimental firing up the Owl river valley in the years 1888-89. The results

were satisfactory in terms of the distance achievable for the trajectory of shells but the gunners' room for manoeuvre was limited because of the narrow profile of the valley. This

led the artillery surveyors to look over the mountain at the horse-shoe shaped Glen of Imaal with Lugnaquilla providing the butt for firing on the western end of the valley. However, the War Department's representatives had not reckoned with the negotiating skills of the Glen dwellers. According to a report in the Kildare Observer they faced opposition from "landlords, tenants, priests and parsons who joined in strong protest against the occupation of the 'happy valley' by the artillery". Such defiance was nothing new in the Glen with columnists pointing out how an earlier generation of Imaal rebels had defied the redcoats in 1798.

Rebuffed in west Wicklow the military surveyors looked farther north in the county and for a time had plans to add artillery to the training facilities

4.5" Howitzer firing in the Glen of Imaal



of the new rifle range above Manor Kilbride. However, when the trajectories were calculated it was found that the shells would fly over the ridge line of Seefin and impact a hunting lodge belonging to a Mrs Cobb who owned heathland prized for its grouse shooting sport.

The army authorities were obliged to return to the Glen of Imaal but this time they were armed with the threat of compulsory powers. After further tense negotiations and an expenditure of the then huge sum of £14,000 from the Treasury, the tenants' interest was purchased across fourteen townlands from the Glen floor and up the steep slopes of its embracing crescent of mountains. The compensatory offering did not stop at money - the War Department also provided what were described as "tin houses with nice boarded floors" as an alternative for those whose dwellings were in the firing line. The deal, twelve years in the making, was not without its critics from across the Irish Sea with a Daily Express columnist opining that the Glen tenants should be grateful for what they had been offered noting that "he who has lived all his life, on a clay floor, now gets a nice zinc and wood house, with a boarded floor, put up just outside the line of fire."



The Artillery range is still in use

Such condescension aside, the way was now clear for the artillery arm to open fire and the Kildare Observer newspaper reported that there was excitement in the Baltinglass area when the first salvo was unleashed on the 23 May 1899 by a battery of the Royal Horse Artillery. Perhaps appropriately, the name of the officer in charge was a Major Guinness.

Over the last 125 years the Defence Forces has continued to use the ranges for military exercises and operational training and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Liam Kenny has a MA in Military History from NUI Maynooth and is a regular contributor to the An Cosantóir Magazine as well as history columnist for the Leinster Leader newspaper.

Scorpion CVRT's in action on the artillery range

PEOPLE OF THE DF

NAME

JOHN MCCORMACK

UNIT

NAVAL SERVICE SHORE OPERATIONS

RANK

SCPO

SEA ROTATIONS

LÉ AISLING X3, LÉ ROISIN X1, LÉ ORLA X3,
LÉ EITHNE X1, LÉ AOIFE X1

YEAR JOINED

1985

Can you give me a brief description of your career so far?

On 19 November 1985, I started my career in the Navy. I had recently reached the age of 18 and was in my final year of secondary school. I made the decision to enlist in the Navy following a successful interview. My recruit training commenced that November on the Naval Base and concluded in April 1986. It was a challenging but rewarding experience at that time. Seamanship branch was the branch I was assigned to after initial recruit training. I completed training in gunnery and seamanship before embarking on my first posting on a naval ship, LÉ AISLING. From LÉ AISLING, my career progressed in a consistent manner, with two years on sea going units followed by two years ashore in various naval appointments. To advance my career I completed my professional military courses including the Potential NCO Course in 1990, Standard NCO Course in 1999 and the Senior NCO Course in 2003. Sea rotations on LÉ ORLA happened in between these courses. To this day, the Seamanship Branch is still my branch in the Navy.

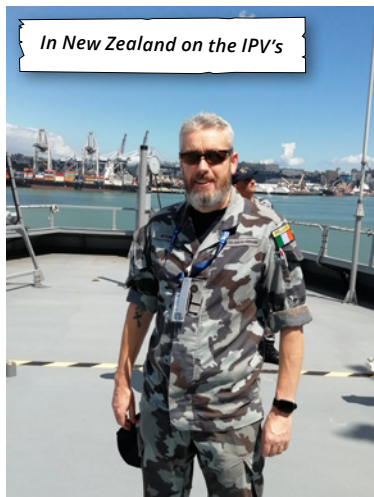


On a career course in Germany

What made you decide to join the Navy?

My father enlisted in the Navy in the early 1960s and served for approximately 13 years. As a young man in Cobh, I would have observed the Navy ships entering and exiting Haulbowline. That was the catalyst that initially piqued my interest in joining the Navy. After growing up by the sea, with the Naval Base in close proximity to my

home and hearing many stories of life in the Navy, I was simply drawn to the sea and the opportunities it entailed. As well as that, I was more interested in an outdoor career that was more physical and engaging than a job in an office.



In New Zealand on the IPV's

What has been your proudest moment so far in the Navy?

I have a few instances in which I am exceedingly proud. This year will mark my 39th year of service in the Defence Forces. Some of the people I joined with

in 1985 are still serving today, and they are very close friends and colleagues. We have been in service together for nearly four decades. Next year will be a year of great significance to us as it will be our 40th year in service. I am extremely proud of this.

From a career perspective, the first ship I joined as an Ordinary Seaman was LÉ AISLING. It was a good learning period for me as I had to put all the training I received into action. In 2008, as a Petty Officer (OR5) I returned to LÉ AISLING as BOSUN. I had the responsibility of the Seamanship personnel on board, all deck evolutions, maintenance of deck equipment and ships overall appearance. In 2012, I returned to LÉ AISLING in the Senior NCO position, COXSWAIN. Therefore, in total I have served six years on LÉ AISLING, transitioning from the most junior appointment to the most senior NCO appointment.

I can still recall my first COXSWAIN, Chief Petty Officer Christie Murphy. I remember the manner in which he treated and cared for others. So when I took up the position of COXSWAIN in 2012, I wanted to ensure I made the same impression on individuals during their time on board the ship, that they were consistently treated with respect and dignity.

In recent years, I have been particularly proud of my involvement in the delivery of the two Inshore Patrol Vessels (IPVs) the Navy acquired from the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN). I was a member



In sports gear on LÉ Aisling

of a team that travelled to NZ to observe the operation of this class of vessel and to determine how they would integrate into the Irish Navy and ensure we deliver our essential roles to the State.

