

THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

AN COSANTÓIR



Óglaigh
na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



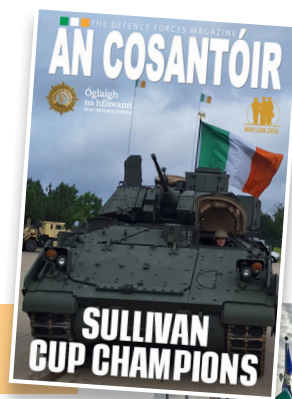
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SULLIVAN CUP CHAMPIONS



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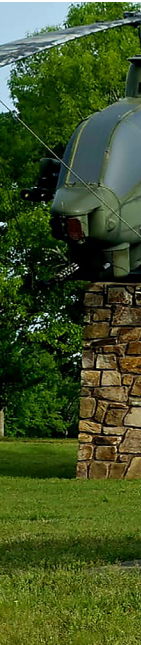
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From the editor

Hello and welcome to the May/June edition of An Cosantóir. In this edition we have various articles from international competitions, featuring the Sullivan Cup, AFSAM 2026 and The Best Warrior Competition. As units continue to train hard at home, it shows on the international stage - whether it's on competition or overseas duties. We welcomed home the 127 Inf Bn UNIFIL as their challenging mission came to an end, and we wish luck to the 128 Inf Bn as they start their mission in Lebanon. Preparation for the An Cosantóir 10k race began earlier this year and we are delighted to feature the 10k race training programme and this year's t-shirt design - designed by Airman Sam Gibney. Keep an eye on our Instagram and Connect pages for updates on the race @Ancosantoir. We hope you enjoy this edition of An Cosantóir.

"The Strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." — Phil Jackson





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Front Cover

Tpr Tristan Regan in the drivers seat of the Bradley during the Sullivan Cup competition

Back Cover

An Cosantóir 2026 poster

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DF SUCCESS AT THE SULLIVAN CUP

ARTICLE BY LT COLM MEADE - 1ACS

The Sullivan Cup is legendary within the global armoured warfare community. Held at Fort Benning, Georgia, this biennial competition is designed to push the world's finest tank and Bradley crews to their absolute physical and mental limits. Traditionally a showcase of the best armour crews of the United States military, the competition tests everything from soldiering skills to lethal gunnery.

For the crew representing the Defence Forces Cavalry Corps, entering this arena wasn't just about competing; it was about validating Irish training on the global stage. It is proving that what we teach in this organisation holds up internationally. It was about confronting a completely unfamiliar platform and matching our skills and knowledge with crews who live and breathe armour daily.

Laying the Foundation

The expression of interest was answered, and the Cavalry School selected its team of five consisting of Lt Colm Meade, Sgt Shane Molloy, Tpr Tristan Regan, Lt Sean Dempsey and Sgt Thomas Conlon. The group knew that to survive the Sullivan Cup, their fundamental soldiering skills had to be second nature. The training regime in the DFTC was relentless, focusing heavily on peak physical fitness, medical, Call for Fire, AFV recognition and pistol marksmanship.

Medical training was provided by the exceptional staff of the Central Medical Unit (CMU) with the team undergoing Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) drills, ensuring they could apply tourniquets, pack wounds, and manage airways under extreme duress.





Alongside life-saving skills came life-taking precision. Pistol shooting drills were practiced under the supervision of Army Ranger Wing (ARW) instructors until drawing pistols and engaging targets became an extension of muscle memory.

The Artillery School provided the best of instruction within their Call for Fire simulator making the entire team comfortable at engaging targets and communicating with the gun line enhancing tactical knowledge and awareness.

All of this was facilitated by the Cavalry School who provided the team with the tools necessary to succeed providing training support, simulators and the classroom environment needed to spend hours studying doctrine and AFV recognition.

Bradley Train-Up: Mastering a New Platform

Arriving in the United States, the Irish crew faced their biggest unknown, mastering the M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle. The Cavalry Corps utilises a highly versatile but vastly different platform. Transitioning to the heavy, complex Bradley required a total immersion into American mechanised doctrine.

The train-up began with the team mastering driving the heavy tracked vehicle and learning the meticulous art of Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services (PMCS). Understanding how to troubleshoot a thrown track or a fluid leak under time pressure was just as vital as pulling the trigger.

Next came the Gunnery; this consisted of weapons proficiency in the 25mm Chain gun and Coax machine gun alongside the complete crew skills required to operate the Bradley Turret. The training reached its peak by the crew needing to pass a required number of competency-based tests within the Bradley simulators with the gunner and commander engaging targets and managing the vehicle's complex control systems. This paved the way for the team to move on to the live fire phase.

The live fire phase consisted of complex range operations by day and night where the entire team needed to prove their competency and validate the training provided on the vehicle. This ultimately concluded in all five Irish members being qualified as Bradley Drivers, Gunnery and Commanders making the crew eligible to compete.





The Competition: A Test of Steel

When the opening whistle of the Sullivan Cup blew, all the weeks of preparation converged into a blur of adrenaline and excitement. The competition commenced with a punishing physical fitness test designed to completely drain the competitors before

moving into crew assessments on Bradley doctrine, AFV recognition, and Call for Fire under strict time constraints. The pistol qualification was far from a standard range day; it was a high-stress shooting event where crews had to sprint, carry heavy equipment, and engage targets with elevated heart rates and shaky hands.

The heart of the Sullivan Cup lay on the gunnery ranges. The crew faced the daunting day and night shooting tables, communicating clearly over the intercom to track and destroy targets selecting varying types of ammunition depending on the presented threat. This culminated in the spectacular "Thunderdome" shoot-off, a bracket-style, head-to-head live-fire event that pitted the top crews directly against one another in speed and accuracy where team Ireland pulled off a podium finish.

The final event was the "Final Charge." This brutal event combined every single discipline the crew had practiced into one continuous, high-intensity tactical scenario. Under intense pressure, the crew had to operate tactical radios, submit precise

reports, treat simulated casualties, identify enemy AFVs, call in artillery strikes, and execute advanced weapons skills. It was an absolute test of stamina and cognitive preservation under extreme fatigue and pressure.

Reflection: A Victory Through Teamwork

Looking back on the dust, sweat and empty casings of Fort Benning, one truth stands out above all others: nothing in this world is ever won in isolation. A crew is only as strong as the ecosystem that supports it, and the success of the Irish team was built on a foundation of international camaraderie and shared professionalism at home.

The journey began with the world-class instructors of the Defence Forces Training Centre (DFTC) whose professionalism and flawless attitude for the team to excel emboldened a resilience and high-performance attitude to achieve. That excellence was seamlessly matched by the U.S. Army instructors assigned to the Irish team during the Bradley train-up. These American Bradley Instructors and scouts poured their expertise, time and passion into the Irish crew, treating them not as foreign guests, but as brothers-in-arms.

It was this combined dedication that transformed an ambitious crossover mission into a masterclass in interoperability. The Irish Cavalry Corps proved beyond a doubt that with the right attitude, rigorous discipline, and mutual respect, the bonds of professionalism can bridge any gap, master any platform, and stand proud alongside the very best in the world.





BEST OF THE BEST

28 Infantry Battalion competes in Massachusetts Army National Guard 'Best Warrior Competition' 2026

ARTICLE BY COMDT BRIDGET CLARKE

28 Infantry Battalion competitors departed Finner Camp in the early hours destined for Camp Edwards, Cape Cod and not before getting through the challenges of the fuel protests along the way to Dublin Airport. A mixture of nerves and excitement kept us on our toes until we got on the plane.

Arriving in Camp Edwards, the four competitors immediately took advantage of getting to know the area, adjusting to the extremely hot weather which was not expected and embracing the opportunity of a lesson on the Massachusetts Army National Guard (MANG), way of 'call for fire'. One could sense the intensity of the MANG Best Warrior competition 2026 and the four soldiers were fully tuned in to any advice being offered on how best to approach the next three days of gruelling tests.

All the training back in Ireland had come to a head and over the course of the next three days their physical and mental skills would be thoroughly tested. While the soldiers trained as a team, this is an individual

competition from start to finish testing the strength, skill and endurance of each soldier. The four soldiers selected to represent Ireland on this extremely demanding international stage were Sgt Ryan Kelly, Cpl Dylan Quigg, Pte Stephen Mitchell and Pte Dylan McGarrigle.





As soon as the team was selected, and with help from other unit staff, the training began. An intense fully packed seven-week programme was designed to cover all the elements which they would be tested in the competition. Hats off to last year's team (7 Inf Bn), who gave excellent advice from their experience which really helped the team in preparing for this competition. Training included physical fitness training, map reading and navigation by day and night. The soldiers gained extremely valuable training on the weapons being used with the elite Army Ranger Wing (ARW), enhancing their skills and confidence with a range of weapons. They also completed a battlefield first aid training with the Medical School. They spent time with the Artillery School on learning to 'call for fire'. Unit staff carried out revision on Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN). All this training not only prepared them and improved their tactical abilities, but it developed a really strong team rapport and their confidence.

The team arrived in Camp Edwards, the MANG main training facility, an expansive area of over 25,000 acres. There wasn't much time to explore, and it was straight to meeting staff and getting a very rapid familiarisation tour of the Camp before the team got a crash course on how the MANG 'call for fire' for that event. They met soldiers from across the U.S. and their mutual respect, camaraderie and talk of competitiveness was evident, giving a very positive atmosphere from the onset. The team spent their evening preparing kit, receiving briefs and getting to know their U.S. counterparts with many of them eager to share and tell of their Irish heritage and family connections. It felt like home away from home!

D-Day arrived and the competition began at 0500hrs with the new and first time to be tested 'U.S. Army Elite Physical Fitness Assessment' (EPFA). This test set the tone for the day ahead with a one-mile run; Dead stop push-ups; 100 metre sprint; Sandbag lift; 50 metre water carry; 50 metre movement lane finishing off with one mile run, all with your body armour and in a time of 30 minutes. Sgt Kelly had the best time in this event finishing in just over 19 minutes.

Moving swiftly along to the next event, soldiers competed on the ranges in two separate shooting events. The qualification shoot required precision under pressure while the other event, the stress shoot, had soldiers pushing their limits under pressure by initially doing burpees (1 min), then dragging a casualty (160lbs) to different shooting positions and engaging targets with both M4 rifles and M17 pistols, with loud simulators constantly sounding until soldiers crossed the finish line.

From the stress shoot, competitors had to complete a map test and then prepare for the last event of the day, which was a five-hour land navigation test that commenced in daylight and ended well after sunset. Unfamiliar territory, tough terrain and through forestry with limited visibility, soldiers were pushed to their limits. By the time competitors got back to their quarters, they had been on the go for almost 18 hours.

Day 2 began at 0500hrs with 'Warrior Lanes', these focused on testing the soldiers core skills in four challenging events. Events were Medical, 'Call-for-Fire', Mystery event (I won't spoil the surprise for 2027) and Grenade throwing. Each event had its challenges both mental and physical, and it was evident how competitive each competitor was, which added to the competition. Similar to our own training and demonstrating adaptability among other traits, soldiers moved quickly from the Warrior Lanes in tactical gear to transition into their best uniform taking a breather to get some lunch. In the afternoon, competitors wearing their Service Dress (SD No. 1) for the formal part of the competition, had to complete a written multiple-choice exam on U.S. Military knowledge followed by a formal oral board. Senior NCOs conducted an inspection in their No. 1s and interviewed each competitor, putting them under pressure and reviewing their appearance

and demeanour. Finishing day two, all competitors and staff attended the 'Best Warrior' dinner where everyone had an opportunity before the final day to get to know each other and exchange their experiences so far.

Day 3, the final day, started at 0515 hours with competitors making their way to the start line for the culminating and much anticipated event, 12 Mile Foot March wearing body armour, carrying weapons and 35 lbs of gear. This is not for the light hearted and a real display of the finest of soldiers with resilience that cannot be measured. Competitors had to finish this event within three hours and first overall across the finish line was Pte Dylan McGarrigle from the Irish team, in a time of two hours six minutes. With many tired bodies, limping from blisters and muscle pains it truly is a test of mental and physical endurance together with pride.

