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Tomorrow's Forces Today
The ARW in profile.
Report by
Wesley Bourke

Being ‘The Best’
ARW instructors speak on the necessary requirements to pass selection.
Report by
Wesley Bourke

Selection Passed
Soldiers who successfully completed the last selection course speak of their experiences.
Report by
Wesley Bourke

Multitasked
Job specifications with the ARW.
Report by
Sgt Rena Kennedy

Ice Cold
Two Army divers take part in an expedition to the Arctic Circle.
Report by
Comdt Mark Brownen

For Valour — Sgt John Moyney (VC)
We mark 150 years of the Victoria Cross with a story of one Irishman’s bravery in battle.
Report by
Pte Chris Percival

RDFRA ADC 2007
A brief report on the RDFRA conference held recently.
Report by
Sgt David Nagle

Eyes Over the Ocean
The Air Corps Maritime Aircraft refitted.
Report by
Flt Sgt John McMahon

Golfers Enjoy Their Tee Time
All the results from this year’s DF Golf Championship.
Report by
Capt Enda De Brún

The Clash of the Ash
Results from the Chaplin’s Cup and Parson’s Cup.
Report by
Sgt Willie Braine

In Top Form
DF showjumpers take part in international events this year.
Report by
Lt Stephen Maguire

Letters to the Editor
Readers give their opinions.
On Parade
At their annual Camp in the Glen of Imaal in July, Comdt Des Coleman (54 Res Fd Arty Regt and Gen Sec RDFRA) is seen here taking the salute from No 7 Gun Bty on the occasion of his last Camp.

Run for Life
22 members of LÉ Orla’s crew ran the Cork City Marathon recently in Aid of Our Lady’s Hospital for Sick Children Dublin. Four of the crew ran the full marathon and the rest ran in relays.

Present Arms
Sgt Maj Noel O’Callaghan’s (35 Inf Gp Kfor) photo shows Lt Col Eamon Colcough (OC 35 Inf Gp Kfor) leading his troops in rendering honours to Gen Berndt Grundevik (Comd MNTF(C)) and Brig Gen Padraig O’Callaghan (GOC 4 W Bde) during a medal parade on July 18th.

Admiral’s Visit
In July, the newly appointed Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Donal Counihan visited the Naval Base. As the Admiral of the Port of Cork (a ceremonial title), Cllr Counihan was fulfilling a long-standing tradition of the Lord Mayor calling to the Naval Base on taking office. He was given a short tour of the base and a brief on Naval Operations. (Sea David Jones photo shows (l-r): Lt Cdr Pat Allen, Lady Mayoress Mrs Breda Counihan, The Lord Mayor, Commodore Frank Lynch (FOCNS) and Mr Frank Gavin (Cork City Manager).

Recce in Reserve
Pictured here are the first RDF Troop Leaders Course run by the Cav Sch in July. They are back row (l-r): Cpl Paddy Hughes, Padraig Roughan and Tommy Grier, Sgt Mark Murtagh, Cpl Gary Pendred, Sgt Sean Cassidy, Cpl Mark Buckley and John Flanigan and Sgt Bernard Kelly. Front row (l-r): Sgts Garry Fitzpatrick and Alan Cox, Capt Mick Bohan, Comdt. Patrick Power, Capt Mick Curran (Both Instr), Lt Glen McKenna and Sgt John Hamrock. Photo: Cpl John Flanigan (54 Res Cav Sqn).

Looking Good
Pictured here is the Irish Contingent serving with ISAF in Afghanistan in their recently issued Desert Irish DPMs. They are (l-r): Comdt Robbie Kiley, Sqn Sgt Johnny Enright, Comdt Fred O’Donovan, Lt Col Ray Lane, Coy Sgt Gerry Selright, Comdt Darragh O’Brien and Coy Sgt Gus Keaneey.
**Arrested Development**

Pictured at a presentation in the NCO’s Mess Cathal Brugha Bks to retired members of the MP Det Gov Bldg Det and 2 Grn MP Coy on July 20th are (l-r): Cpls Paul “Smack” Wynne, Christy “Molly” Molloy, Cliff “Digger” Whealan, Roy Briggs and CQMS Joe Cogley. Photo: Pte Robbie McAney.

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**Lebanon Visit**

Tom Felle sent in this photo of the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Dermot Earley with (l-r): Cpl Philip Thorpe, Capt Barry Byrne and Pte Philip McNally who are all serving with 36 Inf Gp. This was the Chief of Staff’s first visit to an Irish unit overseas and he got the opportunity to see the infantry group working with their Finnish counterparts.

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**We are the Champions**

Mons Eoin Thynne (HCF) is seen here presenting the Chaplain’s Cup to this year’s winning team captain Pte Tom Fitzgibbons (4 Inf Bn). See Sports Update for more on the results. Photo: Armn Billy Galligan.

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**Pen to Paper**

Sgt Willie Braine’s photo shows instructors and students of the RDF Logs/Admin Cse held recently in the Mil Admin Sch, DFTC. They are; front row (l-r): Sgts John Murphy (54 Res Med Coy), Oliver Dunne (59 Res Inf Bn), Capt Gerry Gaule (RDFTA), Cpl Elaine Black (67 Res Inf Bn), Comdt Tom Bell, Capt Conor Galvin, Sgt Pauline O’Keeffe (All RDFTA) and Sgt James Manning (51 Res Inf Bn). Back row (l-r): Sgts Richard Martin, Frank Murphy (Both 33 Res Inf Bn), Michael Fitzpatrick, Ian Sims (Both 32 Res Inf Bn), Kieran Sheehan (31 Res Inf Bn), Peter McGarrigle (58 Res Inf Bn), John Cooney (33 Res Inf Bn) and Darren Martin (66 Res Inf Bn).