What has been your most challenging moments so far in your career?

I would have encountered the most challenging period in the navy as a young married man, when I had to leave my two young children behind when I was heading to sea on patrol. I was fortunate to have spent the first two years of each of my children's lives at home with them. However, I was compelled to spend the subsequent two years at sea. It was exceedingly difficult to leave them. My wife and I planned our family in conjunction with my sea rotation to spend the first two years at home with both of our children. The situation became somewhat more manageable at that time, as the children were slightly older each time I returned from sea. I am convinced that my wife's assistance was indispensable in my pursuit of this profession.



SCPO McCormack and the team on the IPV's



Chilling with the IPV team

What has been the most valuable lesson being into the DF has taught you?

As an eighteen-year-old, I would have been quite reserved. I would have lacked a small amount of confidence, a lesson that I have since acquired. The Potential NCO Course changed me. The course instils in you the confidence to address a class and deliver a lesson, as well as give you the ability to speak in public. This is a life skill that you will have for the rest of your life, and not just something that is beneficial to the Navy or the DF. We dedicate five and a half months to a course that is essentially a character-building course for new NCOs. It essentially prepares you for life in service and outside it.

What advice would you give to your 18-year-old self?

Well, the advice I would have given myself at the age of 18 would have been to stay an additional year in school and complete my Leaving Cert.

I believe you need the Leaving Certificate results at some stage in your life, maybe to pursue a trade or different career. I did return in the 1990s and successfully completed my Leaving Cert. However, it is undoubtedly more convenient to remain in school and complete the task at that time rather than returning to it later in life and trying to balance work, family time and education.

What's your favourite thing about being in the Naval Service?

The individuals with whom I work with are undoubtedly my favourite thing about being in the Naval Service. Fortunately, a significant number of them continue to serve alongside me to this day. It is the individuals you encounter over the years, the diverse personalities, and the lifelong companions you make. They are genuinely real friends for life. Additionally, I am particularly fond of the job's diversity. The Navy offers a multitude of opportunities. Also, the assistance provided in the event of an unforeseen circumstance are invaluable. Those supports are not always available in civilian life, where there is often a disconnect between the employer and the employee. I believe you are more highly regarded and supported in the DF. Plus, it is good fun!

What is your favourite quote?

"Amateurs train until they get it right, but professionals train until they can't get it wrong"

You worked in New Zealand with the IPV's, can you tell us what that experience was like?

It was a wonderful experience. I had never anticipated visiting New Zealand on the opposite side of the world. However, when this opportunity presented itself, I was delighted to travel to that location. The general region bears a striking resemblance to Ireland. A significant number of individuals in that region exhibit characteristics similar to those of the Irish. The Irish Navy is comparable in size to the RNZN. Consequently, we shared a great deal in common. I found the task that we were assigned to perform in NZ to be really enjoyable. It was certainly not a tourist experience or a holiday. We were housed in Newport, a town on the outskirts of Auckland, where we worked daily on the two IPV's, acquiring a comprehensive understanding of their systems and a deep understanding of their capabilities. Since we returned to Ireland and the ships were delivered to the Navy, it was our responsibility to train our people on how to manage and operate the ships. That was a significant obligation but one I embraced and enjoyed.

From your time at FORST (Fleet Operational Readiness Standards and Training) what new standards and initiatives were recently implemented?

FORST is accountable for maintaining the operational standards and training of the naval fleet. It comprises of approximately a team of ten individuals and reports to the Officer Commanding Naval Operations (OCNOC). The FORST team ensure ships and crew are at a standard that is safe to proceed to sea and undergo Maritime Defence and Security Operations (MDSO). FORST set standards on ships evolutions and monitor ships performing a wide range of tasks, including deck evolutions, firefighting and damage control, Replenishment at Sea (RAS), towing operations, naval gunnery shoots, navigation, and medical care, to mention a few. During my tenure, FORST would have implemented a new line throwing system, towing system and new life jackets.



At Man of War bay at anchor

Defence Forces Athletics

ARTICLE BY COMDT NOEL CONWAY CHAIRMAN DF ATHLETICS COMMITTEE
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COMDT NOEL CONWAY



Team Event Winners 2012 with the Duggan Shield

Athletics training is integral to military training and the sport of athletics has naturally been embedded in the culture of the Defence Forces since the foundation of the organisation in 1923. This is demonstrated in the perpetual trophies that are competed for each year to this day by Defence Forces athletes. An example of one of these trophies is the Duggan Shield, the much sought after trophy for the winning team in the Defence Forces senior men's cross-country championships every year. The trophy contains the names of each individual member of every team that has won the event since 1923.

The organisation of Defence Forces championship events in athletics falls to the DF Athletics Committee. It is not known exactly when the committee was established but it is understood that it has operated in one form or another

since the early 1930s. The committee organises championship events across the various sub-disciplines of the sport every year. Sub-disciplines include cross-country running, track and field (indoor and outdoor) and road running. While running is probably the aspect of the sport that most of us can relate to (many will recall being dragged out to run schools' cross-country events, willingly or otherwise!), in recent years field events including the long jump, shot putt and "weight for distance" throw have enjoyed a revival and developed a strong following across the Defence Forces. This is thanks to the tireless efforts of Comdt Tom Bouchier (3 Inf Bn), our Field Events Rep on the athletics committee and a keen proponent of these more specialized aspects of the sport.



Airman Jason McCormack throwing the shot putt at this year's athletics event in Kilkenny

As well as taking part in athletics events



Ladies 100m Sprint on the Watershed athletic track in Kilkenny at the 2024 event

on-island, Defence Forces members have the fantastic opportunity to represent the organisation at international military events organized by CISM ('Conseil Internationale du sport Militaire' or International Council for Military Sport). At this level, focusing on its area of strength, which is in cross-country running, Defence Forces teams have regularly achieved podium placings in both the men's and women's events at European level CISM events – in Switzerland in 2012 and in Belgium in 2016, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023. In 2018 and 2023 respectively, Capt Liz Carr placed second and third individual in the women's race at the international CISM cross-country in Belgium, an outstanding achievement at this elite level. In 2022 and 2023 Sgmn Josh Hourihan-O'Sullivan (Army Reserve) placed fifth overall in a world class men's race at the same event.