While all four Irish competitors stood out for their exceptional performances, Cpl Dylan Quigg took first place and winner of the Best Warrior in the NCO category. This was very fitting as a competition supervisor asked Cpl Quigg at the end of the tactical tests, "What did he think of the competition now?" and his reply with a big smile was "Can I do it all again".

The experience was transformational for the 28 Infantry Battalion soldiers. They displayed professionalism, fitness, adaptability, and composure under pressure, acting as ambassadors as much as competitors. Their participation strengthened international military bonds and encouraged further cooperation with the MANG.

The competition served as more than a test; it was a platform for international engagement and mutual learning. Soldiers

exchanged experiences, tactics, camaraderie, bridging divides through shared hardship and mutual respect.

Soldiers from the 28 Infantry Battalion returned home following a once-in-a-lifetime experience, having gained valuable knowledge of U.S. military operations, training methods, and daily life. The time spent training and competing together fostered a stronger sense of pride and teamwork across the group. Participation in the competition significantly contributed to professional growth, strengthening team cohesion, morale, and individual standards of excellence.

Taking part in this competition marked a significant step forward for international cooperation and soldier development. The insights gained in both tactical performance and military-to-military engagement will benefit the 28 Infantry Battalion for years to come. Ultimately, the event was more than a competition; it was a proving ground where soldiers are challenged, lasting bonds are formed, and excellence is achieved, effort, and resilience.



THE STORY OF THE 41ST AND 42ND WINGS COURSE CLASS

ARTICLE BY LT CONOR WALSH

The 41st Wings Course Class (WCC) began their Cadetship as the 41st Regular Air Corps Cadet Class on the 22nd October 2022. The 42nd WCC began their Cadetship as the 42nd Regular Air Corps Cadet Class on the 28th September 2023. Each class began with a weeklong induction in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel.

This challenging stage of training lasted 18 months for the 41st and 10 months for the 42nd. The first phase consisted of basic military training where fitness, drill, deportment, fieldcraft and weapons handling were of utmost importance and practiced on a daily basis.

The remainder of the Cadetship focused on various leadership roles to ensure the Cadets would be ready to commence life as Commissioned Officers in the Defence Forces. Academia became the forefront of the core learning objectives, with Military Law, Irish History and Defence Studies all covered in depth, providing a solid foundation for the Cadets in each of the disciplines. The Cadets then received a Level 7 in Leadership, Management and Defence studies from Maynooth University.

Ground school began in May 2024 for the 41st WCC and August 2024 for the 42nd and lasted for eight intense months. During this time over 800 hours of instruction were given on 13 aviation related subjects ranging from Principles of Flight to Human Performance and Limitations. Instruction was provided by both

FTS Instructors and subject matter experts from elsewhere in the Air Corps. The classes sat examinations both internally in the Flying Training School and externally with the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), qualifying the classes to EASA Airline Transport Pilots License (Theoretical Knowledge) standard. The 42nd then began preparations for their own commissioning ceremony on 19th of May 2025.

Following this, the classes completed a Computer Based Training (CBT) course in which they learned the technical specifications of the Pilatus PC-9M Advanced Trainer Aircraft. Some of the students were then selected to complete their Flying training in America, while the remainder of the classes commenced their training in Baldonnel.

In May of 2025, four students left Ireland to commence their flying course in the United States. The course was run through the U.S Air Force Security and Training (AFSAT) Squadron. The course took place in Dothan, Alabama where students learned basic flying and airmanship in the Cessna 172 aircraft. The students flew the Cessna for nineteen hours before moving to the intermediate stage of the course. The students flew a Grob G-120TP aircraft and learned basic and advanced aircraft handling, airmanship and instrument flying. The first solo of the Grob will be a day that lives in everyone's memory. No aircraft were damaged beyond repair during the course, despite our best efforts!

There were a number of check flights throughout the course, basic handling, advanced handling, instrument and navigation tests. The students finished with a final test and had a small graduation ceremony before returning to Ireland to finish the final stages of the Wings Course. The final fifteen flights took place in Ireland on the Pilatus PC-9M covering a wide base of disciplines from VFR general handling, precision navigation, instrument flying, formation flying and mixed profile navigation, culminating in the Pilot Wings Qualification Test.

Back in Ireland, the students of the 41st and 42nd WCC commenced their simulator training in the Fixed Training Device in FTS in April of 2025 and August respectively. The simulator element of the Wings Course consists of a total of 47 sessions, designed to emulate real-world stresses and emergencies without the real-world risk and serves as a great tool to prepare students for the dynamic nature of flying the PC-9M. Prior to stepping into the aircraft for the first time, the students became proficient with checks and procedures, allowing them to focus on learning handling skills once they moved on to the aircraft.

Following their introduction in the sim, the students then moved on to the Elementary Stage of flying, which focuses on the basics of flight; take-off, straight and level, turns, climbing, descending and landing. One of the main focuses of this stage was circuit flying, which involved the students flying dozens of circuit patterns to develop and refine their airmanship. This stage culminated with the students flying the PC-9M solo for the first time after 20 flights, a proud moment for everyone, and a key step in flying training that all pilots remember for the rest of their careers.

The Elementary Stage of flying lasted for another 30 flights with disciplines such as aerobatics, spinning and instrument flying being taught. Students had the opportunity to develop their own sequence of aerobatics, including loops, barrel rolls, aileron rolls, horizontal eights and Cuban eights. Aerobatics are a physically demanding discipline, requiring a tolerance for sustained G-force and precise flying, but they offer a chance to further develop aircraft handling and accuracies. Each flight built up on previously learned material and the stage concluded in an Elementary Handling Test (EHT), where students were tested on all their visual flying skills and manoeuvres, including successfully completing a Precautionary Forced Landing pattern to simulate an engine failure.

The next stage of flying for the students further consolidated their general handling of the aircraft and lasted for approximately 40 flights. Medium level navigation saw students traversing the country at 1500ft using meticulously prepared maps with the aim of arriving overhead a destination +/- 5 seconds. Instrument transits were also introduced, which allowed the students to operate in cloud without visual references, using radio aids for positioning. The Instrument Rating Test (IRT) was a major milestone during this phase of training, giving the students their first rating, and qualifying them to fly anywhere in the country on instruments, solo.

The Advanced Stage of flying training included both night and formation flying. Night flying gave students an appreciation for handling the aircraft without the visual references afforded by daylight, and a whole new perspective on the landscape around

Baldonnell. Formation flying followed, proving to be the highlight of the course for the students. This discipline involved flying 'two-ship' formation with another aircraft less than one wingspan away and performing dynamic break and re-join manoeuvres to hone their skills. Formation is a skill taught at the ab-initio stage in the Air Corps, something unique to military flying, and is testament to the excellent instruction provided by FTS instructors. The final hurdle for the students was the Pilot Wings Qualification Test, in which all aspects of flying learned throughout the course were assessed. The completion of this phase signalled the completion of the Wings Course for the students.



28 INF BN COMPETE IN AFSAM 2026

ARTICLE BY COMDT TREVOR GETHINS

Members of the 28 Inf Bn have been preparing intensively for the 2026 Armed Forces Skill at Arms (AFSAM) competition in Arkansas. The competition, conducted by the United States National Guard Marksmanship Training Centre (NGMTC), takes place in Camp Robinson, Little Rock. The 28 Inf Bn entered two teams, each consisting of four personnel to compete in the competition. They competed

against teams from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States over a period of ten days in a competition which included a variety of unique shooting events that tested teams in both pistol and rifle practises by day and by night.

The team was drawn from soldiers who demonstrated exceptional shooting skills, teamwork and tactical ability during the highly competitive 2025 Platoon in Attack competition. They began their AFSAM preparation in



January 2026 under the guidance of their team coach Sgt Axel Foley. Their selection reflected the high standards displayed throughout the Platoon in Attack Competition and the confidence placed in them to represent the battalion at one of the Army's premier competitions.

Since the beginning of the year, the soldiers had undertaken a demanding training programme designed to develop their physical fitness, marksmanship and the military skills required to compete at AFSAM level. Training was focused primarily on the shoots that they would be taking part in both by day and by night. The teams were required to undergo the Infantry Low Light Equipment Operators Course (ILLEOC) which allowed them to operate the new Night Vision Equipment (NVE) and Lazer Light Modules (LLMs) for the competition. The team found the LLMs to be a very useful piece of equipment but unfortunately not very robust. Out of twelve that were issued we were down to three for the competition due to technical errors. Our new NVE was the envy of all the competitors taking part in the competition and was an excellent piece of kit. The teams were also fortunate to receive training from members of the ARW which included CQB and transition shoots in the DFTC. Special thanks also have to go to members of 1 Cn Cois who had competed in AFSAM 25 for their assistance and AAR from the previous year. Speaking during training, members of the team acknowledged the pride associated with representing the battalion and

the motivation that came from being selected from the winning platoon of the 2025 Platoon Attack Competition. The commitment shown since January has reflected their determination to perform to the highest standard at AFSAM 2026.

The teams arrived in North Little Rock, Arkansas on the 18th of April for the two-week competition and after a brief rest period reported for day one of the AFSAM. The first two days were not scored events. This was designed so that teams could get used to the conditions and different strength Ammunition in Camp Robinson. The first day included a registration for both teams and a full equipment check. This was then followed by a zeroing practice that was completed by each team in order to fully ensure all weapons were ready to undergo the competition. The zeroing practice took place from 100-500 yards and plenty of time was allocated to allow competitors confirm their zero at a variety of ranges. The second day included a pistol practice that saw competitors get familiar with the formalities of a pistol range and how it would be conducted. Again, this event was not scored and was done to give the competitors an idea of how the upcoming events would proceed. That evening the teams completed a nighttime zeroing with their IR lasers to ensure they were fully ready for the competition. The third and fourth day involved day and night CQB practises with both the rifle and the pistol. Day 5 was cancelled due to thunder-storms.





SMALL ARMS COMPETITION



IRELAND
ALPHA



The second week consisted of scored competitive events. This included much more complex shoots such as rifle and pistol barrier shoots, close quarter battle shoots, rapid pistol CQB, stress shoots and an anti-body armour team match. These shoots would include day and night events and engaging at ranges of up to 500 yards. One of the more unique shooting tables involved teams being given ammunition that was not “bombed up” in magazines but carried loose. They would then sprint to various firing points and from these positions they were required to “bomb up” the ammunition into the magazines (with the use of speedloaders), distribute it correctly throughout the team and then continue to engage various targets. Each day the competitors would start with a safety brief and a walkthrough of the events. Most days consisted of three to four different shoots. Each one, a uniquely separate competition. This would then be followed by a team captain’s brief where teams could discuss various points brought up throughout the day. Teams had unique levels of experience, all ranks competed with some being part time reservists while others were highly qualified soldiers with multiple combat deployments. During the second week, as competitors got to know one another, they began sharing knowledge in relation to marksmanship techniques which benefited all shooters and built up the standard of the competition.

On the final day of the competition, the NGMTC allow retiring soldiers to fire what is called the “final shot”. All teams gather on the range to observe the ceremony that simply involves a soldier conducting a final shot from a pistol and being awarded the paper target they had their last shot on and a retirement certificate. This courtesy was also extended to a foreign

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SMALL ARMS COMPETITION



IRELAND
BRAVO



competitor from the Dutch Armed Forces who had travelled to AFSAM from his home country for a total of 10 years symbolising the culmination of their military service.

The overall experience was highly beneficial to the troops involved and the opportunity to benchmark their training against some of the finest small arms marksmen in the world was invaluable. The competition also assisted the Irish team in building international relationships and fostering friendship with partner nations. Since then, the team have submitted after action reviews with the aim of developing the standard of marksmanship and small arms competitions within the Defence Forces.