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**For a good cause**

Lt Col Mick Clancy (Adjt 1 S Bde) is seen here presenting a cheque for €3,600 to Anne Elliot of the Marymount Hospice in Cork. This money was raised by Pte Ray Ryan who ran a sprint triathlon with the Carrick-on-Suir Triathlon Club in July. See August’s Connect for more. Photo: Sgt Barry McCarthy.

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**AN COSANTÓIR • August 2007**
The first seven years of this century have seen major changes in the focus of operations for the Army Ranger Wing, and consequently on the unit’s training and deployment.

In this article Wesley Bourke describes these changes and what they have meant for the Defence Forces’ Special Forces unit.

Warfare today takes place in a fast-moving, dynamic environment and elite Special Forces units are at the forefront of this constantly changing arena, leading the way in terms of technology, training and skill. The Defence Forces’ Special Forces unit, the Army Ranger Wing (ARW) is ready at a moment’s notice to respond to any task that may come its way. The unit must be ready and able to carry out operations in both conventional and anti-terrorist/special operations roles in order to assist the Defence Forces in any roles assigned to it by government.

The ARW is a strategic asset for both the Defence Forces and the state and as a result comes under the remit of the highest level of command.

Like other Special Forces units the ARW roles cover both conventional and antiterrorist/special operations, also known as ‘green’ and ‘black’ operations. Over the last decade the focus has shifted more from the ‘black’ to the ‘green’. Up to the end of the 1990s the main focus of the Defence Forces was Aid to Civil Power (ATCP) and a lot of the ARW’s capabilities focused on this area, mainly assisting the Garda Síochána in anti-terrorist operations. Consequently, much of their training was similar to that of foreign special police units such as GIGN in France or GSG9 in Germany. Since 2000 the focus has changed significantly.

Although the unit continues to develop its skills in anti-terrorist/special operations, today’s focus is more on conventional operations and particularly in being prepared to deploy overseas. This change of focus manifests itself in the training carried out at home and in the exchange programmes with other special forces units, which now are more likely to be the likes of the French parachute regiment or the Dutch Royal Marines, rather than the police units mentioned earlier. Given the Defence Forces’ entry into the Nordic Battle Group, the ARW has also been developing close ties with Swedish special forces units.

Another significant change has been in interoperability with other brigades and services within the Defence Forces. This is very important, as for many
The nature of EU defence now means there is more exchange of information with other Special Forces units. Under the Helsinki Headline Goal the Defence Forces is required to have a rapid reaction force of company strength on standby and ready to deploy within 30 days. As part of this set-up the ARW are constantly on five days notice to deploy. They would then be followed up by the standby company. Training for this has meant a huge development in interoperable training with the brigade that is tasked with providing a rapid reaction company. The most recent example of this took place with the ARW taking part in a live-fire, tactical training exercise with troops from 1 S Bde who had been tasked as the Rapid Reaction Company.

Also within the EU there is a Special Operation Project Group, which is tasked with drawing up standard operating procedures (SOPs) that will allow similar units to inter-operate more easily. A simple example of this could be identifying differences in the way the ARW and their Swedish counterparts fast-rope out of a helicopter and then standardising this so that both units use the same technique.

Under Partnership for Peace all contributing units, regular or Special Forces, are required to demonstrate an equivalent level of expertise to their overseas partners. This also applies to the ARW who are required to operate at the same standard as other special forces units.

The ARW is up with the best of them in terms of equipment and the capability to meet the tasks set for them and the unit made a name for itself on the international stage when it came third in special forces competitions run by GSG9 in Germany in 2003. Fifty special forces teams from around the world met to compete in an across the board test of skills, including tactics, shooting, endurance, the ability to improvise, and a range of other basic requirements for a special forces team. The competition is being held again this year and the ARW is once more preparing itself to compete with the world’s elite for title of Number One.

The personnel of the Army Ranger Wing are determined to maintain the highest levels of skills, technology and personnel, in the decades to come in order to meet any mission that they may receive in the future.

years the ARW had a mythical status; seen to be on standby only for very specialised jobs. Now there is more emphasis for the unit to be able to operate with personnel and units throughout the Defence Forces and to be able to deploy overseas with them when required. The ARW also provides assistance for the brigades and services in terms of their development. For example, with the Air Corps’ recent acquisition of new helicopters the ARW are working closely with them in the development of insertion and extraction skills, abseiling and fast-roping out of helicopters.

Since the mid-90s the ARW has been deploying more and more overseas at unit level and ARW personnel continue to serve overseas on an individual basis. The UNOSOM mission to Somalia was the first time ARW personnel deployed overseas in large numbers. In 1999 the ARW deployed to East Timor with a platoon and HQ element. UNMIL in Liberia was the next ARW deployment overseas on such a scale and at present there are ARW elements supporting all of the Defence Forces major overseas missions.

All of the ARW’s overseas deployments to date have been in the conventional or ‘green’ role. In these deployments the ARW are used instead of regular units in more sensitive areas or where the risks are higher. ARW teams can operate on their own, without the standard support regular forces would receive, are tasked with providing ISTAR (information, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance) and liaising with local leaders.

Today
Adverts for the ARW selection course come around once a year and the headline in Connect usually reads ‘Be All You Can Be’, or ‘Be The Best’, or something along those lines. The mystique surrounding the Defence Forces’ elite Special Forces unit is enhanced in articles with accompanying photos of rangers with blurred-out faces, who remain stubbornly anonymous in the captions. The secrecy surrounding the Wing means that most of our knowledge is based on stories and rumour. Despite this, or more probably because of it, many DF personnel ask themselves: ‘Have I got what it takes?’ Wesley Bourke met ARW instructors to find out exactly what it does take.

Every year some 50 candidates from throughout the Defence Forces put themselves forward for the robust, intense, and physically and mentally demanding ARW selection course. Those making it through selection progress to the basic skills course and a chance to earn the Green Beret and become part of the elite Fíanóglaich.