The athletics committee are currently planning for the Defence Forces cross-country championships, which are scheduled to take place in 1 Brigade on 06 November. The senior men's and women's event at the cross-country championships will double as "trial" races to select teams to represent the Defence Forces at the CISM international cross-country in Belgium in mid-December. As well as the senior/trial events, there will also be events for junior/novice athletes and masters runners (over age 40). Runners of all ages/abilities (PDF and Reserve) are welcome and encouraged to take part. For information on upcoming athletics events keep an eye out on IKON and on the Connect app. Details of your local athletics Rep can also be found on the Connect app.

PROFILES OF ATHLETICS COMMITTEE MEMBERS PAST AND PRESENT



Warrant Officer (Retired) Tom Kelly

Warrant Officer Tom Kelly (Retired)

Tom joined the Defence Forces as an apprentice in 1972 qualifying as an electrician in 1975. He later qualified as an electrical artificer in the Naval Service and went on to serve there for the next 42 years. He is one of five brothers to pass through the army apprentice school. As well as being a committee member for many years Tom was a keen athlete in his day. Highlights of his athletics career include being a member of the winning

Naval Service team in the "All Army" junior cross-country championships in 1991, winning by a narrow two-point margin (the first time the NS had ever won a cross-country team event at all-army level). Tom joined the athletics committee in 1989 as the Naval Service Rep. Highlights of his time on the committee include helping to establish the Defence Forces 10-mile road race in 2013, being team manager for the Defence Forces team at the CISM international cross-country in Belgium in 2016, where the men's team placed third; and, being team manager for the Naval Service team that won the Defence Forces senior cross-country championships in 2016. A stalwart of the athletics committee, Tom was active in organizing events across the Defence Forces until he retired in 2017 after a remarkable 45-year long career.

Commandant Tom O'Keefe (Retired)

Tom joined the Defence Forces as a cadet in 1976 and was commissioned 2 years later. A keen long-distance runner as well as an orienteer, highlights of Tom's athletics career include placing second individual in the "All Army" novice cross country championships in 1983 and winning 6 team medals in the All Army senior cross-country championships over the years. He also represented the DF in the CISM World Orienteering Championships in Hungary in 1993. From an early stage Tom was also actively involved in organising athletics events, starting out in an organisational role as the cross-country Rep for the Curragh Command in 1980. He was also closely involved in the CISM world military cross-country championships on the two occasions when that event was held in Ireland - in 1994 he was a liaison officer for one of the visiting delegations and in 1998 he assisted Comdt (Retired) Pat Healy on the organising committee. Tom served as chairman of the DF Athletics Committee from 2003 to 2013 (handing over the role to the writer in 2013). He retired from the Defence Forces in 2015 after long and loyal service to both the organisation and the Athletics Committee.



Comdt (Retired) Tom O'Keefe (Yellow T-Shirt) Pictured with members of the DF Athletics Committee



CPO Cian McParland at a recent event

CPO Cian McParland

Cian joined the Defence Forces in 1999 and has worked in the Naval Service in a communications role since then. A keen runner, he has been a member of the athletics committee as the Naval Service Rep since 2014 and will be well known across the Defence Forces for his relentless hard work behind the scenes organising athletic events each year. He is rightly proud of his role in establishing the Defence Forces 10-mile road race which was inaugurated in 2013 and has been successfully hosted by Cian and his colleagues in the Naval Service every year since. Cian was team manager of the Defence Forces cross-country team at the CISM international cross-country in Schaffen, Belgium in 2018 where both the men's and woman's teams achieved podium placings. He was also team manager of the winning Naval Service team at the Defence Forces senior men's cross-country championships in 2016.

CQMS Pat Byrne

Pat joined the Defence Forces in 1994 completing his military training in 3 Infantry Battalion. From the outset, Pat established himself as an outstanding athlete in long-distance events. His many athletic achievements are too numerous to mention but they can be summarised to include: winning the Defence Forces senior men's cross-country championships on 12 occasions, winning the An Cosantóir 10K on 9 occasions; and representing the Defence Forces in CISM international military competition on no less than 21 occasions. Pat joined the athletics committee in 2010 and since then he has organised a number of DF championship events and acted as team manager at international events including in Switzerland in 2012 at a European level CISM cross-country event where the Defence Forces men's team placed second, and at the European cross-country event in Schaffen, Belgium in 2019, where both the men's and women's teams achieved podium placings. Pat has spent most of his career in the DFCT. Still an active competitive runner at master's level, he is a member of Tinryland athletics club in Carlow.



CQMS Pat Byrne



Comdt Noel Conway, Warrant Officer (Retired) Tom Kelly and CPO Cian McParland at this year's An Cosantóir 10k race

IRISH DESERTERS OF THE IRISH DEFENCE FORCES DURING WWII

SHOULD THE DESERTERS BE REMEMBERED, COMMEMORATED OR CELEBRATED? OR IGNORED AND FORGOTTEN?

ARTICLE BY CAPT CIÁN HARTE

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAPT CIÁN HARTE

Such a question leads inevitably to highly emotional responses for those against and for any of the propositions – often not unreasonable points of concern are raised by both sides of the argument even if, as stated above, many are obscured by emotion. If one argues for a commemoration, he may be labelled an appeaser of the British imperial past. If one argues against the observance, it is easy to be labelled a whitewasher of Ireland's complex historical past and a spiritual and ideologue Republican. As the historian Doherty correctly pointed out regarding even the general topic of Southern Irishmen joining the British Army (leaving aside deserters for the moment), it was and remains today very 'difficult to have a rational discussion of the matter at all'. The fact remains that this is a hugely complex question and in endeavouring to make any form of conclusion one must dig deep into the psychological scar tissue of Irish military and political history. In so doing, the crimes of the British imperial past inevitably come to light, and the actions of the deserters are thus viewed through the prism of the Irish historical past and the island's very troubled relationship with the United Kingdom.

Kelly aptly sums up the difficulty Ireland faces when a question such as this one is posed: 'Ireland's past is too fractured and violent for there to be a national consensus on who or what to remember'. In January 2020, the attempted commemoration of the RIC and DMP quickly descended into an identity politics argument with accusations of spitting on the graves of Irish patriots and treachery thrown around. The seemingly double treacherous nature of the WWII Irish soldier of firstly deserting Ireland's Defence Forces and secondly enlisting into the ranks of the old enemy will be a political and cultural tightrope to balance when the time comes for all parties involved – most notably that of the Irish Defence Force organisation itself.

Should They Have Been Pardoned?