Travel to this competition would not have been possible without a huge amount of support from various elements from within the Defence Forces who assisted in both training and logistics and the 28 Inf Bn are extremely grateful to all involved in this process. This was the third year a team representing the Irish Defence Forces have competed in the competition and it is hoped teams will continue to travel to AFSAM in order to further develop our soldiers in the most fundamental skill of military marksmanship. This unique military competition demonstrated that the standard of Irish soldiers is on par with their international counterparts and that the level of training available in Ireland can allow soldiers to perform confidently on the international scene. Furthermore, 28 Inf Bn personnel travelling to the United States for a competition of this nature highlights the great opportunities currently available to personnel of the Defence Forces and has most definitely proven an incentive for all members of the unit, both new and old, to focus on improving their own marksmanship and compete for places on the unit’s shooting teams.



ARMY RANGER WING FORD F-350 SRV

ARTICLE BY COLIN STONE

Ireland might have one of the numerically smallest armies in Europe, but it is like a terrier with a bite bigger than its bark. At the tip of this Irish armed spear is the Army Ranger Wing. As an elite and very active force, they trial much new equipment before some of it goes on general release.

So, what exactly are the Ranger Wings taskings? They are the proponents of both green and black roles on behalf of the Irish Government and Irish Defence Forces. They have been deployed on UN peacekeeping and peace-enforcing roles in the likes of Somalia, Lebanon, Chad, Afghanistan and Mali. They were officially created in March 1980 but there were nearly 20 years of prior tinkering and training by the Army to get the correct balance of what was required when officially sanctioned. Recently the Rangers hit the headlines by intercepting a large cargo vessel in very heavy seas with 2.2 tonnes of drugs aboard when they fast roped aboard from a helicopter. It was the Irish State's largest-ever drug interception. Other than a released Army PR video clip of the Rangers in action, nothing else was seen of them.

The predecessor to the Ford F350 SRV was the ubiquitous Land Rover Defender 110 with WMIK weapons station. They were the first real weapons platform that the Rangers used and as a Defender fan, I was a bit put out by this upstart Yank pretender to the throne. So why did the Rangers choose the Ford F-350 SRV? Quite simply, that Yank powerhouse out front in the shape of a six-litre V8 diesel block. The Defender could not compete with the Fords 325hp and its 560 pound-foot torque of muscle. The six-litre Ford Power Stroke engine delivers its might through a 5 speed TorqShift automatic gearbox. The engine is manufactured by Navistar Trucks, and the truck is assembled in Ford's factory in Louisville, Kentucky. The big Ford has a stalk-mounted red button behind the steering wheel that is like a nitro button. Instead of a nitro mix you get a hunkering down of the engine and drive train to produce more power and torque to get you out of whatever difficult terrain you find yourself in. The other asset that the Ford brought to the table was its cargo capacity and its "good old boys" pick-up truck's ability to suck up punishment and still carry out the task at hand.

The Ranger Wing were the only recipients of the Ford F-350 SRV which was kitted out by Ricardo Engineering who also provided the previous Defender patrol vehicles. Ricardo added a big Ramsery 12,000lb hydraulic winch on the front chassis by bolting a seriously sturdy chassis extension and then recovery points on either side of the winch. Slap bang in the centre of the bull bar is a four-pot 66mm multi-directional smoke discharger. The fixed windscreen and cab were removed and replaced by a removable windscreen unit and a very important PVC dash cover to protect the dash and its instruments from the damp Irish conditions. The reworked windscreens and bodies have stood up very well to the dreaded rust even after twenty years of hard service. There is also discrete all-over foul weather covers to allow vehicles to traverse the country during Ireland's four seasons in one day weather and to remain discrete on public roads.

The crew consists of three Rangers; Driver, Commander and rear Gunner. All can multitask and man the mounted comms systems, weapons and drive. The Rangers use the SINCGARS frequency hopping radio in either regular or "Baby SINCGARS" sizes, allowing easy access by the front crew. There are also sophisticated Harris radios behind the driver's seat and a fuse box and breakers control box between the front passengers, mounted to the rear cab wall. The Commander has access to a tough book mounted where the glovebox was once housed on civilian models. The tough book dispenses with the need for VHF or HF communication and allows orders and sitreps to be emailed into and from HQ.



The Rangers prepare to board a French C-160 Transal to patrol the sensitive border between Chad and Sudan. The French provided for all of the Irish air requirements and they hugely impressed the Irish.

All cars come equipped with a Motorola CB which allows local comms between vehicles on the move and a discrete floor-mounted stalk light enables the crew to operate the radios in the dark. The vertically moveable Commander's seat allows access to a pole-mounted GPMG which replaces the door and is attached securely to the bulkhead's side member. It is not mounted straight in front of him, but rather in line with his right arm, allowing the commander better situational awareness and visibility to the front. It can be swung into action directly in front when required.

The Gunner in the rear is provided with a rear-facing, mesh-based and backed seat that is located against the rear tub's front bulkhead. The base of his seat can be removed to allow him access to the ring-mounted weapon which is either a Browning M2 or a 40mm H&K grenade launcher. Every pair of vehicles would have alternating heavy weapons to complement

each other. Also attached to either side of the roll cage is a single easy access SRAAW anti-armour disposable weapon. Again, mounted on the outside of the roll cage would be the crews' Bergan-style backpacks. On either side of the rear Gunner's seat are floor-mounted stowage bins for ready-use ammunition. The rear tub contains numerous stowage areas with elasticated nets to stop items from falling out. When first introduced into service, crews used the sand channels wedged between the rear bumper and tailgate as a shelf to stow Bergans and kit. This seems to have ceased as the sand channels are now mounted inside





the tailgate and the Bergans positions at the rear would not have allowed the tailgate to open. Car Commanders and crews could tailor the vehicles to their teams' mission needs. There are another four smoke pots located on the driver's rear corner, and they guard the most important piece of kit on the vehicle. The removable Boiling Vessel or BV is a 24v kettle come slow cooker that can make tea or you can drop in your main meal from a ration pack and have a hot al fresco dining experience rather than cold morale-sapping gruel.

Everything about the SRV is pretty much good old American automotive technology in the form of heavy box section members and old-school heavy-duty leaf springs. The turning circle would not be great on these big Fords, and the Irish found their range to be sufficient, especially considering their weight when fully loaded. Americans also complained about the loud engine noise of these trucks when first introduced. In my humble opinion, they have a throaty and distinctive V8 diesel burble that exudes power. Prices in 2004 for an off-the-forecourt civilian model ranged in the US from \$6,495 to \$23,999. I paid €21,000 for a bog-standard VW Golf for my mother back then. Every light comes with a PVC light cover that seems to have survived its full-service life. Also amazingly tough are the fabric mesh with padded outer edges that allow operators to ride with their battle vests or webbing fitted. The vehicle also has a standard NATO battery jump socket facing towards the Commander's left ankle. Both front occupants also have large baskets on the outside allow them to stow "quick grab" items. These baskets are mounted to stiffeners that provide the vehicle with additional strength now that the doors are permanently removed.

The SRVs were only ever deployed to Chad in a first for Ireland, as it was an EU-led peace mission rather than UN-mandated. The Fords were delivered by Antonov air freighter and were used to patrol the Chad/Sudan border and provided overwatch to allow

"Míle Buíochas to the CO, RSM, CS and the Transport NCOs for their assistance in the preparation of this article."

Irish Engineers to set up a camp from scratch. The cars were kitted out with large round EUFOR stickers on the rear bodies and bonnets and an EU circle of stars on the front right bumper. The only sticker that lasted was the bumper one, as the others all fell off in the tough conditions. They used dayglo orange signal tarps to show their position to friendly aircraft. The roll cage allowed the front two passengers to drape camo nets over it to keep the relentless African sun off their heads. The cars performed flawlessly in the tough conditions and were even used in a daring and successful civilian hostage rescue. The main issue was with tyres that were destroyed by the thorns and local conditions. In the post-deployment debrief the Rangers asked for a logistics mothership that would allow them greater range and ability to operate deep from base while on deployment. They received Acmat trucks and they have proven to work complementary of each other. The cars are now coming to the end of their lives, and I think the tough Rangers will actually miss them, they might even shed a tear when they are retired. We will not have long to wait until we find out what their replacement might be as trials of certain replacements have already been spotted.

Colin Stone served as a reservist for 26 years and writes for magazines and books across the world.



Ford F-350 S.F. Vehicle on patrol Chad 2008



The Ranger car commander has placed the GPMG spare parts wallet next to the weapon, hung from the pintle mount. Note the "cosy" flak jacket over the side basket.