I was looking forward to interviewing the guys charged with moulding the best candidates in the Defence Forces into fully-fledged rangers.

I have to admit, like most people I had little impression of what a ranger would look or sound like, other than the fabricated Hollywood impressions we have all seen of tough bulletproof Special Forces units taking on the entire world. As it turned out, the instructors I met don’t have a ‘death grip’ handshake and apart from one or two with beards they looked and chatted like anyone else you would meet in the Defence Forces.

Since last year the selection course has been reduced from four weeks to three. The instructors explained that other Special Forces units have had trouble getting guys through long selection courses. ‘A body will only take so much,’ one of them told me, ‘and if you prolong a course the chances of getting injured increase.’

My hosts quickly shot down any fleeting impression that the course has been made easier by the change. ‘If anything, selection is now harder as candidates have less time between tests; less time for recovery.’

Prior to selection, applicants undergo a three-day ‘prelim’, which includes a fitness test, an interview, basic lectures on the course, and making sure they have all the right kit.

‘The prelim cuts out the shock factor of going straight into it on Sunday night,’ explained one
Instructor. ‘In the interview we’re not trying to trip guys up: we’re looking at what kind of calibre he is, his character, his attitude. We don’t want a guy simply looking for a way out of his unit. We don’t want ‘tough guys’, and we’re not looking for ‘super’ soldiers either. What we’re looking for during selection and the skills course is a team player; someone who is level headed; someone who can do the basics very well and progress; who can take in information; who can work by himself and with a group; a guy that will give his heart no matter what.’

I was surprised to learn that some candidates arrive totally unprepared, trying to give off a ‘hard man’ image, or arriving with all their kit in a black bag. ‘When they come here they should at least have their kit in order,’ said one instructor.

Candidates also need to know that the swimming pool features a lot during their training. ‘They don’t need to be athletic swimmers,’ I was told, ‘but they need to be comfortable with the fact they are going to be spending time in the water.’

There are no secrets about the selection course and candidates won’t encounter anything they haven’t covered before. The first week includes battle PT and several tests. The second two weeks are spent ‘on the ground’. ‘There’s nothing new,’ the instructors told me. They do patrol harbours, basic communications, basic ambush drills and we use all the standard army training manuals, not an ARW manual. It’s basic tactics but at a more intense level. We want to see that they can soldier and that they are willing to go the next step.’

Candidates may be surprised to find out they get the best part of a weekend off after the first week. The main reason for this is that the following two weeks are spent on the ground and they need to be rested and fresh.

However, there’s also some psychology at play here. ‘This is where your mental fitness starts to get tasted,’ one of the instructors told me. ‘You go home and get comfortable and you see your buddies out drinking, whereas you’ve had an intense week and it’s only when you rest that you start to feel the aches and pains. It plays on your mind. The danger time is about three days after they come back when they’re on the ground and thinking of their home comforts. Some guys will RTU themselves at this point.’

A lot of candidates will undergo a battle in their own minds whether to give up or not but one instructor told me: ‘There’s no feeling worse then giving up; walking out the gate knowing that you were good enough but you were just having a bad day and felt sorry for yourself.’

The instructors told me that there are a lot of reasons that someone mightn’t make it through selection. ‘There are times when we’ll tip a guy on the shoulder and say ‘This isn’t for you’, usually because they aren’t of the right calibre,’ they told me. ‘Then you will see guys who are very fit but have a bad attitude or aren’t focused - this is usually down to bad preparation. Then there are those unfortunate guys who might be fit and have the right attitude but just get injured.’

There is no foolproof solution to passing ARW selection but the instructors did give me some advice. ‘Guys think that you need to be super fit but it is more mental fitness then anything. We’re looking for the guy who is absolutely drained of everything and has nothing left physically, but who can still reach in the bag and grab another 10% or 15%. That’s what real soldiering is all about.’

Block out things other people might be saying to you as they may be jealous or trying to ‘wind you up’. Your mental preparation should come from your
On the skills course we’re assessing the raw guys that passed selection to see if they have what it takes to progress to the level of ranger,’ one instructor told me. ‘It’s not for everybody, and if a guy has a question mark over him you are better off letting him go back to his unit get a bit more experience before coming back again. We’ve had skills courses with six guys and only two passed.’

Selection is only the first step to joining the Wing, and if I don’t get it I’ll try again next year’ but some instructors agreed, ‘that it’s very draining. Some guys find it too much, particularly having to operate in very confined spaces under a lot of pressure.’

On some occasions students have been given their Green Berets without even knowing it. ‘On one course, we had the two remaining students go through an obstacle course around the Curragh,’ one instructor told me. ‘We had them absailing down buildings, stripping and assembling weapons, and loads of other drills. Then they were brought into the pool and given more tasks. After that we ran them through the CBRN chamber and by the time they got there they were so wrecked they didn’t even notice the whole unit was there. The CO had the keys to two locked boxes that the students had been instructed to open them the two lads’ Green Berets were inside! The shock on their faces and then the realisation that their Green Berets were inside really came to the fore.

On the skills course we’re assessing the raw guys that passed selection to see if they have what it takes to progress to the level of ranger,’ one instructor told me. ‘I’ve seen guys coming down saying ‘I’ll give it a go this year and if I don’t get it I’ll try again next year’ but guys with that attitude don’t last; you can’t let the thought of failure cross your mind. Of course selection is very tough but it’s fair. Everything is structured to allow people to pass, there are no hidden tricks.’

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‘If you have to focus so much all the time,’ one instructor told me. ‘It’s very draining. Some guys find it too much, particularly having to operate in very confined spaces under a lot of pressure.’