The official state pardon exonerated all Irish Defence Forces soldiers who deserted. It made no effort to specifically pardon those who left and joined the fight on the side of the Allies. Min. of Justice, T.D. Mr Alan Shatter pardoned all these individuals without investigating a single case. Hypothetically, someone who deserted and went to work in the United States because they had enough of the army lifestyle was also pardoned. Many deserters did not desert to re-enlist with a different army but

rather to leave the military altogether. For many, the army lifestyle was not for them and being unable to discharge (there existed an embargo on discharges until the Emergency ceased), they deserted and were pardoned.

James Dunbar of Levinstown stated before a judge that he "did not like the army" and had no intention of returning. Matthew Gunning of Trim took 'French leave', as the Garda superintendent stated. Private David Staunton of Brickens, Ballyhaunis – when asked by the judge did you "get tired of it or what?" The young Staunton stated: "Yes Sir". Private William Lamb of Green Street, Dublin, said upon being arrested that he "did not want to soldier anymore". Charged on the same day and brought before the same court and judge, Private Michael O'Leary stated he did not want to rejoin the army. He, too, seemingly had not enjoyed the rigours of military life. For some, rejoining after deserting the army was not an option – life in the military was not for everybody. Christopher Rooney (18) stated upon his arrest, he had "no intention" of rejoining the army. It is stories such as these when details rather than bland generalisations are forthcoming makes one question the necessity and whether it was the right judgement to make to pardon all deserters.

It can be reasonably asserted that to blanket ban everybody, in the first place, was wrong, and to blanket pardon everybody is also wrong.

The State has pardoned the deserters – this is a fact. Thus, when WWII commemorations commence in the coming decades, will the organisation that the deserters left have to commemorate and remember deserters from their own ranks? Is there an historical precedent for such an occurrence? Eunin O'Halpin stated at the time of the pardon debate: they 'did their duty by the state. And I think to honour deserters is to insult the people who didn't desert'.

Heroes or Traitors?

Outside of the semantics and the legal technicalities of what these men were accused of doing and found guilty of by the Defence Forces and, by extension, the state – how could one not call the men who liberated concentration camps a hero; who braved the Atlantic waters and stormed the beaches of Normandy, a hero? From a European perspective, these men helped liberate the continent from Fascist regimes and illiberal ideologies. Irrespective of what they had been convicted of doing in absentia in Ireland, did subsequent brave actions acquit them of previous crimes? However, it is difficult to be certain that the motives individuals would claim retrospectively for their actions in the war years are those which prevailed at the time.

Were these men simply mercenaries or liberators of Europe? The truth



Figure 2. John Finn (b. 14/11/1909) from Marlow, Ballymote, Co. Sligo. Labourer and Baker by trade. Served in the British Army during WWII. Returned to live in his native Ballymote after the war. Picture courtesy of next of kin.



Figure 1. Gunner Stephen McManus (seated). Stephen had joined the Irish Defence Forces for a brief period during the Emergency in the early stages of WWII. Stephen opted to desert from the organisation. He went on to join the British Army serving in the 144th Battery, 35th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery. After basic training, he would be sent out to defend the strategically important city of Singapore. The Japanese however overran the city and by the 15th of February 1942, Stephen had become a POW of the Japanese Empire. Stephen would remain a POW until his death on the 27th of July 1943. Gunner McManus is buried in the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Thailand. He died as a POW while building the infamous Burma railway. Picture courtesy of his surviving next of kin.



Figure 3. Gunner Paddy Reid (pictured 2nd from left) served in the Anti-Tank Regiment of the British Army. Picture taken in Burma during WWII. Irish Independent (13/06/2013).

is probably neither but like so much in history, somewhere in the middle. Trying to generalise large numbers removes the individualism of many of the decisions and reasons and never gets us closer to the truth. Judge them from an Irish military court-martial or legal framework, and

they are guilty of desertion; judge them from a higher moral compass not bound by national laws, and these men contributed to a heroic struggle and were liberators of peoples from authoritarian regimes.

By following the latter point, it is apt to point out for those few who did desert for idealistic reasons how ironic in the historic sense their cause was, in that Irishmen would have to join the traditional foreign oppressor to defend the sovereignty of Europe and, by extension that of Ireland. Even if this were not the case in individual personal motivations – it is undoubtedly an overarching historical truth.

An interesting perspective on the deserters of WWII has come from retired officers of the Defence Forces, many of whom wrote opinion pieces for the Irish Times of the amnesty legislation in 2012. They made it 'clear that their objection centres squarely on the question of desertion and that that they bear no grievance against the tens of thousands of Irish men and women who directly joined the British forces during the war'.

To Be Remembered, Commemorated or Celebrated? Or Ignored and Forgotten?

Having analysed some of the pertinent and contentious points that may refrain or convince one from committing to either side of the argument, the question remains whether we should commemorate, celebrate, merely remember, or ignore and forget the Irish deserters of the DF during WWII.

Can we celebrate their activities? Or is it sufficient to commemorate? Or can we ever commemorate deserters? If not, should we, by extension, ignore them and cast them aside? Does their story deserve to be told? If so, how does one write it – within what context? The Allied cause during WWII was a heroic struggle with herculean effort. By extension, then, are

the soldiers' heroes too? Even if they did not fight for noble reasons per se, should they be deemed heroes? Is there a correlation, and instead, should there be between a man seeking adventure and a man who ends up liberating so many?

To Irishmen at the time, Imperialism and Nazism/Fascism were interchangeable evil terms. Reflectively, of course, one would find it exceedingly difficult to argue that these men's contribution was not for a great cause, but did people know at the time – the ordinary person on a Dublin street or in the West of Ireland? Did they know of the atrocities of the Nazi regime? And a bit more controversially, even if they did so, was it still the correct decision for soldiers to desert their national forces?