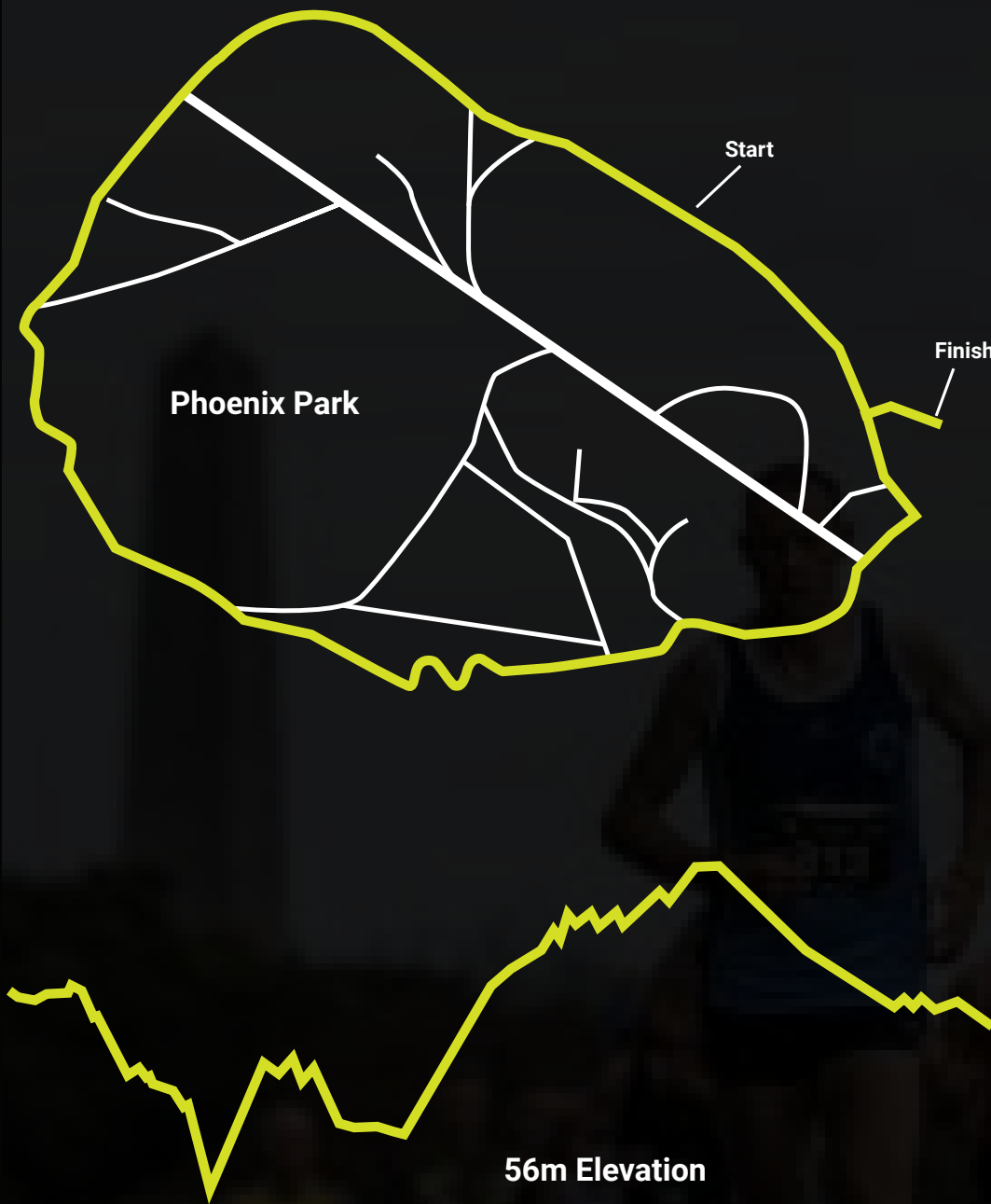


2η ΓΟΣΑΝΤΩΡ

10KM TRAIL

RACE

BEGINNER



56m Elevation

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Week 1	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 1 min for a total of 20 minutes. Cool down	Rest	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 1 min for a total of 20 minutes. Cool down	Rest	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 1 min for a total of 30 minutes. Cool down
Week 2	Rest	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 3 min for a total of 16 minutes. Cool down	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 3 min for a total of 20 minutes. Cool down	Rest	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 4 min for a total of 18 minutes. Cool down
Week 3	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 5 min for a total of 18 minutes. Cool down	Warm up & jog 10 min Cool down	Rest	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 7 min for a total of 24 minutes. Cool down	Warm up Recovery Cool down
Week 4	Warm up & jog 15 min Cool down	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 9 min for a total of 30 minutes. Cool down	Rest	Warm up, Cycle/swim/row for 80 min Cool down	Warm up & jog 18 min Cool down
Week 5	Warm up & jog 15 min Cool down	Active Recovery	Warm up & jog 20 min Walk 10 Cool down	Rest	Warm up & jog 20 min 5 mins rest Cool down
Week 6	Warm-up, Steady jog for 30mins, 5mins rest & 10mins cool-down	Warm-up, Pace 5x2 mins (3 min walk between each), 5x100 Strides, cool-down.	Rest	Warm-up, Tempo 2x5min (5mins jog between each), 7x100 Strides, cool-down.	Warm-up, Steady 1x10mins, 10mins walk, cool-down
Week 7	Warm-up, Pace 6x2mins (3 min walk between each), 5x100 Strides, cool-down.	Active Recovery	Warm-up, Steady 40mins, 10mins exercise, cool-down	Rest	Warm-up, 20mins jog, 5mins rest, 15mins exercise, cool-down
Week 8	Warm-up, Steady 30mins, 10mins exercise, cool-down	Warm-up, Steady jog, cool-down	Rest	Warm-up, Pace 8x1min (3min jog between each), 10 mins rest, 6x100m Strides, cool-down.	Warm-up, Steady 40mins, cool-down
Week 9	Warm-up, Steady/Tempo mixed, 30mins, 10mins exercise, cool-down.	Warm-up, Pace 5x2mins (2min jog between each), 5mins rest, 15mins exercise, cool-down.	Warm-up, Steady 45mins, 5mins rest, cool-down	Rest	Warm-up, Steady 30mins, 5mins rest, 5x100m Strides, cool-down
Week 10	Warm-up, Steady 50mins, cool-down	Warm-up, Steady/Tempo mixed 30mins, 10mins exercise, cool-down.	Warm-up, Steady Pace 5x4 mins (4min jog between each), cool-down	Rest	Warm-up, Steady 55mins, cool-down
Week 11	Warm-up, Pace 10x2mins (2min jog between each), cool-down	Warm-up, Steady 35mins, cool-down	Warm-up, Steady 5min rest, 7x100m Strides, 10mins exercise, cool-down.	Rest	Warm-up, Pace 5x2 mins (2min jog between each), 15 mins exercise, cool-down.
Week 12	Rest	Warm-up, Pace 5x1 mins (1min jog between each), cool-down	Rest	Warm-up, Steady 20mins, cool-down	Rest

2025 Winners

Male: Pte Rogers 31:08
 Female: Capt Carr 35:53
 Block: Cadet School

Course records

Male: Capt Richardson 29:51
 Female: Cadet Carr 35:53
 Block: ARW 36:51

Most Wins

Male: Pte Rogers - 10
 Female: Capt Carr - 6
 Block: Cadet School - 10

TRAINING PLAN

WEDNESDAY 07.10.2026

WEEK

INTERMEDIATE

ADVANCED

Day 6	Day 7
Rest & Active Recovery	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 1 min for a total of 21 minutes. Cool down
Continuous jog for 12 min & cooldown	Active Recovery
Warm up 3 mile walk/jog (jog as much as possible)	Rest
Rest	Warm up, walk 1 min & jog 9 min for a total of 30 minutes. Cool down
Warm up & jog 20 min 5 mins rest 5x100m easy Cool down	Rest
Warm-up, 40mins jog 10mins rest, 10mins exercise, cool-down	Rest
Warm-up, Pace 3x2mins (5min walk between each), 10 mins rest, 4x100m sprints	Rest
15mins jog, 5mins rest, 15mins exercise, cool-down	Rest
Warm-up, Pace 5x3 mins (3min jog between each), cool-down	Active Recovery
Warm-up, Steady 30mins 5x100m Sprints with walk-back recovery, 10mins exercise, cool-down	Active Recovery
Warm-up, Steady 60mins, cool-down	Active Recovery
Warm-up, 6x100m strides, cool-down	10K Run

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Light Gym or Pilates	Aerobic Run 30min very easy	Rest	Aerobic Run 30min very easy	Aerobic Run Light Speed 30min with 20min easy 6 mins of alternating 15sec on 45sec off	Aerobic Run 30min very easy	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Aerobic Run + 30-40min with the last 10-15min at low end steady pace	Rest	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	AT & Hills 15min WU & CD, 6 min steady/Z3, 2-3min recovery then do 6 x 20 sec hills	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Alternating Pace 10-15 min WU & CD, 15min of 45 sec at a hard pace, 75 sec at a controlled easier pace	Rest	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Light Speed & Aerobic Capacity 10-15min WU & CD, 2x20 sec hills off a jog back recovery, take 3 min rest followed by 3 x 5 min steady @ AT off 60sec recovery	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 50-60min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Progressive Pace Workout 15min WU & CD, 2 sets of 5, 3, 1 min off 60sec jog recovery between reps and 3 min between sets (5 min at steady/Z3, 3 hard pace/Z4)	Rest	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Cruise Intervals AT & Hills 15 min WU & CD, 4 x 5mins steady/Z3 with 1 min recovery followed by 4 x 15 sec hills with easy jog back recovery Aerobic Run 30min	Rest	Aerobic Long Run 60-70min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Alternating Thresholds 15min WU & CD, 3 sets of 14min steady/Z3, take 1min then do 2min hard/Z4 take 90 sec recovery between sets, take 2min then do 6min of 20sec hard 40 sec	Rest	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	AT & Hills 15min WU & CD, 2x5 min steady/Z3, 90 sec recovery, 2-3min recovery then do 6 x 30 sec hills controlled with a jog back rec	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 70-80min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Fartlek Session at 15min WU & CD, 10min running: (3min, 2min, 1min, 30sec, 30sec, 1min, 2min, 3min) all with	Rest	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Cruise Intervals AT & Hills 15 min WU & CD, 4 x 5mins steady/Z3 with 1 min recovery	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 70-80min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Threshold Workout 15min WU & CD, 4 x 5min off a 2min rec reps 1 & 3 @ steady/Z3, reps 2 & 4 30sec on 30sec off fartlek	Rest	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Progressive Pace Session 15min WU & CD, 7x5/7min all at progressive paces off 1 min jog recovery, take 3min then do 4 x 20 sec	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Long Run 70-80min Easy E1/E2 with with a 30 sec surge at 10/20/30/40/50min
Light Gym or Pilates	Aerobic Run & Light Speed 40min with 30min easy/6 mins of alternating 15sec on 45sec off/4min very easy	Rest	Aerobic Run 30min very easy	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy followed by 4x80m strides off a jog back recovery	Aerobic Run 30min very easy	Long Run 70min (60min very easy 5min of 15 sec hard 45 very easy, 5min easy)
Light Gym or Pilates	Alternating Pace 10-15 min WU & CD, 20min of 45 sec at a hard pace, 75 sec at a controlled easier pace but not full, recover.	Rest	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Steady State & Hills 15min WU & CD, 2 sets (5min steady/Z3, 30 sec hills) take 2-3min between sets at the end do 5min lower end steady	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 70-80min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Progressive Pace Workout 15min WU & CD, 3 sets of 5, 3, 1 min off 75sec jog recovery between reps and 3 min between sets (3 min at steady/Z3, 2 hard pace/Z4)	Rest	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Capacity & Hills 15min WU & CD, 10min steady/Z3, take 3min then do 30, 45, 60, 45, 30s ec hills (gentle slope here)	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Long Run 70-80min easy Z1/Z2 (Over Rolling Hills a steady but controlled effort)
Light Gym or Pilates	Fartlek & AT Work 15min WU & CD, (8sets of 80sec hard 40sec easy) 3min rec then 10min lower end Steady/Z3	Rest	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 60-70min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Pre Race Session 15 min WU & CD, 2 x 6 min steady/Z3 off a 90sec rec, take 3min then do 6min of 20sec hard 40 sec flat, 2-3min recovery then do 6min steady	Rest	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Pre Race Routine 20-30min very easy followed by 3 x 12sec strides on gentle slope	Pre Race Routine 20-30min very easy	10K Run

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Light Gym or Pilates	Alternating Pace 10-15 min WU & CD, 20min of 45 sec at a hard pace, 75 sec at a controlled easier pace but not full, rec	Rest	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 70-80min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Aerobic Run + 30-40min with the last 10-15min at low end steady/AT	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	AT & Hills 15min WU & CD, 2 x 5 min steady/Z3 off a jog recovery, 2-3min recovery then do 8 x 20 sec hills controlled with a jog back	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 40-50min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Alternating Pace 10-15 min WU & CD, 20min of 45 sec at a hard pace, 75 sec at a controlled easier pace but not full rec	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Light Speed & Aerobic Capacity 10-15min WU & CD, 5 x 20 sec hills off a jog back recovery, take 2-3 min rest followed by 3 x 4 min steady @ AT off 60sec recovery	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Long Run 70min (60min very easy 5min of 15 sec hard 45 very easy, 5min easy)
Light Gym or Pilates	Progressive Pace Workout 15min WU & CD, 3 sets of 5, 3, 1 min off 60sec jog recovery between reps and 3 min between sets (5 min at steady/Z3, 3 hard pace/Z4 and 1 min 30m pace)	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Light Speed & Aerobic Capacity 10-15min WU & CD, 5 x 20 sec hills off a jog back recovery, take 2-3 min rest followed by 3 x 4 min steady @ AT off 60sec recovery	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy	Long Run 70min (60min very easy 5min of 15 sec hard 45 very easy, 5min easy)
Light Gym or Pilates	Alternating Thresholds 15min WU & CD, 3 sets of 14min steady/Z3, take 1min then do 2min hard/Z4 take 90 sec recovery between sets, take 2min then do 6min of 20sec hard 40 sec	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Run & Surges 40-50 min easy with 6 x 10 sec hard rec off 50 sec recovery in the last 10min	AT & Hills 15min WU & CD, 5 x 5mins steady/Z3, 2-3min recovery then do 10 x 30 sec hills controlled with a jog back rec	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 70-80min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Fartlek Session at 15min WU & CD, 10min running: (4min, 3min, 2min, 1min, 1min, 2min, 3min, 4min) all with 60secs easy jog in	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Cruise Intervals AT & Hills 15 min WU & CD, 5 x 5mins steady/Z3 with 1 min recovery followed by 4 x 15 sec hills with easy jog back recovery	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 70-80min easy Z1/Z2 (Over Rolling Hills a steady but controlled effort)
Light Gym or Pilates	Threshold Workout 15min WU & CD, 4 x 5min off a 2min rec reps 1 & 3 @ steady/Z3, reps 2 & 4 30sec on 30sec off fartlek	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Run & Surges 40-50 min easy with 6 x 15 sec hard off 50 sec easy jog recovery in the last 10min	Progressive Pace Session 15min WU & CD, 7x5/7min all at progressive paces off 1 min jog recovery, take 3min then do 4 x 20 sec hills	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 80-90min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Aerobic Run & Light Speed 20min very easy jog followed by 6x20sec relaxed strides off 1 min recovery 15 min very easy	Rest	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Aerobic Run & Light Speed 40min with 30min easy/6 mins of alternating 15sec on 45sec off/4min very easy	Rest	Progression Run-60 Mins total at a progressive effort 30 mins easy to start followed by a small increase in effort 1HR every 10mins, Last 5-10 mins easy to WD
Light Gym or Pilates	Alternating Pace 15 min WU & CD, 25min of 45 sec at a hard pace, 75 sec at a controlled easier pace but not full, rec	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Run 40-50min very easy followed by 4 x 100m strides off a jog back recovery	Steady State & Hills 15-20min WU & CD, 2 sets (5min steady/Z3, 90 sec hills) take 2-3min between sets at the end do 5min lower end	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 80-90min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Progressive Pace Workout 15min WU & CD, 3 sets of 5, 3, 1 min off 60sec jog recovery between reps and 3 min between sets (3 min at steady/Z3, 2 hard pace/Z4 and 2 min 30m pace)	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Run & Surges 50-60 min easy with 6 x 15 sec hard off 50 sec easy jog recovery in the last 10min	Aerobic Capacity & Hills 15min WU & CD, 10min steady/Z3, take 3min then do 30, 60, 90, 60, 30s ec hills (gentle slope here)	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 80-90min very easy
Light Gym or Pilates	Fartlek & AT Work 15min WU & CD, (8sets of 80sec hard 40sec easy) 3min rec then 10min lower end Steady/Z3	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Cruise Intervals AT & Hills 15 min WU & CD, 4 x 5mins steady/Z3 with 90sec recovery	Aerobic Run 50-60min very easy	Aerobic Long Run 70min (60min very easy 5min of 15 sec hard 45 very easy, 5min easy)
Light Gym or Pilates	Pre Race Session 15 min WU & CD, 2 x 6 min steady/Z3 off a 90sec rec, take 3min then do 6min of 20sec hard 40 sec flat, 2-3min recovery then do 6min steady	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Aerobic Run 30-40min very easy	Pre Race Routine 20-30min very easy followed by 3 x 12sec strides on gentle slope	Pre Race Routine 20-30min very easy	10K Run