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Many officers will pass selection but the unit only has a limited amount of vacancies. ‘This is why we have to set out not just to pass the selection course,’ continued Dave, ‘but we have to outperform everybody else, so that the instructors will say ‘This is the officer we want as our platoon commander’.

On the selection and skills course officers are treated no differently to any other candidate. However, their path into the unit is somewhat different. Also, the lowest commissioned rank in the ARW is captain. Two infantry captains on the basic skills course, Dave and Ger, explained how an officer becomes part of this elite unit.

There are several different appointments a commissioned officer can apply for in the ARW; platoon commander or operations officer for example. However, it’s not as simple as going for an interview. To be an officer in the ARW you have to earn your green beret the same as the rest of the unit. Like every other ranger you have to want to be the best.

The first step is to pass selection. ‘From my point of view the ARW is a place you can really soldier,’ Dave told me. ‘On selection and skills I wanted to be treated no differently from anybody else and it’s one of the few places in the Army you get that opportunity. Although there is no rank, the instructors know who you are and if you’re an officer or an NCO more is expected of you: you are expected to lead and to take charge.’

Many officers will pass selection but the unit only has a limited amount of vacancies. ‘This is why we have to set out not just to pass the selection course,’ continued Dave, ‘but we have to outperform everybody else, so that the instructors will say ‘This is the officer we want as our platoon commander’.

Unlike other successful candidates who pass selection an officer will not go straight onto a basic skills course but has to wait until a vacancy opens. ‘It is a bit of an anticlimax,’ Ger says. ‘It also...’
Got the badge.
Now to earn the beret!

When asked how it feels to finally be in the unit on a skills course, Dave smiled. ‘For me it doesn’t get better than this,’ he says. ‘To be on an intensive course for five months where you are learning something new every day is fantastic.’

Adding to his buddy’s zeal Ger went on to say: ‘The unit ethos is ‘do as I do’. If we are going on a battle run with kit weighing 35 pounds the instructor will run with the same kit.’

‘As an officer,’ Dave added, ‘you’re not just expected to pass the skills course but to bring it to the next level, help the lads along the way, and bring our professional skills and experiences to it.’

Working as a platoon commander in the ARW is not the same as in a battalion. ‘In your first year here you are trying to get to know how the unit works and getting to know the lads, some of whom have been here for 15 years,’ explained Dave. ‘It’s also different working with teams: the tactics are different and it takes some time to get to know the capabilities of the dive team or the parachute team for example. Over our time here we would try to specialise in a particular area and get up to the same standard as the lads in the teams.’

So, why become a ranger?
On this both officers where in total agreement. ‘This is a place where things are done to the highest levels. We are the best trained, best equipped and ‘hands down’ the best soldiers that the Defence Forces has to offer.’

As to their chances of progressing to full membership of the unit both Ger and Dave were again unanimous: ‘Failure is not an option!’
The skills course is very demanding but it’s also very enjoyable. Overall, I would say that to be successful you have to be dedicated and you have to want to be here.

One thing to be aware of is that you are joining a Special Forces unit and you have to step up to their standards; they will not drop to yours.

NCO helped as well because you would have that bit more experience. Everyone on selection or the skills course is treated the same, regardless of rank, but obviously as an NCO you should know your stuff.

The skills course is very demanding but it’s also very enjoyable. Overall, I would say that to be successful you have to be dedicated and you have to want to be here.

Martin (Engineer Corps)

I was an electrician before I joined the Army, but even then I wanted to go for the ARW. Hopefully the skills I’ve learnt on engineering courses can be useful here. My advice is to prepare yourself for selection like going overseas; you get all your kit ready and then you have to prepare yourself mentally.

Dave (Infantry Corps)

I failed one selection course due to injury and spent some time in hospital but I came back down and passed the next time. Family and friends that know I’m here are very proud of me and supportive. They know I want to be here and they’re delighted that I passed, although they wouldn’t know the specifics of what I’m doing. You don’t have much contact once you are on the selection or the skills course as we’re very busy.

The first time I came down I was actually fitter but I got injured: the second time I wasn’t as fit but my head was in a much better place and that’s what really got me through it.

Philip (Infantry Corps)

The experience here is nothing like you would get back in your own unit and I wanted more out of the Army; I wanted a challenge. Like everyone said, selection was very tough and demanding but you have to come here with the right frame of mind. You have to want to be here and you have to be prepared. You can’t just decide to start training the week before coming down; you have to be working on it a few months beforehand. In the Cav I was a Mowag driver and I’d done a Basic Recce course, which I found has helped.

Paul (Artillery Corps)

I’ve been in seven years and I’ve wanted to be a ranger since I joined up as I think the ARW has a lot more to offer. Selection was tough but it is all in your head. I was fairly fit so I did not find the physical aspect too hard but anyway you don’t have to be an athlete coming down here, as long as you have a decent fitness level that can be worked on.

I’m very happy to have got this far. There is a lot to learn and a lot thrown at you. It’s a big turn around from artillery tactics and firing 105s.
Ranger One told me: ‘All divers are required to maintain a high level of physical fitness and it’s vital that they remain current in diving. To ensure this we are tested every 12 weeks and undergo an annual dive-specific medical. So as you can see, life as a diver can be very demanding but it’s also hugely rewarding and very exciting.’

**Diver**

Ranger One has 13 years service in the DF, the first two years been spent in the Naval Service during which he completed a three-month diving course. In 1996 he successfully completed selection and following completion of the skills course he became a member of the ARW dive team. He has been dive team leader for the last two years.

Although qualified as a naval diver, Ranger One still had to complete the four-week ARW combat diving programme before being accepted into the ARW dive team. On the ARW course he covered such topics as scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus), theory of diving, sub-surface navigation and the ARW’s SOPs and tactics. He reflects: ‘Even though I had a slight advantage on other students as I came to the unit as a qualified diver I still found it a very physically demanding course’.