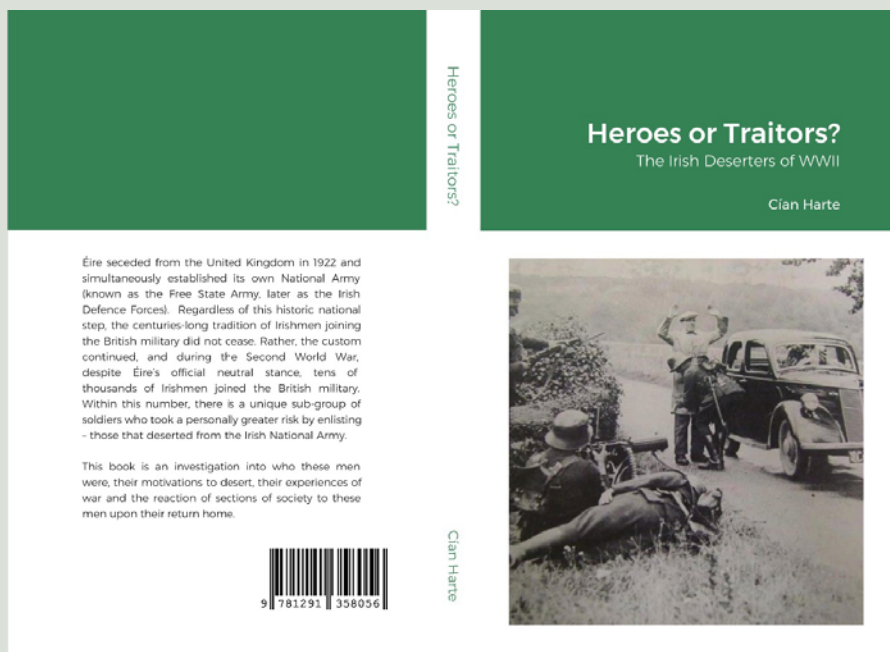
One can argue that the contribution of Irish volunteers in the war against Fascism deserves to be honoured. There is no credible or substantial evidence that their involvement was the cause of any diminution in their sense of Irish nationality or even, for most, a rejection of Irish neutrality. This does not mean that unintentionally and inadvertently, the act of desertion increased the likelihood of invasion or at least the chances of a successful defence in the event of an invasion. While the men may not have fought for the values they ended up defending, one may be living under a far different regime today without their contribution to a wider collective sacrifice.

Sometimes there are only perspectives and no truthful answer to the question of heroes or traitors. Humans naturally like categorising and placing people and arguments into black-and-white brackets, but some questions are too complicated. I am sure if we go into the weeds of every single story, some soldiers were pardoned who committed a war crime during WWII – the law of averages dictates so. Therefore, when the inevitable question of how to approach such a sensitive topic arises, maybe it is prudent to commemorate all the lives who suffered and were lost because of WWII and not to pick and choose between who deserves to be remembered and who does not and to what degree characters in the story are recognised – perhaps everybody deserves to be remembered but not celebrated is the answer. Technically, they were deserters (broke an oath to the state), but to state they committed a treasonous act may be pushing it too far (from a European perspective).

There are facts, but there is no universal truth. There are only perceptions. We are not arguing over what happened, which can be resolved. Was everybody wrong? Were the soldiers wrong to desert? Was the de Valera government wrong to be seemingly punitive once they realised how gruesome the Nazis were? And are we wrong here today in arguing over them for ill or good? Perhaps it is time to let the dead rest – and the past... remain the past.

Author: Capt Cian Harte was born in Riverstown, Co. Sligo in 1991. He holds a B.A. and M.A. in Ancient History from Queen's University Belfast and an M.A. in Strategic Studies from UCC. He has self-published five history books to date including his latest: 'Heroes or Traitors: Irish Deserters of WWII' (2021), available from www.lulu.com or any online book retailers.

Capt Harte's book, 'Heroes or Traitors? The Irish Deserters of WWII' is available from www.lulu.com and online booksellers



THE ARMY RESERVES PROFESSIONAL PART-TIME SOLDIER'S TRAINING

ARTICLE BY CPL LUKASZ GANCARZ

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CPL LUKASZ GANCARZ



Cpl Moloney introduces the students to arms drill



Recruit Haran representing her County in Gaelic Football

Recruit Ellie Haran is from County Dublin, currently in her final year of college studying Sociology and Social Policy in Trinity College Dublin. She also works part-time in the pro shop at a hotel and golf resort.

"I have been and still am heavily involved in sport namely GAA and golf. I've held many leadership roles in many areas of my life over the years and this year in particular I am the captain and chairperson of the Trinity College Ladies GAA club.

I began to attend training nights with the RDF in July 2023 and I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience so far. I have found the RDF in Cathal Brugha to be a very welcoming and positive learning environment. From foot drill to physical training, to lectures and marching in the St. Patricks Day Parade in Dublin '24, I have learnt a huge amount in terms of discipline, respect and commitment.

My RDF journey so far is unlike anything I've ever been involved in, especially as we progress with our training in weapon handling and firing with the ultimate goal of supporting the PDF. Although the uniform inspections to date have been challenging, the high standards expected from us as a platoon is continuously fostering ownership, cohesion, and responsibility from us as a unit.

The values and skills instilled throughout RDF training are transferable and can certainly be applied throughout one's civilian career and everyday life. I have always had a keen interest in Óglaigh na hÉireann and am really looking forward to where this path leads me."

Since the introduction of Single Force Concept and reorg in 2013, the training, service and career options of Reservists have been continuously improving. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Army Reserve personnel provided support not only to their PDF colleagues but most importantly to the civil service. Countless duties were covered in the COVID testing and vaccination centres, and multiple trained Reservists covered medical assignments on behalf of the Defence Forces. As requests for support relating to the pandemic increased for the PDF, their AR colleagues stepped up to cover additional work parties as required.

During the path from becoming an inductee to a Three Star Private each soldier is taught a variety of skills including foot & arms drill, weapons handling, fieldcraft, first aid, navigation and many more life skills such as teamwork, time management and self-discipline. New recruits come from all walks of life. Different backgrounds, work and life experiences are one of the major strengths of the organisation. Recruits Ellie Haran, Jan Sztemon and Simran Saini share their views and personal experiences with the initial stages of training in the 3 Rifle Platoon, D Company. While my career in media has been fulfilling, thanks to a combination of sheer luck and hard work transitioning from photographer to videographer, and now managing production at a leading Irish video agency, as I approached my thirties, there was always something missing. I couldn't shake the desire to live out my childhood dream of joining the military.



Recruit Sztemon during weapons handling class

Recruit Jan Sztemon, originally from the Czech Republic, calls Ireland his home over a decade now.

"Since I was a child, I've been torn between two passions: becoming a professional photographer and experiencing the thrill of military life.

While my career in media has been fulfilling, thanks to a combination of sheer luck and hard work transitioning from photographer to videographer, and now managing production at a leading Irish video agency, as I approached my thirties, there was always something missing. I couldn't shake the desire to live out my childhood dream of joining the military.