IGNITING INNOVATION FROM WITHIN

ARTICLE BY CAPT EAMONN HENNESSY

DEFENCE SPARX AND THE POWER OF PROBLEM SOLVING

Innovation within defence is often associated with advanced technology, new platforms or emerging systems. Yet some of the most impactful innovation begins not with hardware, but with people – how they think, collaborate and approach complex challenges. The Defence Sparx programme was designed with this principle at its core.

Developed and delivered by the Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI) Office, in partnership with Accenture, Defence Sparx is an organisationwide innovation programme aimed at equipping Defence Forces and Department of Defence personnel with structured tools to tackle some of the most pressing strategic challenges facing Defence today.

Rather than focusing on incremental improvement, Defence Sparx seeks to build enduring innovation capability within the organisation, empowering participants to problem-solve collaboratively, think systemically and develop practical, actionable solutions aligned with senior leadership priorities.

Why Defence Sparx?

Defence organisations operate in an increasingly complex environment, shaped by evolving security threats, workforce challenges and societal expectations. Recognising this, senior leadership identified four critical challenge areas where innovative thinking was both necessary and timely:

- Recruitment and Retention

- Cultural and Organisational Reform
- Training and Professional Development
- Cybersecurity and Hybrid Threats

Defence Sparx deliberately takes a different approach to solving challenges. It creates a protected space for Defence personnel to step outside their normal roles, learn new ways of working and collectively explore solutions that cut across organisational boundaries. The guiding philosophy was clear: innovation is most effective when it is rooted in real challenges, informed by diverse perspectives and supported by a structured process.

Designing an Innovation Capability

The programme was codesigned by the RTI Office and Accenture, combining internal organisational understanding with external expertise in innovation, design thinking and problemsolving methodologies.

Crucially, participants were not expected to arrive with preconceived solutions. Instead, they were introduced to a comprehensive innovation toolset that enabled them to move systematically from challenge definition to solution development. Over a 12-week part-time programme, participants engaged in a structured learning journey that included:

- Problem framing and root-cause analysis
- Stakeholder and user centric research
- Ideation and creative solution generation
- Rapid prototyping and testing
- Value articulation, feasibility and impact assessment
- Executive level pitching and storytelling

This approach ensured that solutions were evidence based, operationally grounded and aligned with Defence priorities, while also building participants' confidence in applying these methods beyond the programme. The sessions were delivered in a hybrid format with the in-person sessions taking place in Accenture's global R&D Innovation centre based in Dublin - The Dock.





A Cross Organisational Approach

Eighteen participants commenced the programme on 13th January 2026 from across the Naval Service, Air Corps, Army, Reserve Defence Forces and the Department of Defence. They were deliberately assigned to multidisciplinary teams to ensure each challenge benefited from a range of operational, policy, personnel and technical perspectives.

This structure proved to be one of Defence Sparx's greatest strengths. Participants consistently highlighted the value of working with colleagues they would not normally encounter, gaining new insights into how different parts of the organisation experience and contribute to shared challenges. The programme not only fostered innovation skills but also strengthened professional networks and mutual understanding across Defence.

As the programme progressed, teams moved from broad challenge statements to sharply defined problem areas. Using the tools introduced throughout the programme, they tested assumptions, engaged with stakeholders and refined their understanding of where the greatest opportunities for impact lay.

By the final stages, each team had developed a tangible solution concept, clearly articulated in terms of organisational value, feasibility and alignment with Defence priorities. Importantly, teams also considered implementation pathways, recognising that innovation only delivers value when it can be translated into practice.

The Dragons' Den Moment – From Pitch to Implementation

The culmination of Defence Sparx was a high impact pitch event which took place on 20th April 2026 at Accenture - The Dock, deliberately modelled on a "Dragons' Den" format. Each team presented its solution to a senior judging panel comprised of; Chief of Staff Lt Gen Rossa Mulcahy, Secretary General DOD Jacqui McCrum, Lt Gen (Canadian Armed Forces Rtd) Stuart Beare of Accenture's Global Defence Council, and Comdt (Rtd) Pat O'Connor, CEO of VRAI.

The pitch represented a critical transition point rather than the conclusion of the programme and at the time of writing, the Chief of Staff and Secretary General will now undertake a two week evaluation period to determine which teams will progress to implementation depending on their feasibility, viability and desirability. Teams selected for this phase will receive organisational sponsorship, implementation support and oversight for a 6-month period from both RTI and Accenture to further develop and deliver their solutions.

The overall standard of the pitches highlighted the effectiveness of the Defence Sparx methodology. Teams demonstrated strong analytical thinking, clear articulation of value and an informed understanding of



Defence constraints and opportunities.

The Recruitment and Retention team delivered the most compelling pitch with their project MERIT (Matching Expertise and Reserve Integration Tool). MERIT proposed the development of a skills mapping IT system for Reservists, designed to systematically capture and leverage civilian acquired skills that are currently underutilised.

By aligning Reservists' civilian competencies with Defence capability needs, MERIT aims to unlock latent organisational value, strengthen Force integration and enhance the overall proposition of Reserve service.

Looking Ahead – The Next Iteration of Defence Sparx

Recruitment for the next iteration will commence in Q3 2026, with the programme scheduled to begin in January 2027. The RTI Office is seeking driven, curious and motivated personnel from across the Defence Forces and Department of Defence, regardless of rank, service, or background.

Defence Sparx thrives on diversity of experience and perspective. Participants do not need prior innovation expertise — only curiosity, commitment and a willingness to engage with complex problems in new ways.

As Defence continues to respond to evolving workforce, capability and security challenges, programmes like Defence Sparx will play an increasingly important role in shaping adaptive, resilient and peoplefocused solutions.

Defence Sparx demonstrated what is possible when personnel are equipped with the right tools, encouraged to collaborate across boundaries and given the mandate to tackle meaningful challenges. It reinforced the principle that innovation is not confined to specialised units but is a capability that can exist across the organisation.

If you wish to learn more about Defence Sparx and are interested in applying to the next iteration, contact rti@defence.ie.

Defence Sparx – Participating Teams

Challenge Area	Project	Team Members
Recruitment & Retention	MERIT – unlocking hidden capability in the RDF.	Cdr Philip Dicker; Comdt Margaret Hogan; Comdt Mark Donnelly; Justin McGinn (DoD)
Cultural & Organisational Reform	Governance and Policy document (NCT) – a policy management framework.	Comdt Stephen Cooper; Comdt Fiachra Lambe; Tara McGrath (DoD)
Training & Professional Development	Shared Defence Education	Lt Colm Hill; CQMS Kevin Campbell; CQMS John Chapman; Kelley Rickard (DoD)
Cybersecurity & Hybrid Threats	The Hybrid Awareness Cell – making every rank ready for the threat we already face.	Cdr Elaine Moloney; Lt Patrick White; Comdt (AR) Sean Murphy; BQMS Joe Devlin



RETHINKING READINESS

Designing a Strategic, Data Driven Framework for Óglaigh na hÉireann

ARTICLE BY SGT MAJ DAVID O'REILLY

"You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might or wish to have at a later time."
- Donald Rumsfeld 2004

Military readiness for Óglaigh na hÉireann is best understood as the strategic bridge between national ambition and actual force capability. Harrison's 'Rethinking Readiness' provides a compelling foundation for redesigning that bridge, arguing that readiness is not a static condition but a process one that converts peacetime inputs into usable, "mission ready" outputs. By treating the Defence Forces as a complex system of systems makes it possible to move beyond rhetoric and towards measurable military effectiveness. Building on Harrison's insight, this article argues that Óglaigh na hÉireann requires a systematised, data driven readiness framework anchored in the Ends-Ways-Means model, structured around Galvin's multi-level understanding of preparedness, and informed by RAND's ten dimensions of strategic readiness. Such a framework would allow senior leaders to define, assess, and operationalise readiness in a manner that aligns force development, resource allocation, and operational planning.

The Conceptual Problem: Readiness as an Overused and Under Defined Term

Readiness has long suffered from conceptual ambiguity. Both academic literature and policy practice warn that the term is invoked far more often than it is rigorously defined. Betts' classic formulation of "ready for what, of what, for when"—remains a powerful diagnostic tool, forcing planners to specify missions, required capabilities, and timelines. Galvin adds a crucial strategic dimension by defining readiness as "the capacity of a nation's military to fight as designed to satisfy national strategies and plans." This shifts the focus from narrow checklists of personnel, equipment, and training to the alignment between force design and national strategy.

RAND's work reinforces this multidimensionality by identifying ten interlocking dimensions of strategic readiness:

1. Military effectiveness,
2. Operational readiness.
3. Force posture.
4. Structural readiness.
5. Mobilisation readiness.
6. Sustainment readiness.
7. Resilience.

8. Human capital
9. Allies and partners
10. Business systems and organizational effectiveness.

No single metric can capture this complexity. Harrison's contribution dovetails with these perspectives by emphasising throughput, how effectively resources are transformed into available combat power, rather than static snapshots of a forces condition. Taken together, these conceptual tools point to readiness as a dynamic, risk informed process rather than a compliance exercise.

Ends-Ways-Means: A Strategic Scaffold for Readiness

If readiness is to function as a meaningful management instrument, it must be embedded within a coherent strategic planning framework. The Ends-Ways-Means model provides that scaffold.

- Ends: mission ready forces, credible response timelines, and sustained operational effectiveness across assigned roles and contingencies.
- Ways: doctrine, policy, training, evaluation regimes, and interoperability mechanisms that translate concepts into operational practice.
- Means: personnel, equipment, logistics, budgetary allocations, and external partnerships that set the ceiling on what the Defence Forces can realistically achieve.