Now in his capacity as team leader he has ultimate responsibility for his team and must ensure they are ready at all times in anticipation of an order to deploy. Ranger One’s life as a diver in the ARW is a varied one, especially with the introduction of the re-breathers system acquired by the ARW, and which is in standard use worldwide with similar Special Forces units.

The re-breathers is a tactical diving system that affords a diver a greater sub-surface endurance and also has the advantage that divers using the system cannot be visually detected from the surface as no bubbles are released, unlike the scuba. In addition, the re-breathers system is chest-mounted, therefore allowing divers to surface tactically, unlike the scuba system, which breaks the surface before the diver.

Combat diving is broken into three main areas: sub-surface diving; surface swimming; and boating/kayaking. These areas cover such diverse aspects as beach recce; ship’s boarding; securing gas/oil rigs; and diver insertion for conventional and AT (anti-terrorist) tasks; and boat casting and recovery.

The ARW dive team utilise a wide variety of vessels such as M9 Avons; CRRC (Combat Raider Rigid Craft); Mk 4 commando kayaks; Klepper kayaks; and the more robust RIBs (rigid inflatable boat), similar to those deployed by the NS but incorporating a 100% military specification.

On completion of the skills course, and with a minimum of one year’s experience in an assault team, a ranger can apply for a position in one of the dive teams. A rigorous medical is required, followed by a three-week prelim course, which incorporates theoretical (week 1) and practical diving (weeks 2&3). If deemed suitable the candidate is then sent to the Naval Base to complete the combat diving course, which is broken into two phases. Phase 1 qualifies students in scuba and sub-surface navigation. Phase 2, supervised by ARW combat diving-qualified personnel, teaches the re-breathers system and TTP’s (tactics and techniques procedures), which will allow potential divers to slot into a dive team when qualified.

Qualified divers must also complete a basic RIB course, followed by specialised long-range RIB training. The latter is tactically oriented and includes more specialised training pertaining to ARW tactics.

Ranger One told me: ‘All divers are required to maintain a high level of physical fitness and it’s vital that they remain current in diving. To ensure this we are tested every 12 weeks and undergo an annual dive-specific medical. So as you can see,
‘You wear your personal kit/chest rig on your front,’ Ranger Two explained. ‘You’re then dressed in a jump suit to ensure no loose straps interfere with your parachute; your backpack is strapped to your chest and your parachute strapped to your back…and you jump.’

Parachutist

Ranger Two has 10 years service in the Defence Forces, with his first two years spent in an infantry battalion, including a trip to Lebanon. However, ‘It was always part of the plan to join the Ranger Wing.’

He completed selection in 1999 and has had a very varied career in the Wing to date. On completion of his skills course in 2000 he was immediately deployed to East Timor with the second ARW platoon to serve in the mission. He found this a terrific way to put everything he learned on the skills course into use in a hugely challenging environment.

On returning home, he spent almost two years as part of an ARW dive team before transferring to a para team…such is the diversity of life in the ARW. In 2004 he completed the Accelerated Free-Fall (AFF) course in Spain as an element of the advanced syllabus of parachute training undertaken by the ARW.

‘On the basic parachute course you conduct a couple of days’ ground training, where you prepare your kit, learn parachute packing techniques and perfect your drills and you then jump from 3,000ft using a static line (a line that automatically opens your parachute on departing the aircraft),’ he told me. ‘On the AFF course I did one day’s ground training, rehearsing safety drills and body positions and my first AFF jump was from 12,500ft, the minimum height for AFF.’

‘Your instruments tell you your exact altitude,’ he continued, ‘and when you’re at approx 5,000ft you pull the cord. You also have an instructor with you on your first jump…although it’s still your call when to pull the cord.’

Similar to the sniper teams, the parachutists are on call 24/7 so kit is packed ready to go for any eventuality. Ranger Two has been to Sweden in recent years where he completed a ‘kit-jumping’ course with Swedish Special Forces. This involves jumping with full kit and a prerequisite of the course is that you must have a minimum of 50 AFF jumps completed before jumping with kit attached.

‘You wear your personal kit/chest rig on your front,’ Ranger Two explained. ‘You’re then dressed in a jump suit to ensure no loose straps interfere with your parachute; your backpack is strapped to your chest and your parachute strapped to your back…and you jump.’ This makes it sound simple and straightforward but life as a diver can be very demanding but it’s also hugely rewarding and very exciting.

Similarly to his colleagues in the para and sniper teams, Ranger One has also spent time abroad cross-training and up-skilling with other combat dive teams and gaining invaluable experience.

Ranger One also served with INTERFET in East Timor and spent time in Belize (Central America) and Brunei (South East Asia) completing an ISTAR recce course and a jungle warfare tracking instructors course, respectively. He also served in Lebanon and was employed as part of a close-protection team in Liberia, West Africa.

Sniper

Ranger Three has 18 years service in the Defence Forces, beginning his career in the Southern Brigade. Having been heavily involved in all aspects of infantry tactics in his parent unit he says it seemed a logical step to progress his career by applying for the ARW and he underwent a selection course in 1996. ‘It was always my ambition to join the Defence Forces’ Special Forces unit,’ he told me, ‘and if I didn’t try I felt that I’d always regret it.’

He received many positive responses to his intention to join the Wing when he spoke to ex-members of the ARW and to some who had completed selection but hadn’t actually served in the unit. ‘Across the Defence Forces there is a cadre of people who will speak very highly of their time and experiences spent in the Wing,’ he says, ‘and I would recommend that anyone who has an interest should actively seek out such people for information prior to going on selection.’

In early 1996, having passed selection, he went on to complete his six months probation (now known as the skills course), which he personally found harder than selection itself. This was followed by a year spent in an assault team where skills and drills are taught and tested to the ‘nth degree’.