Cpl Moloney and Recruit Saini going through weapon details



Recruit Simran Saini was born in Punjab, India and moved to Ireland at the age of 7. She graduated in October 2023 from Trinity College Dublin where she studied General adult nursing. "In my civilian life I work as a critical care nurse in an intensive care unit in Dublin. I play cricket for Phoenix cricket which I enjoy quite a bit. I like to go travel any opportunity I get.

I had always been interested to join the Defence Forces. The RDF allows me to be a part of the Defence Forces and also allows me to continue my civilian job. The reason I joined the RDF is because I thought it would provide discipline in my life and it does exactly that. The RDF gives me the courage to push myself further whether it's in terms of physical performance or building important skills. For me the most fun part of training is learning skills that are particular to the Defence Forces, which otherwise would be impossible to acquire in my civilian life. Since I have joined the RDF, I have learnt skills that I can utilise in my civilian life. The most useful skills that I

enhanced through the RDF and use the most in my civilian job include time management, organisational and communication skills. The RDF has also provides an environment where I can establish new connections and friendships with people who I would not have the opportunity to connect with in my civilian life.

One of the hardest part of training so far was probably getting use to the routine during the first weekend training. However, myself and the other recruits quickly adapted and looked after each other quite well."

Being a Platoon Sergeant is a full-time job, however leading a recruit Platoon requires that extra bit of leadership and a full personal dedication.

— Sgt Eric Brennan shares his experiences with the Platoon

The latest recruits of 7 Infantry Battalion D Company Army Reserve commenced their first weekend of the new RDF recruit syllabus in Feb this year. To date their introduction to life in uniform has been one evening per week, covering the basics of training such as their initial issue of kit, foot drill, and classroom lessons. Normally these troops report to barracks after coming straight from their work, study/education, extra

curriculars or after spending time with family in order to undergo hours of training on top of their normal commitments. Individuals from all over Dublin and neighbouring countries travel to Cathal Brugha Barracks just to

The Recruits are introduced to weapon cleaning



have the opportunity to put on the uniform and serve.

It's fair to say that when an RDF recruit spends their first weekend on programme, they undergo a culture shock. Time in barracks is no longer transient, and from the moment they report in, they get the full military experience and begin to understand the training demands that go with it. The pace of training programme has to be measured and impactful to ensure recruits gain the most from their time during training. The objective of the training staff is to ensure the programme is effectively delivered and that students are brought through to the culmination of passing out where these recruits will be promoted to Two-Star Privates.

The RDF recruit syllabus spans a period of 6 weekends and 2 full weeks in addition to regular training nights once per week, but for this cohort of troops they will always remember their first weekend in Feb 2024 when they would spend their first 2 days in green. New terms of responsibility such as Orderly Sgt or Billet Orderly are introduced and being somebody's "buddy" in the buddy system (where two recruits look out for and are responsible for one another) becomes more important than ever.

Troops were tasked with reporting in at 0830hrs ready for PT. Quickly check parade was completed, accommodation was assigned, and personal kit tidied away; before they knew it, they were warming up and

preparing for a light group run around the barracks. Ranging in ages from 18-35 years old, it's important that troops understand their commitment to fitness and stay on top of their physical ability. For an infantry unit this is hugely important and for some individuals, they would not have had the exposure of group/team fitness before which may present new challenges to them. The weekend quickly progressed into introductory lessons on the Styer assault rifle, foot drill and other lectures such as Duties of the Guard, Care of Hearing and RDF Career Development.

In a couple of months' time these troops will carry forward their rifle training, getting the opportunity to test the principles of marksmanship, Immediate Action drills and finally get a chance to squeeze that trigger and put rounds on target. For a recruit this is an unforgettable experience, and no doubt something they will all bond over during their time together. The completion of basic weapons training will form the basis of everything they will take on in the future in their new role and is an exciting milestone to complete. But for now, the experience of first time eating in the mess, preparing billets and uniforms for inspection, learning how to care for and clean for weapons or practicing drill on the main square will be their focus.

Introduction to safety precautions



As the Platoon Sgt, I was extremely happy with the enthusiasm and effort the troops demonstrated over their first weekend. Their new environment is very different from what they are used to, and they only have a short time to acclimatise and assimilate the content the training staff present. For the training staff it is a prideful moment to see troops progressing well and the process of delivering training can unlock experiences which may have fallen to the back of one's mind when we ourselves first walked through the gates. For myself that was over 12 years ago, and I still think of that experience with great fondness. Putting oneself in that frame of mind helps to keep things grounded, allowing training staff to look at things from the recruit's point of view. It's fascinating to see people from all walks of life such as Craftspersons, Doctors and Nurses, Engineers, Barristers, Students etc, absorb the training material and to see it take. I have no doubt that bright careers lie ahead of these reservists, and I speak for all training staff when I say we're privileged to have had a hand in it.

While the training gets more advanced, recruits will soon get an opportunity to put the rifle training to practice on their first range session as well as their first two week long Full Time Training. While being a part of Army Reserves requires a fair investment of spare time, being a member of the organisation is a life truly less ordinary.

DF Sports & Clubs Update

FOR REGULAR UPDATES ON ANY OF THESE CLUBS, PLEASE LOG ONTO THE CONNECT APP



Rowing

The Defence Forces Rowing club has recently returned to winter training in preparation for the Rowing Ireland season which kicks off in the coming weeks. Behind the scenes our members are putting in a lot of time both on water and indeed on land training in order to be more successful in our second year as an affiliated club within Rowing Ireland.

The club currently are based out of the National Rowing Centre Cork, however one big development is the decentralisation of our club back to the old grounds formally occupied by the Defence Forces Rowing Association in Islandbridge.

Recent works involved clearing the site commenced in early Sept and our heartfelt thanks go to CQMS John Judge of G4 2 Bde for all his help for this. Our long-term plan is to return rowing to Dublin for our current rowers based within Dublin and surrounding areas. However, long

The land and plans for development in Island Bridge



term plans for Islandbridge may also involve utilising the site for all DF wide water sports, such as Triathlons, Kayaking, Diving, Adventure Races and of course Rowing.