Harrison notes that while readiness is difficult to quantify, mapping Ends, Ways, and Means against risk tolerance creates a disciplined structure for judging whether readiness levels are sufficient or illusory. For Óglaigh na hÉireann, adopting this model would expose where strategic ambition outstrips available resources, enabling leadership to make explicit trade-offs rather than relying on implicit assumptions.

Ends	Ways	Means
Mission ready forces.	Doctrine & policy.	Personnel.
Response timelines.	Training.	Equipment.
Operational effectiveness.	Evaluation.	Logistics.
Sustained readiness.	Integration.	Budget.
	Interoperability.	Partnerships.

Readiness Within National Preparedness: Galvin's Multi Level Lens

Galvin's depiction of military readiness nested within broader national preparedness provides a second essential strand for rethinking readiness. His model treats the armed forces as one component of a wider whole of government system that includes civil defence, critical infrastructure protection, and societal resilience.

This perspective has two major implications:

1. Military readiness must be designed with interagency integration in mind.

The Defence Forces rarely act alone in domestic crises, and their readiness must reflect the speed and coherence with which they can plug into national response mechanisms.

2. Metrics must capture the Defence Forces' contribution to national level preparedness.

Unit qualification rates or equipment availability are necessary but insufficient. Measures must also assess joint planning, interagency interoperability, and the ability to support national crisis management.

This reinforces Harrison's argument that readiness spending is fundamentally risk spending: a choice about how much uncertainty the state is willing to accept. A readiness framework that ignores the broader national context risks optimising the military in isolation while leaving overall national preparedness fragile.

Building an Irish Military Readiness (IMR) Model

Translating these conceptual insights into practice requires a systematised, multi-tiered readiness model that links individual, unit, and operational levels into a coherent whole.

1. Individual Readiness

Individual readiness should rest on four clear pillars:

- Medical fitness
- Physical fitness
- Personal weapons proficiency
- Functional role competence

These elements ensure that each soldier, sailor, or aircrew member can perform as designed, forming the foundation for higher level capability.

2. Unit Readiness

Unit readiness must be defined against force design and designated roles, with four core pillars:

- Personnel: manning levels and skill mix
- Equipment: availability, serviceability, and modernity
- Training: collective proficiency and validated performance
- Supply: logistical preparedness and sustainability

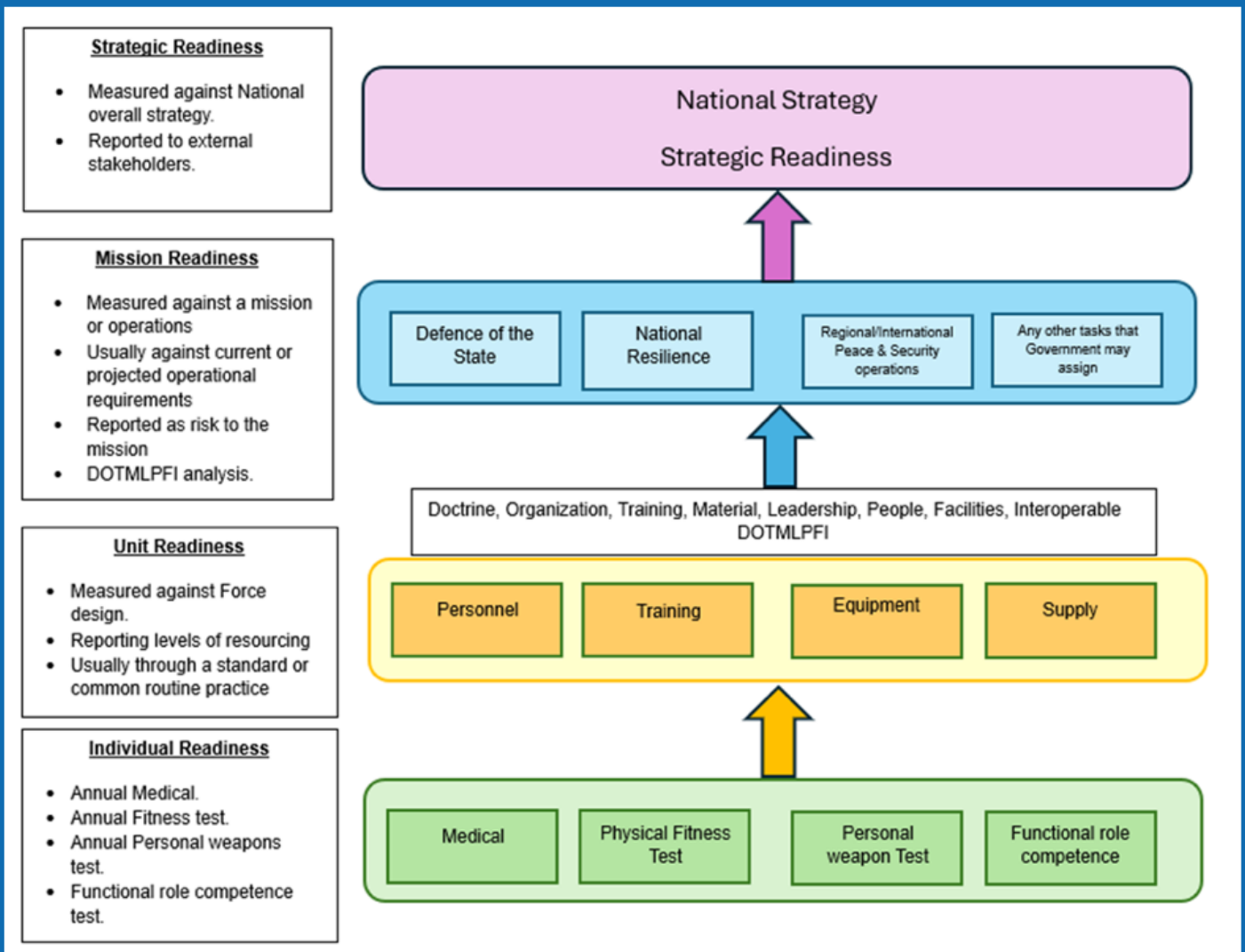
This level is where most readiness reporting traditionally occurs, but without the other tiers it risks becoming a narrow administrative exercise.

3. Operational Readiness

Operational level readiness evaluates whether formations and brigades can meet the tasks assigned in military plans. This includes the integration of all elements of the DOTMLPFI framework—Doctrine, Organisation, Training, Materiel Leadership, Personnel, Facilities, and Interoperability. Operational readiness is the level at which strategic ambition meets practical capability.

Stacked together, these tiers form an Irish Military Readiness (IMR) model that creates a clear line of passage from government intent through formations and units down to the individual. This turns high level strategy into actionable standards.





DOTMLPFI: Readiness as a System of Systems

The DOTMLPFI lens is particularly powerful for viewing readiness as a system of systems rather than a simple inventory of platforms. Equipment alone does not generate capability; it must be embedded in appropriate doctrine, organisational structures, trained personnel, enabling infrastructure, and interoperable systems.

Applying DOTMLPFI systematically allows planners to identify which element is constraining readiness in any given capability area. For example:

- Is a shortfall caused by insufficient training capacity?
- Is maintenance infrastructure inadequate?
- Is organisational design misaligned with assigned missions?

When combined with RAND's 10 readiness dimensions, DOTMLPFI enables the construction of dashboards that show not just the status of individual indicators but their contribution to overall strategic readiness. This transforms readiness measurement from an accounting exercise into a form of risk governance and strategic stewardship.

Governance, Accountability, and Strategic Decision Making

A robust IMR framework grounded in Ends–Ways–Means and DOTMLPFI would significantly enhance governance across the defence enterprise. Clear, data driven metrics at each tier would allow leadership to track trends, identify emerging vulnerabilities, and assess whether reforms are producing intended effects.

For example:

- Persistent shortfalls in unit level training metrics could trigger targeted investments in simulation, instructors, or training areas.

- Operational level assessments informed by joint training outcomes would reveal whether formations can realistically execute assigned plans rather than being “paper ready.”

- Strategic dashboards would support transparent dialogue between the Defence Forces and political leadership, clarifying what levels of readiness can be achieved at given funding levels and what risks are being accepted.

Such a system also reduces the risk of “hollowness,” where headline figures appear healthy but underlying capability is degraded.

Neutrality, Preparedness, and Strategic Credibility

Rethinking readiness in this structured way reinforces that neutrality and preparedness are not contradictory but complementary. A small state that aspires to be a credible security actor must convert limited means into focused, effective capabilities. A rigorous readiness framework enables precisely that, it is essential to understand that readiness without metrics is an oxymoron.

By embedding Ends–Ways–Means as an organising principle and operationalising it through an IMR model, Óglaigh na hÉireann can maintain a flexible, agile posture responsive to political direction. Readiness becomes a tool for peace, deterrence, and strategic credibility rather than a static label.

Harrison's warning is clear: the cost of neglecting readiness whether paid in blood during crises or in treasure through inefficient peacetime spending is ultimately higher than the cost of building a disciplined, data driven system for governing it. For Óglaigh na hÉireann, rethinking readiness is not merely a technical necessity but a strategic imperative and a strategy rendered executable.

References are available upon request to the editor.

THE WEIGHT OF THE RANK

DF Senior NCO Course

ARTICLE BY SGT SEÁN CAMPBELL, 2 BTC ATHLONE

Ten weeks. A syllabus that covers everything from combat service support operations to emotional intelligence. Prioritise, delegate, supervise.

During a Command Leadership and Organisational Studies (CLOS) lesson on emotional intelligence, the instructor asked us something that stuck with me. Not how well we lead soldiers, but how well we understand ourselves when pressure is on. It was a question I had never thought of before. I have twenty-two years in uniform, a decent stack of course qualifications and I carry myself confidently. Up to that point I thought I had a fair handle on leadership. Looking back now, I realise I only understood it from one angle.

What surprised me most about the course was how often it required you to lead sideways instead of down. Back in a unit, rank can do a lot of the heavy lifting. On this course, you're living and working alongside some of the most experienced NCOs in the Defence Forces. Men and women with their own methods, their own pride in how they do the job, and years of proven experience in appointments and on deployments.

You can't rank your way through a syndicate.

You earn your ground by how you communicate, how you deal with problems, and how you handle disagreements without turning everything into a contest. That, to me, is what senior leadership actually looks like. Shaping behaviour in people who already know what right looks like, but who might need help choosing it when fatigue, pressure, or a bit of ego starts pulling them off course. At senior level, what's required is emotional management. Reading a room properly. Understanding what's driving behaviour in the people around you. Adjusting your approach when necessary without lowering standards. It's a small difference, but an important one.

The subjects covered are broad: leadership theory, motivation, conflict resolution, coaching, toxic leadership, organisational culture. These are the mechanics that determine whether units function well or quietly fall apart. The lesson on toxic leadership landed closer to home than most of us probably expected. Anyone who has spent enough time in uniform has seen difficult leadership styles

up close. The course gave us the language and frameworks to break those experiences down properly and, more importantly, forced us to look at whether we had ever done the same thing ourselves.

Outside the classroom the tactical phase is where theory gets tested.

Delivering combat service support orders at company and battalion level. Working inside a Battalion HQ during FTX ANACONDA. Planning and delivering TEWTs that required proper use of the Military Decision-Making Process. That's where you see very quickly whether your're thinking holds together when things start moving.

For many of us, the Research Methodology and Effective Writing module was something entirely different again. Delivered in partnership with SETU, it requires you to engage with academic research methods, carry out a literature review, develop a research proposal and produce a written dissertation. I'll be honest, it didn't come naturally to me.

More than anything else, the course showed me that moving to the senior level isn't really about knowing more. It's about seeing things differently. The gap between Sergeant and Company Sergeant isn't just the addition of the wheel. It's a change in view. A wider field of responsibility. More people looking to you to have already considered what the next step is likely to be.

The Senior NCO Course isn't trying to make you "better" in some vague sense.

It's trying to make you reliable.