During his previous service in his parent battalion he had qualified as a sniper instructor, so it seemed a natural progression to become part of the ARW’s Sniper Team. The main job of the Sniper Team is provision of a force-multiplying ISTAR capability to the assault platoons by providing precision fire when and if needed and by providing information/intelligence to Tac HQ prior to, or during, an operational deployment. Potential snipers will undergo basic sniper training.
Sniper training is broken down into both anti-terrorist and conventional training. Members of the team must excel at marksmanship with various weapons, including the Accuracy International family, including the 338 Super Magnum and the 12.7mm Anti-Material Rifle.

‘The ARW is not for everyone,’ Ranger Four says, ‘but it’s a place where all your talents, skills and interests are utilised to get the job done.'

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While on probation but to become part of the Sniper Team you must complete one of the six-week unit-specific sniper courses that are conducted every two to three years, depending on the unit’s requirements.

At the moment Ranger Three is a Sniper Team leader and is responsible for the constant training of his team members to ensure they achieve the highest possible standards in all aspects of sniping.

Sniper training is broken down into both anti-terrorist and conventional training. Members of the team must excel at marksmanship with various weapons, including the Accuracy International family, including the 338 Super Magnum and the 12.7mm Anti-Material Rifle.

Conventional tactical training includes LRRP (long-range reconnaissance patrolling); information gathering and reporting techniques; proficiency in the use of OP suite equipment similar to that deployed by artillery OPs; advanced communications skills; and an understanding of the ‘intelligence cycle’.

If a situation were to arise that required the immediate deployment of the ARW, it would be normal for the Sniper Team to be deployed prior to any form of direct action.

The team must excel at marksmanship with various weapons, including the Accuracy International family, including the 338 Super Magnum and the 12.7mm Anti-Material Rifle.

The final ranger I spoke to is a ‘jack of all trades’, so to speak, in that he has spent time in various teams within the unit and is now employed in the HQ element of the ARW, with responsibility for planning and co-ordinating exercises and training programmes. His 15 years’ experience in the unit lends well to this job, as there are very few things he has not done himself, albeit from the other side.

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The Team Leader inspects his team regularly to ensure kit is ready to go 24/7. In his ten years in the ARW, Ranger Three has had numerous opportunities to travel abroad. Having completed two tours of duty to Lebanon before joining the ARW he was a member of the first ARW platoon to be deployed to East Timor in 1999. He recalls that this trip was the first time he had been deployed on covert ops ‘for real’ at home or abroad, and he relished every day of his tour. He considers that trip to be one of the highlights of his service in the ARW, along with various foreign exchange placements and foreign courses.

‘I’ve been lucky,’ he says, ‘service with the unit has given me exposure to other Special Forces from Spain, Italy and Sweden. On exercises, I’ve stormed trains with the BBE (Holland), assaulted airplanes with GSG9 (Germany), parachuted low-level at night with the RPIMa (France) and patrolled the jungles of Belize with the KSK (Germany).’

He recommends that if someone wants to truly experience ‘a life less ordinary’ then ARW life is certainly the one to choose. However, he is mindful of the support that being a ranger requires from family members and is grateful to his own family who have supported him unconditionally in the past 10 years in his ‘adventures’ as part of the Defence Forces’ Special Forces unit.

Ranger Four has served six trips overseas to Lebanon, Liberia, Bosnia and East Timor. He says that for him ‘the highlight was serving as part of a close-protection unit for the UNMIL Chief of Staff for six months.’

The team were responsible for the security and safety for the COS in his daily routine, he continued, ‘and this involved carrying out route recces, meeting with other security personnel. All of our work was geared towards getting the COS safely to the precise location he required on time...not too early or too late.’

Having a ‘desk job’ is new to him but it’s a job that he is enjoying and as he’s so closely involved in the unit’s training activities he still gets to spend plenty of time ‘on the ground’.

Summing up the ARW’s training ethos, Ranger Four says: ‘The unit trains and operates in relative secrecy, in order to protect the identities of personnel and also to conceal the tactics and techniques that may be employed to counter terrorism. The very knowledge that a highly trained and motivated unit exists should be a deterrent in itself. The question is often asked, ‘How do you calculate the ARW’s deterrent value?’ My answer is: It’s better to have us and not need us than to need us and not have us.’

‘The ARW is not for everyone,’ Ranger Four says, ‘but it’s a place where all your talents, skills and interests are utilised to get the job done. Job satisfaction and flexibility are the two main reasons I’m still in the ARW. Personnel are trained in a wide selection of skills and are highly professional – it should be every soldier’s ambition to serve here.’
In June, Tpr Tom O’Doherty (LBC), Comdt Mark Brownen (DDFT), (both members of the Army Diving Group), along with Gardaí Enda Broderick (formerly Naval Service) and Daniel Murphy (both members of the Garda Underwater Unit), were part of an international diving group that visited the Artic Circle, with a Dutch polar expedition company to carry out some ice diving.

The 14-strong diving group involved in the expedition consisted of divers from military-, police-, scientific-, and TV documentary backgrounds. Other members of the expedition included naturalists, wildlife photographers and university students.

The expedition operated from the MV Grigory Mikheev, a Russian-owned, 66m-long ship, that was constructed specifically to operate in the polar regions and spends most of its working year in either Artic or Antarctic waters, depending on the season and demand for such trips. With a reinforced hull and extra thrusters built into its hull, the ship is capable of operating in almost all but the thickest of ice.

We took a four-hour flight from Oslo to RV with the ship in the town of Longyearbyn, the capital of the Norwegian Svalbard Islands, located in the high Artic, north of Greenland. This small town of about 1,000 occupants is used as a start point for many expeditions as it has the only hospital, logistic and evacuation facility in the Artic. Its population survives on tourism, a small coalmine and as a supply depot for passing icebreakers.