Boxing



The Defence Forces boxers have begun their preparations for the upcoming Elite Championships. Pictured are Comdt Shane Courtney, Officer Commanding DFPES, alongside Pte Sean Mari, the current 51kg Elite Champion, Pte Shauna Kearney, the

current 75kg Elite Champion, and Sgmn Aaron O'Donoghue, the current 63.5kg Elite Champion. This marks the first time the Defence Forces have won three Elite titles at a single championship. Also pictured are Sgt John Molloy, Head Coach and Technical Coordinator, and Comdt John Moody, Team Manager and President of Defence Forces Boxing. The boxers have received tremendous support from their Military Units and colleagues, whose encouragement has been invaluable in their success.

Pte Sean Mari is aiming for his fourth Elite Boxing Title this year, with Pte Ross Hickey, a former Elite Champion, in his corner. Having transitioned into a coaching role, Pte Hickey brings a wealth of experience at the

elite level to support Mari in his pursuit of victory. Leading the team is Sgt John Molloy, whose leadership and expertise have been instrumental in their success. Sgt Molloy has achieved unprecedented results at both national and international levels, with his meticulous and strategic approach elevating the Defence Forces boxing team to new heights. His dedication, passion, and attention to detail make him the driving force and the very heartbeat of the team.



DF Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu club:
Training Day at civilian club



Soccer

Women's Soccer Team played the Belgian Armed Forces 28th August 2024. An intense match where Belgian Armed Forces Came out with a 3-1 Win.



04th Sept 2024

Men's and Women's Teams were presented with their International Caps from Brian Kerr in McKee Barracks.

A presentation was also made to RSM (retired) Anthony Jinks for his contribution to DF soccer.



Brian Kerr speaking about the international cap prior to the presentation



Sgt Kim Turner receiving the international cap

26th Sept 2024

Women's Team Played a Friendly match against Newbridge Town FC. Despite the wet and cold conditions, it was an intense match with the DF Women's team coming away with a 5-3 victory.



On the 16th of October the men's team played the French armed forces which resulted in a 2-2 draw.



November Joint Fixture between Men's & Women's Team who will travel to play the UKAF in Belfast.

Hurling



Lt Col Bates, DFTC HQ, presenting the trophy to the winning team captain Pte Josh Moore



The Inter Bde Trophy which is a direct replica of the Liam MacCarthy cup (GAA Hurling Trophy)

On Thursday, October 10th, 2024, in Faithful Fields, Co. Offaly, the Defence Forces hosted the Inter-Bde Hurling Championship.



3 INF BN Team Captain Pte Josh Moore with the Inter Bde Trophy

The day began with 3 Inf Bn facing DFTC/AC/DFHQ, where 3 Inf Bn emerged victorious, securing their spot in the final.

At the same time, 2 Bde competed against 1 Bde. The teams were tied at halftime, but 2 Bde played exceptionally well in the second half, ultimately defeating 1 Bde.

This set the stage for two exciting matches: the All-Army final and the inaugural Secondary All-Army final.

In the All-Army final, 2 Bde took on 3 Inf Bn. Despite a strong performance, 2 Bde lost to a formidable 3 Inf Bn team featuring several highly skilled hurlers. With this victory, 3 Inf Bn has retained the All-Army trophy since 2019.



Sgt Noel Poynton
2 Bde Hurling Rep and manager

This year also marked the first-ever All-Army Secondary Hurling Final, contested between 1 Bde and DFTC/AC/DFHQ. It was a fiercely fought match, with 1 Bde emerging as the champions.



3 INF BN winning team

Upcoming events are 23rd of Oct DF V AIB in St Vincents GAA Club at 1300.

21 Nov DF V AGS in Westmanstown Gaa Dublin.

Golf

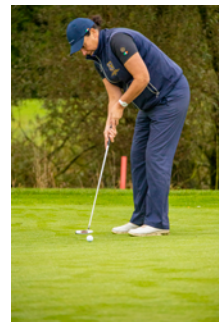
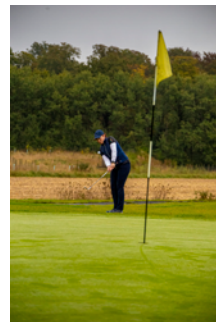


(L to R) Cpl Joe Hanningan, Capt Mark Doyle, Comdt Regina Foley, Sgt Niall Kennedy, Comdt John Fitzgerald (Manager), Cpl Richard Finn, Cpl Jennifer Kingston, Pte Lee Scanlon, Pte James Everard at this year's CISM Regional Golf Championships in German

The Defence Forces golf team travelled to Germany to compete at the CISM Regional Golf Championships from the 29th Sep to the 3rd October. The competition was played on Munster-Tinnen Golf Course.

Cpl Richard Finn, current Defence Forces Senior Champion won the Individual Gold with Pte Lee Scanlon in his first CISM outing winning Silver and Sgt Niall Kennedy winning Bronze following an exciting playoff for third place that also involved Pte James Everard. Comdt Regina Foley

won Silver in the Ladies section and captured the first Ladies CISM Golf medal as a result, missing out on the Gold medal by one shot.



Gaelic Football



Both the Men and Women's DF Gaelic Football teams will play the Fire Services Northern Ireland on Wed, 13 Nov 2024 in the Athletic Grounds (Armagh).

Men's game at 1400hrs and Women's game at 1200hrs.

NEW VESSELS FOR NAVAL SERVICE

BY LT CDR TONY O'LEARY
PHOTOS BY CPL NEVILLE COUGHLAN &
A/SEAMAN DAVID JONES



The Naval Service, as the maritime element of the Defence Forces, is the state's principle sea-going agency. As an island nation, 99% of our trade is transported by sea. To exercise and uphold the state's sovereignty and obligations, the Naval Service patrols Ireland's 220 million maritime acres, an area 12 times larger than the island of Ireland.

Due to the age profile of the current fleet (six of the eight vessels are over 30 years old) and to fulfil the roles assigned by government, approval was given in 2007 to initiate a tender competition to purchase two new off-shore patrol vessels (OPVs), with an option to purchase a third such vessel (government recently confirmed that this option will be exercised).

Following this decision, a new vessel project team comprised of subject matter experts from all branches of the Naval Service was established. After developing a detailed concept-of-operations for the vessel, a comprehensive specification running to some 400 pages, was written and issued to prospective candidates as part of the invitation-to-tender process. This process culminated in 2010 with the signing of a contract with Babcock Marine for the provision of two gom OPVs. The vessels were to be built in Appledore Shipyard in Devon to a proven hull design produced by STX Marine (Canada). The new OPVs, although similar in appearance to LÉ Roisín, will feature a number of substantial improvements to the tried and tested long-range patrol vessel (LPV) class used by the Naval Service since 1999.