The kind of senior NCO who can influence peers without unnecessary friction, develop the people below them, and carry the standard properly, whether anyone is watching or not.



ARMY EQUITATION SCHOOL CENTENARY PARADE

A ceremony to mark the centenary of the Army Equitation School took place in McKee Barracks on 30 April 2026.

The Minister for Defence, Helen McEntee TD, inspected the parade at an event celebrating a century of excellence, service and sporting achievement by the Army Equitation School, which has represented Ireland with distinction at home and abroad.

Established in 1926, just four years after the foundation of the State, the School was created to develop riding and equitation skills within the Army while promoting Ireland through international equestrian sport. From its beginnings at McKee Barracks, it quickly earned a reputation for producing riders, horses and training standards of the highest calibre.

Over the past century, the Army Equitation School has maintained a unique dual role: supporting

military riding capabilities while representing Ireland on the international stage. Army riders have competed at Olympic Games, World and European Championships, and Nations Cups, earning global respect for their professionalism and horsemanship.

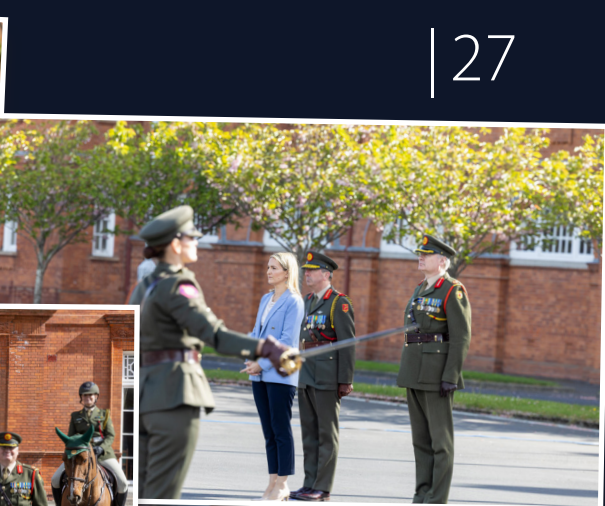
Since the end of the Second World War, individual Army Riders have won hundreds of international classes and numerous individual grand prix achievements. Col Ned Campion was a notable winner, from his first international win in New York in 1962 to that unforgettable Aga Khan victory in 1967 on the great Liathdruim, flying the tricolour on over 65 Nations Cup teams.

Minister McEntee said: "The Army Equitation School represents the very best traditions of the Defence Forces — excellence, discipline, commitment and service. For 100 years, its riders and staff

have represented Ireland with distinction across the world and made an enormous contribution to Irish equestrian sport.

"The school has also played an important role in strengthening Ireland's reputation as a leading equestrian nation and continues to inspire future generations through its dedication and professionalism."

Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, Lt Gen Rossa Mulcahy said: *"On the centenary of the Army Equitation School, we honour a legacy defined by discipline, pride, excellence and an enduring partnership between the Defence Forces and the Irish Horse. For the past 100 years the school has represented the best of our traditions with innovation, skill and unwavering dedication on a national and international stage. As we look to the future, we do so with pride in what has been achieved and with confidence that this proud institution will continue to inspire generations to come."*



PEOPLE OF THE DF

NAME:

TINA MCKEEVER

RANK:

PTE

SERVICE:

21 YEARS

CURRENT UNIT:

27 INF BN

OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS:

3



On the range for ARPs

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

I joined the Defence Forces at 18 years of age in October 2004. I did my recruit training in Aiken Barracks Dundalk, and my 3-star course in Monaghan Barracks. On completion of training, I was posted to A Coy 27 Bn. As a young soldier I completed a variety of support weapons courses within the Battalion. I completed the driver's course, which enabled me to go forward and qualify as a MOWAG crewman, later up-skilling to the MOWAG DRWS variant. My first overseas tour of duty was as a rifleman, with the 33rd INF GP KFOR. I have also deployed overseas as an Mowag crewman to UNIFIL and UNDOF.

I spent 11 years working in the battalion Operations / Training office, however in 2021, I got the opportunity to

go back to full time education and complete my leaving certificate. It was during this time, I completed a QQI level 5 in Food Preparation, which really sparked my interest in cooking. After completing my leaving certificate, I enrolled in DKIT's Culinary Arts programme. For the next 2 years, I worked as a full-time trainee chef in the cookhouse of Aiken Barracks, while studying in college, in the evenings, and weekends. In 2025, I graduated with a higher Certificate in Culinary Arts. I hope to complete the Catering Conversion Course later this year.

What made you decide to do the cooks course?

After 11 years in OPS / Training, I really just wanted a change. I wanted to try something different, but I wasn't exactly sure what. I really enjoyed the QQI Food Preparation course, and after spending a few months as a trainee chef in the kitchen in Aiken Barracks, I knew this was what I wanted to do. My husband is also a serving member of the Defence Forces, and because he was based in the DFTC at the time, and the challenges around childcare, I was unable to complete the army cooks course. One of the great things about being in the Defence Forces is that there are multiple opportunities available to personnel, when it comes to education and training. I was very fortunate to have gotten the opportunity to pursue my career goal, of becoming a chef, in the way that I did.





Pictured at my graduation having completed the Culinary Arts Course in DKIT

What has been your standout memory from your career so far?

There are so many experiences throughout my career, which stand out as great memories, my passing out parade, my first trip overseas, the first time I drove a Mowag with night vision, the first time I was orderly cook on my own, or when I played football against

the UKAF. All the great friends I've made over the years, and all the laughs we've shared, too many to count. But if I was to pick just one stand out memory, from my whole time in the Defence Forces, it would be meeting my husband. This year we will be celebrating our 20th anniversary. It hasn't always been easy for us, especially when it comes to taking turns deploying overseas, but we have 2 great children who are really supportive.

Can you tell us about representing the DF internationally?

I was never really a sporty person until I joined the Defence Forces, but throughout my career, I became increasingly interested in sport and fitness. In 2024 I was part of the Defence Forces women's team who played the UKAF. A great experience and a very proud moment. In the last few years, I really got into running and managed to do well in my age category for the An Cosantóir 10k race, finishing 1st in 2024, and second in 2025. I was really fortunate to get offered a spot on the women's Cross Country team, which competed in Belgium at the end of last year. It was an amazing experience, something different from running the roads, and I learned a lot from the other members of the team.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

"You pack it, you carry it" in training the NCOs would say this all the time, and initially I just took this literally, but a Corporal told me after training, it's not just about what you put in your back pack, it's about what you put in yourself, it's about being prepared, with personal accountability. With mental health being so relevant now, it makes so much sense. If you pack negativity, that's what you'll carry, so I always



try my best to pack as much positivity as I can carry.

What is your favourite quote?

"If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life" and I love what I do.

What are your plans or goals for the future?

From a professional point of view, I plan to complete the next catering conversion course. I am really looking forward to learning about how a field kitchen operates. I have also started training in my local Hyrox gym, and I would like to complete a Hyrox event this summer.

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

I suppose knowing what I know now, and how my life has turned out since joining the army, the advice I would probably give my 18-year-old self is very simple, "Believe in yourself"

When I was 18, I knew I wanted to join the army, but I didn't really have much of a plan beyond that, and like most young people I was filled with self-doubt, am I strong enough, smart enough, or even good enough to pass recruit training, and survive military life. Well, 21 years later I can confidently say that yes, I was strong enough, smart enough, and good enough, to not only get through recruit training, but to have had a deeply fulfilling career. The life I enjoy today, is due in no small part to having joined the Defence Forces. From a shy, and easily embarrassed 18-year-old girl, to the strong, and confident woman that I am today.



Defence Forces
Physical Education School



FIGHTING FIT

ARTICLE BY CPL FIONNUALA GRAY (RDF) 1 CN COIS

The Defence Forces Physical Education School in DFTC recently hosted a Physical Training Leader (PTL) course for members of the Army and Naval Service Reserve. The week long course was designed to qualify selected RDF personnel to safely and effectively deliver physical training within their units, while also reinforcing the high standards expected of those appointed to leadership roles in physical fitness and wellbeing.

The course brought together 27 students drawn from across the Reserve. The course opened with a welcome by instructional staff from the Defence Forces Physical Education School with an overview of the course programme, assessment procedures and SOPs. This initial phase set the professional tone for the week and highlighted the structured and disciplined approach taken throughout the course.

Following course administration, students commenced the academic element of the programme with a series of lectures aimed at providing the theoretical foundations required of a Physical Training Leader. Instruction throughout the week covered a wide range of subjects including anatomy, principles

of training, muscular systems and nutrition. The first lecture focused on the skeletal system and provided students with a comprehensive understanding of bone structure, the different types of bones within the body, and the distinction between the axial and appendicular skeleton. Emphasis was placed on correct anatomical terminology, ensuring that students could accurately identify and reference skeletal components when planning or delivering training.

Following lectures, students transitioned from the classroom to the practical training environment for their first physical training session of the course. This session consisted of an eight kilometre run and was designed to introduce students to the correct conduct of a Physical Training run in a military setting. Instruction was delivered on the importance of a structured warm up, appropriate pacing during the run and a thorough cool down on completion. The instructional staff took time to explain the purpose of each phase, reinforcing the importance of injury prevention, recovery and overall training effectiveness. This session concluded the first day of the course and provided a clear indication of the physical standards expected throughout the week.



The assessment phase was designed to confirm both theoretical understanding and practical competence. Students first completed a written general knowledge examination

Day two saw a return to the classroom, with lectures focusing on nutrition and its role in supporting physical performance. Students received detailed information on healthy eating, safe dietary practices and the importance of balanced nutrition for personnel engaged in regular physical training. The lectures covered macronutrients and micronutrients in depth, including carbohydrates, fats and salts and identified common food sources for each. Additional instruction was provided on vitamins and minerals and their contribution to energy levels, recovery and overall health. This knowledge equipped students with the ability to provide sound and practical advice to those under their supervision.

Following the nutrition lectures, the course moved into a practical phase with instruction on the health screening process conducted prior to physical training activities. Students were taught how to carry out basic health related questioning and how to conduct a pulse check to assess readiness for exercise. Working in groups of four, students rotated through the process, allowing each individual the opportunity to practise and refine their technique under the supervision of the instructional staff. This session reinforced the responsibility of the Physical Training Leader to prioritise safety and welfare at all times.

After lunch, students were

tasked with preparing a simple and engaging game for use during warm up sessions. Instruction was then delivered on the structure of an effective Physical Training warm up. This included pulse raisers, static and dynamic stretching and the importance of conducting a final pulse check prior to commencing the main activity. Students were encouraged to consider variety, engagement and suitability for different group sizes and fitness levels.

Day three began with lectures centred on the muscular system. Students received instruction on anterior and posterior muscle groups, as well as the function of ligaments and tendons. The role of stretching in improving mobility, reducing injury risk and aiding recovery was also covered in detail. This was followed by a lecture on the different types of runs that can be employed to improve cardiovascular fitness, with discussion on how and when each type should be applied within a training programme.

As part of the daily routine, the afternoon focused on practical application. Students continued to practise the health screening and warm up processes to build confidence and consistency. A five kilometre run was then conducted with a student placed in a supervised PTL role covering health screening, delivering the warm up which included a game of their choosing and leading the group into the run. This provided valuable experience in command and control, communication and decision making.

Following a week of instruction, study and physical training, students completed their assessments on the final day of the course.

followed by a practical assessment in which each student was required to demonstrate their ability to lead a physical training session.

For the practical test, students took a group of six participants through the full process beginning with health screening questions and a pulse check. They then delivered a structured warm up which was required to include a game, before concluding with a cool down consisting of breathing exercises and extensive stretching. Throughout the day, students rotated between the role of Physical Training Leader and participant, ensuring that all candidates completed the assessment under comparable conditions.

Upon completion of all assessments, the course concluded with a formal debrief. Students were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the course content and delivery and to engage in open discussion on potential improvements for future RDF focused Physical Training Leader courses. This feedback process reinforced the importance of continuous improvement and professional development within the Defence Forces.