Following embarkation, we left Longyearbyn and headed north towards the polar ice pack and the beginning of our ice diving trip.

In June there are 24 hours of daylight in the Artic, so this ensured we had plenty of light for the initial preparation of our diving equipment. As the temperature was below zero, all diving operations were carried out in dry suits and all breathing and buoyancy systems had a secondary backup system working off an independent air supply (one air system is the normal practice). The main reason for having a backup system is that the extreme temperatures can cause equipment to freeze and either fail or malfunction underwater.

All our equipment was serviced and in certain cases freeze-protected to prevent any unforeseen incidents. During dives we wore layers of full-body, fleece under-suits to keep our cores warm under the dry suits. Protection for the hands and head was the one area where even with the thickest of neoprene gloves and hoods we knew we were going to suffer, and we did.

Following immersion hands and face went numb quite quickly. The duration of the dives was affected by this, as after about 30-35 minutes all manual dexterity was lost and the operation of equipment and the replacement of frozen or malfunctioning kit became very difficult.

We used two types of breathing equipment; the Spiro full-face mask with in-water communications (the warmer option) and the standard diving mask with freeze-protected regulators. Following some freezing incidents and equipment exchanges carried out underwater, we reverted to the colder but more manageable conventional half mask system. The ship’s diving operation was controlled by a former commercial diver with years of experience on the North Sea oil rigs and a former German Navy diver now working as a marine biologist for the university in Svalbard. The trip co-ordinators emphasised that the trip was not for the inexperienced and required various levels of training, which we all possessed, and also insurance policies that would cover the costs of medevac from the Artic! There was a doctor onboard but in the event of a decompression accident he would be of little use, hence the requirement for the level of competency demanded.

Following the check dive conducted in one of the fjords south of the ice pack, we were given the green light to dive. An interesting point about the diving that was to be conducted under the ice and around icebergs was that the dive leaders would not be in the water but on the surface in zodiacs, armed and watching for polar bears. All trips off the Grigory Mikheev, whether wildlife photographers or divers, were accompanied by armed guides. A series of pre-arranged danger signals were issued to cover a range of possible dangers and we were to leave the water immediately on receiving any of these signals. They included a signal to indicate the presence of either polar bears or walruses in the area as these animals tend to be territorial and attack intruders… which we very definitely were!

Fortunately, the danger signals were only required once during our eight days diving and this was to...
After dinner nap.

A polar bear taking an after break. This was where we completed our most northern dive at 80°N 14°W. This dive was completed under pack ice, where the ice is in constant motion and the entrance and exit points are always subject to changes in the currents and weather. It was close to here that our first polar bear made its appearance and had its seal lunch.

Reluctantly, we finished our dives and began the long return trip to Longyearbyen. The area of the Norwegian high-Artic territories we visited is just one small part of a unique environment; an environment that is being affected on a daily basis by the actions of the human race; an environment that is changing rapidly, and one that may soon completely disappear...forever!

The training that Comdt Brownen and Tpr O’Doherty received to allow them operate was done through the Army Diving Group, which has reps in each brigade. The group conducts both beginner and advanced diving courses annually, which are advertised in An Cosantóir, Connect, the Training Directive and on the DF intranet.
Surrounded by German troops, Moyney held his post for four days and five nights, without water and with little food. On several occasions the men in both posts were shelled by both the Germans and the British.

John Moyney was born on January 8th 1895 in Rathdowney, Co Laois, and as a young man worked as a labourer on local farms. He enlisted in the British Army on April 7th 1915, joining the 2nd Bn, Irish Guards. The 20-year-old Pte Moyney left for France on October 9th of that year with No3 Company.

Just before Christmas, John was promoted to L/Cpl and in on October 18th 1916 he was promoted to L/Sgt.

In 1916, during the battle of the Somme, L/Cpl Moyney had a lucky escape after being buried alive by a shell blast. By the late summer of 1917 L/Sgt Moyney was with No3 Coy, under the command of a Capt Gunston, who would later recommend him for the Victoria Cross.

On September 12th and 13th 1917 at Ney Copse, north of the Broembeek stream, which cut through the northern sector of the Ypres front, between Wijndriff and the southern edge of Houthulst Forest, L/Sgt Moyney was in command of 15 men forming two advanced posts.

At 2:45am on September 13th, a German attack killed or captured the troops operating on one of Moyney’s flanks. Battalion headquarters mistakenly believed that Moyney and his men had also been lost and ordered the withdrawal of the remaining friendly forces on Moyney’s other flank. As a result Moyney and his men found themselves surrounded and cut off from their own lines.

After sanctioning the abandonment of the remaining posts and the withdrawal of the main line to a new position, battalion headquarters sent a patrol across the Broembeek with orders to bring in causalities, cover the withdrawal of posts still holding out in Ney Copse, and reconnoitre the enemy positions. Due to a series of errors Ney Copse was not thoroughly searched and Moyney’s party was again left behind. By the time HQ realised the mistake it was too late to risk another patrol and the missing men’s plight appeared hopeless as the Germans had established a machine-gun post between them and the Broembeek after the attack.

Surrounded by German troops, Moyney held his post for four days and five nights, without water and with little food. On several occasions the men in both posts were shelled by both the Germans and the British.

On the fifth day, with over 200 Germans advancing to dislodge him, L/Sgt Moyney launched an attack, using bombs and a Lewis machine-gun team to great effect, and led his men in a charge through the Germans to reach the stream.

On reaching the Broembeek, Moyney and a Pte Woodcock covered the remainder of the party, allowing them to cross unscathed, before the two men...
crossed themselves under a shower of enemy bombs and machine-gun fire.

As a result of his actions, L/Sgt John Moyney was recommended for the Victoria Cross. His citation, published in The London Gazette on October 17th 1917, read:

"His Majesty The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned Officer, Non-commissioned Officers and men...