Following an in-depth analysis of prevailing and predicted weather patterns in the Naval Service's area of operations it was decided to lengthen the vessels by approximately 10m to an overall length of 90m and increase displacement to approximately 2,000 tonnes. This will improve overall operational effectiveness, efficiency, durability and overall crew comfort.

The new vessels are to be longitudinally framed rather than the transverse framing used in the previous class. This will have

the effect of strengthening the vessels and making them more resistant to the structural damage associated with operating in the heavy North Atlantic seas.

Another first for the Naval Service is the inclusion of passive roll-reduction tanks in addition to the active fin-stabilisation system fitted to previous vessels. These passively controlled U-shaped tanks will reduce the ships' roll profile at low speed (below 10kts), which will allow for safer launch and recovery of the ships' rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs).

A new propulsion system, allowing for speeds of 23kts, is provided by two medium-speed, Wartsila engines capable of developing 5,400Kw each via reduction gearboxes and two five-bladed, controllable-pitch propellers. The vessels are also capable of low-speed operation (approximately 8kts) through a power take-in electric motor driven from the ships' electrical alternators, and connected to both shaft lines via a dedicated clutching system. This option will improve fuel efficiency, reduce main engine maintenance and enhance the vessels' 'green' profile and carbon footprint.

Another change is in the introduction of dynamic positioning, a computer-controlled system that will automatically maintain heading or position by utilising the ships' 450Kw Bowthruster main engines and two independently controlled rudders. This system will greatly assist navigational watch-keepers in operations involving remotely-operated underwater vehicles, and operations involving unmanned aerial vehicles.

On the bridge, a completely integrated mission system suite is being added, comprising an integrated navigation bridge system; internal and external communications outfit; and an electro-optical surveillance/gunfire control system, which provides control and prediction for the Oto Melara 76mm main armament in the surface- and air-engagement role. Access to engine room monitoring and alarm system and the ships' extensive CCTV system

is also available from the bridge, which will aid damage control and fire-fighting ops. Other new bridge equipment includes a 3-D echo sounder, which allows for limited seabed mapping; a voyage data recorder; a Raytheon Mins 4000 laser gyro-compass; and an extensive array of direction-finding equipment.

Containers - The after deck has been redesigned and enlarged to enable deployment of three 20ft ISO standard containers. Power supplies are provided for standard, refrigeration or specialised Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) containers depending on mission profile. Independent movement of containers is

representative/ project manager Lieutenant Commander Tony O'Leary followed some months later by Lieutenant Donncha O'Brien, designated Marine Engineering Officer (MEO) for Vessel 1. Both Officers were fully integrated with the Babcock design and production team and were tasked with scrutinising every aspect of vessel build so as to ensure value for money and a high quality end product built to specific ship class requirements (Lloyds Special Service Craft).

LÉ Samuel Beckett arrived home to Ireland in April 2014 and was commissioned into the Naval Service on 17th May. The



possible utilising vessels hydraulic crane rated to lift 5 tonne at maximum extension.

RIBS - Vessels will carry two MST 8m inboard diesel RIBs and also be fitted with a cradle above the after deck for a third RIB. RIBs will be deployed from single point davits and will be capable of operating at speeds of up to 30 knots in moderate sea conditions. These RIBs are a variant of those in operation with the Dutch Marines and are capable of tactical "over-the-horizon" operations for force protection, identification, surveillance and interception operations.

Accommodation - The vessel has been designed for a complement of 54 personnel + 1 VIP (44 Crew and 10 trainees). Officers and senior NCOs will have single berths, with double berths for Junior Ratings, and two four berth cabins for trainees. Two gymnasiums containing a range of commercial fitness equipment and an internet room are provided for use by ships crews.

Medical Facilities - The vessels will be provided with sick bays fitted out to provide primary medical care, resuscitation, stabilisation and holding capability for two persons for both own-crew needs and Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations. The sick bays will also be fitted with equipment to allow for a Tele Medicine Communications Link to land via Ku Band satellite communications system.

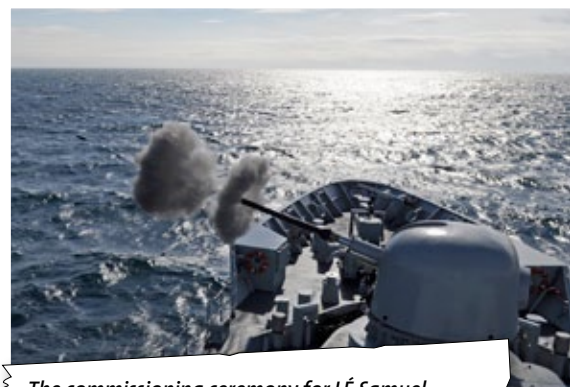
Mast - Vessels will be fitted with a newly designed steel mast allowing for internal access to Radar platforms and yardarms. New variant masts have been designed to allow for the fitting of further equipment at a future date as newer, more improved technology is developed.

Construction of the first of the new vessels began in December 2011, with the keel being laid on the 18th May 2012 by Commodore Mark Mellett, Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service. The keel laying ceremony was attended by senior representatives of the Naval Service and the Department of Defence, as well as Naval Service members involved in the project. This date also marked the arrival on site of the Naval Service permanent on-site

commissioning ceremony was held at Sir John Rogerson's Quay with the spectacular Samuel Beckett Bridge in the background. In attendance were An Taoiseach and then Minister for Defence Mr Enda Kenny TD and the niece of Samuel Beckett Ms Caroline Murphy. Following this event the Lord Mayor of Cork City Mary Shields welcomed LÉ Samuel Beckett to Cork City for the official twinning ceremony. The ship is now fully operational and has completed her first patrol protecting Ireland's maritime jurisdiction.

The cutting of steel for the second vessel commenced in March 2013, with the modular unit construction on-going. Forecast delivery date for Vessel 2 (LÉ James Joyce) is March 2015 and it is anticipated Vessel 3 will be delivered early in 2016. ■

The LÉ before the ships names means Long Éireannach or Irish Ship.



The commissioning ceremony for LÉ Samuel Beckett at Sir John Rogerson's Quay with An Taoiseach Mr Enda Kenny TD, reviewing a guard of honour drawn from the Naval Service on May 17th.