Overall, the course represented a significant opportunity to upskill Reserve Defence Forces personnel and to enhance the standard of physical training within the RDF. The professionalism, experience and enthusiasm of the Permanent Defence Force instructional staff were evident throughout the week and played a key role in the success of the course. Their commitment to physical training and to the development of Reserve personnel ensured that students completed the programme better equipped to lead, motivate and support their units in maintaining high levels of fitness and operational readiness.



ON PARADE



Members of the 179th Recruit Platoon and 2-3 Star course pictured at their passing out



Captain Jacob leading the band at a recent parade in 3 Inf Bn



The 1 Cn Cois team that won the Recce Concentration competition, winning best overall team and best individual. The team consisted of Lt Fitzharris, Sgt McGreal, S/S O'Halloran, S/S Newman & S/S O'Leary



Groom Pte Michéal O Grady and Lt Raphael Lee on secured 2nd place in the 1.35m Balmoral qualifier with Derrycrush, this performance earns them a place at the Balmoral Show



Cpl Peter Carolan 27 Inf Bn pictured receiving his new rank markings on meritorious promotion



Members of the Cavalry Corps pictured in the Glen of Imaal during their qualification shoot on the Cavalry Mowag Gunnery Course. The students are now qualified on the 12.7mm Heavy Machine Gun and 40mm Grenade Machine Gun



Siblings Irene, Isobel and Anna Kelleher pictured at the 101st Cadet Class Commissioning Ceremony



Ex Defence Forces Corporals at this year's St. Patrick's Day parade. Now members of An Garda Síochána Kevin Sharkey, Ray Sheehan and Eamonn O'Reilly. All 3 had over 45 years combined service in the 06th Field Military Police Company Reserve



Members of 32 IRCON KFOR participated in the Istanbul Half Marathon in April, from left to right - BQ Niall O'Neill, Sgt Niall Kennedy, F/Sgt James McCormack and Comdt Niall Buckley



Congrats to DF Reservists who won the 1 BDE Pistol Shooting Competition, Sgt Bergin won best individual in the pistol competition and Pte Murphy who placed 2nd in the GPMG competition

ON PARADE



Minister for Defence Helen McEntee officially opened a new accommodation block in Haulbowline Naval Base



Lt Col Rónán O'Flaherty being presented his new rank makings by Brig Gen Mark Staunton, Lt Col O'Flaherty will take up his new role as Cyber RRT lead in DFTC



DF Band members marching with the 128 Inf Bn UNIFIL at their ministerial review in Sarsfields Barracks, Limerick



A Recruit from the 180th Recruit Platoon navigating through a watery passage during a 96-hour exercise - Photo By Cpl Nicky Lawless



Members of 1st, 2nd and DFTC Eng Gps completed a "train the trainer" course in the newly acquired C2 ColPro (Collective Protection) systems, designed to protect personnel from CBRN threats. These units can be rapidly deployed and utilise CBRN filtration and positive overpressure to prevent contaminated air from entering the shelter



LÉ SAMUEL BECKETT conducted a PASSEX (Passing Exercise) with the Royal Navy Ship HMS MERSEY. This opportunity allows both Navies to strengthen ties and cooperation on the high seas



Chefs from Aiken Barracks standing proud in their newly opened dining hall



Members of 7 Inf Bn pictured after completing the Dublin City Half Marathon in full gear. In the process over €10000 was raised for the Cancer Clinical Research Trust and Cpl Jordan Carney and his mam who is undergoing treatment



11 Naval Service personnel have completed the first level one kayaking course of 2026, in the Naval Basin. The course was facilitated by instructors and equipment from the DF Kayaking Club



Captain Eva Houlihan reading the proclamation at this year's 1916 commemoration outside the The GPO, Dublin City

ON PARADE



3 Inf Bn on parade for this year's 1916 Leaders Commemoration in Arbour Hill



Sgt Aidan Lanigan operating the Cavalry simulator in the Cavalry School for the Enterprise Risk Network visit to DFTC



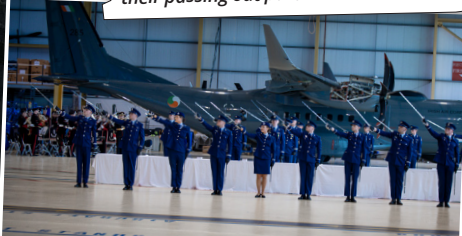
Members of 7 Inf Bn pictured in Casement Aerodrome after conducting heli drills



Congratulations to Willie Lynch on his retirement after 51 years and two months of loyal and dedicated service to the BFW in TISK. D Engr Col Damien McEvoy and OC 1 Bde Engr Gp, Lt Col Kevin Higgins presented Willie Lynch with a token of appreciation from all his colleagues in the DF



The 12th JITC Recruit Platoon marching on to the square for their passing out parade



The 43rd Wings Course and the 1st Air Traffic Cadet Class pictured at their commissioning ceremony



1ACS Recently won the DFTC combined cup for the 3rd year in a row



PSS and the Inclusion Office undertook LGBTI+ diversity training and awareness in the DFTC



3BN troops were out in support of the FTD Brothers on their Irish Challenge as they ran 33 marathons in 33 days in all 32 counties of Ireland to raise awareness for dementia



DF personnel on a recent visit to a local creche

ON PARADE



"Chalk one of the 127 Inf Bn UNIFIL welcomed home in Dublin Airport by their loved ones"

SPORTS & CLUBS



DF BJJ

2026 has been a standout year for the Defence Forces BJJ Club. The club continues to expand rapidly, welcoming new members from all three branches on a weekly basis. Training intensity and technical standards have risen noticeably as the squad grows.

On the competition scene, DF BJJ athletes have performed impressively at tournaments across Ireland, securing multiple medals and podium finishes. The club also received an invitation from the British Military BJJ Team, with several members travelling to the UK to compete and strengthen international military ties.

Beyond competition, the club has organised visits to some of Ireland's leading BJJ academies, allowing members to train under high-level coaches and experience different styles. A major highlight was the launch of the inaugural "Try a Roll" days across all three branches. These introduction events proved extremely popular, resulting in strong attendance and a significant number of new sign-ups.

With this strong momentum, the Defence Forces BJJ Club is looking forward to the remainder of an exciting 2026.

DF MOUNTAINEERING

At the start of May members of DFAM from 27 Inf Bn ran a Mountaineering skills course in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks. Students came from all over the Defence Forces to tackle some of Ireland's most challenging and beautiful mountain routes. Each day students navigated various routes in the

reeks consisting of the Big Gun, Curve Gull, Carrauntoohil and Beenkeragh to name a few. Students learned how to navigate on steep ground, scrambling techniques, rope work and the importance

of being properly prepared for a day in the hills. With some unforgettable view and routes, students are to remember this course for years to come.

DF HURLING

The DF Annual 10 aside (the Chaplin's Cup donated to the DF in 1924) and 7 aside hurling competition (the Parsons Cup, donated by the Parsons family) will take place in The Faithful fields Offaly GAA centre of excellence on June the 11th

All unit formations are encouraged to enter teams.

Anyone who wishes to enter please contact their local hurling REP and or reach out to Comdt Tom Tooher 1 ACS at tom.tooher@defenceforces.ie extn 5230

The annual DF Inter Brigade competition will take place in September time and venue TBC. 4 x teams competed for the DF hurling Inter Bde and an inaugural competition the Pte Gerard McMahon Cup, which was donated by his friends and colleagues from the 1st Inf Bn and the 63rd Inf Group UNDOF. Pte McMahon tragically passed away in 2021.

Looking forward - the upcoming DF Rep series versus AIB is due to take place in Kilkenny on the 02nd of November, also the DF will play the Gardaí (AGS) which will take place in November also.





DF RUGBY

The new year signifies kicking off a new season for DF Rugby, with both the Men and Women's teams hitting the ground running with a busy schedule of games.

Men's results	Women's results
DF Rugby 42 v 10 Prison service	DF Rugby 5 v 35 UKAF
DF Rugby 14 v 29 Leinster Juniors	DF Rugby & AGS combined 12 v Scottish Police
DF Rugby 19 v 53 Munster Juniors	

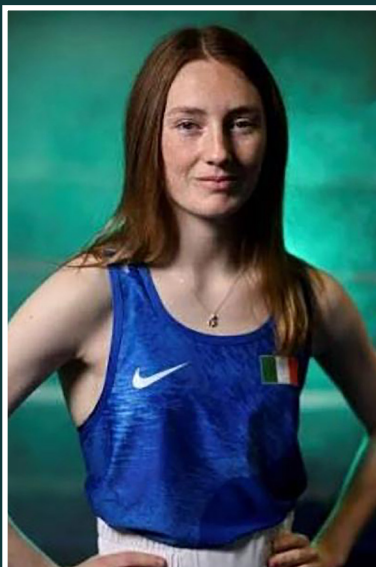


men's 100 meters, with Cadet Bartak taking the 200 meters. Comdt James Ledingham was the standout athlete of the meet, winning the 400, 800, 1500 and 5000 meters, as well as the over-40s 3000 meters to claim the Mulcahy Trophy. In the women's events, Cadet Griffin of the Military College took gold in both the 100 meters and the 1500 meters, while Private Nolan of the 3rd Infantry Battalion won the men's 3000 meters

Looking forward

Both teams are now in preparation for CISM 7's in France, best of luck to all involved. Please stay tuned as there will be a number of events on during summer including Hooker Regan 7's Tournament. Both the Men & Women's teams will host a number of international fixtures to round off the season from September to November of this year.

DF BOXING



DF ROWING

The Defence Forces Rowing Club has been busy behind the scenes. While committee members put the final touches on our facilities at Collins Barracks, our athletes are focused on preparing for the penultimate event of the season, the 1km Championship. Crews are logging serious miles to tackle this tough challenge. Our calendar is also packed with outings at the Munster Branch and Cork Regattas, both hosted at the National Rowing Centre. As always, our WhatsApp channel is buzzing with crew updates, session reports, technical tips, and news from members abroad, including BQ Williams and Pte Diffley. Meanwhile, Pte Ronan Byrne is making the most of Rowing Ireland's High-Performance Programme as he works towards his goal of competing at the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Congratulations to our Defence Forces boxers on some impressive recent and upcoming international selections! Sgt Stephen Kelly represented Ireland as part of the Elite Team at the prestigious STRANDJA Elite Box Cup in Bulgaria.

Pte Ross Hickey also travelled with the squad in his role with the Irish Elite Coaching Team.

Meanwhile, Pte Rachel Lawless (6th BN) has earned selection for the upcoming Four Nations Boxing Event in Scotland this June – a superb achievement and well-deserved recognition of her talent and hard work.

DF ATHLETICS

The Irish Defence Forces Athletics Championships at the Watershed Athletics Track in Kilkenny saw some outstanding performances. Cadet Houlihan of the Military College won the



FROM THE ARCHIVES

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THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE /
AN COSANTÓIR

FIRE!

BY SGT KARL BYRNE, CPL NEVILLE COUGHLAN AND A/B DAVID JONES

On 10th December 2013, a Cavalry Corps day and night shoot took place in the Glen of Imaal, Co Wicklow, at which the Corps' fleet of Scorpion CVR(T) and Mowag Piranha III vehicles were put through their paces.

The Cavalry is one of the corps that provides the 'teeth' of the Defence Forces and has a long and proud tradition of service. Originally, it was called the Armoured Car Corps and was armed with a fleet of light armoured vehicles. Over the decades, the fleet has evolved from: Landsverk armoured cars, Comet and Churchill MBTs (1950s), Panhard AMLs (1960s), Scorpion CVR(T)s (1980) to the latest AFV investment in two variant of the Mowag Piranha III, the Close Reconnaissance Vehicle (CRV) and Medium Reconnaissance Vehicle (MRV), both entering service in 2008.

Read more at: www.military.ie/army/organisation/army-corps/cavalry/





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