No. 7708 L/Sgt. John Moyney, Ir. Gds. (Rathdowney, Queen’s County..."

For most conspicuous bravery when in command of fifteen men forming two advanced posts. In spite of being surrounded by the enemy he held his post for ninety-six hours, having no water and little food. On the morning of the fifth day a large force of the enemy advanced to dislodge him. He ordered his men out of their shell holes, and taking the initiative, attacked the advancing enemy with bombs, while he used his Lewis gun with great effect from a flank. Finding himself surrounded by superior numbers, he led his men in a charge through the enemy, and reached a stream, which lay between the posts and the line. Here he instructed his party to cross at once while he and Pte Woodcock remained to cover their retirement.

When the whole of his force had gained the south-west bank unscathed he himself crossed under a shower of bombs. It was due to endurance, skill and devotion to duty shown by this non-commissioned officer that he was able to bring his entire force safely out of action."

In 1918 when the war ended John Moyney returned home, married and got a job as head porter in Roscrea Railway Station, Co Tipperary, a position he held for almost 40 years. During that time he and a local priest helped to set up a section of the Transport Branch of the St Joseph’s Young Priest’s Society, a society that helped with the education and training of young priests. Throughout his life, John collected over £7,000 for the society at his station and by cycling around to local farmers collecting money. His success at extracting generous amounts of money from wealthy protestant farmers was mainly due to having fought in the Great War and winning the VC.

Prior to his death on November 10th 1980 John was the last surviving Irish recipient of a Great War Victoria Cross.

Before he died John presented his VC to the Regimental Museum in London. He is buried in Roscrea Cemetery, Co Tipperary.

John’s great-grandson, Chris Percival, is currently trying to erect a memorial to John. Anyone who can offer advice or funding can contact him at chrispercival7@hotmail.com.
On June 8th and 9th the membership of RDFRA met in the Military College for the association’s first biennial delegate conference. Like most association conferences it followed the usual format of elections, reports, and motions.

Events included the adoption of the association’s annual report for 2006. During the delivery of this report Comdt Des Coleman (Gen Sec RDFRA) outlined the issues the association dealt with in 2006. These included pushing for legislation to enable reservists to increase their duty commitment at home and, in particular, to any future deployment overseas; the issue of ordnance and wet gear to non-integrated RDF personnel; and the ongoing development of trust and communications with the C&A sections of both the DoD and the Defence Forces.

The general secretary also outlined developments in the areas of promotions and recruitment, and retention matters.

Finally, as this was his last annual report, Comdt Coleman thanked everyone for the assistance they gave him during his five-year tenure as general secretary. Outgoing RDFRA president, Coy Sgt Gerry Enright, reminded the membership that they must constantly ask the question: ‘Are we serious about having a reserve?’ He said that RDFRA is fully committed to the White Paper on Defence and to the RDF Review Implementation Plan (RDFRIP) and it was their job to ensure that the minister was aware of the issues and concerns that reservists have in maintaining the tradition of a volunteer reserve. The president also said that he believed the chief of staff, the GOCs and D Res Fcs were committed to a Reserve as a full part of the Defence Forces.

Mr Seán Power TD (Minister of State at the Department of Defence) spoke on behalf of Mr Willie O’Dea TD (Minister for Defence) who was unavailable due to a prior engagement.

In his speech, Minister Power noted the work already carried out as part of the RDFRIP since its launch in 2004. “This process,” he stated, “will lead to significantly RDF capabilities, while maintaining the core values of the Reserve; the spirit of volunteerism and commitment rooted within the local community.”

He welcomed the establishment of the RDF Training Authority, which, he said, “will bring up and maintain RDF training on par with their PDF counterparts”. Mr Power also mentioned the 7.61% increase to the gratuity payable for annual attendance.

On overseas service for reservists, he stated that “as specified in the Implementation Plan any such participation is likely to be in specialist areas such as medical, transport, engineering and communications and will depend on extended pre-deployment training.” He also said that in view of any potential overseas service for reservists, the security of civilian employment is being actively considered as part of the ongoing implementation process.

Chief of Staff (designate) Maj Gen Dermot Earley told the delegates that he was delighted to have the opportunity to address the conference and that from a personal perspective he had fond memories of his service with E Coy, 19 Inf Bn FCÁ.

In relation to the implementation plan, Maj Gen Earley told the conference “We must not rest on our laurels but move on to the next major challenge of establishing and making the integrated Reserve an effective defence asset. Pilot integration has commenced and schemes are taking place in all formations, incorporating combat, combat support and combat service support units.”

Maj Gen Earley noted that the initial response was positive in some units and weak in others and he said that the Director of Reserve Forces will conduct a review of the schemes in the early autumn and submit proposals later in the year. “It may be that further schemes are required in 2008,” he told the delegates, “and we can then move forward, taking on board all lessons learned.”

Gen Earley told the delegates that he was aware that there are still concerns within the Reserve, before outlining what he considered some positive
Real ownership of the organisation must become a reality for RDF officers and NCOs. This requires those in leadership positions to lead. The younger members of the force are a reflection of today’s society; they expect to be challenged and they have high expectations. These expectations and challenges can only be realised through active leadership. Leadership involves competency, devotion to duty, integrity and example.

Maj Gen Earley recognised the considerable resource constraints, not least the time available to members of the RDF who have other significant aspects to their lives, such as their careers and families. In this regard he extended his personal thanks to the families, “without whose support the time commitment given by reservists to the force would not be possible”.

Finally, he told the delegates: “There are challenges in the future: challenges of training standards, greater commitment to training, and the establishment of the integrated Reserve. However, with your co-operation I have no doubt that these challenges will be met. We can then work together in ensuring that the RDF has the opportunity to make an even greater contribution, as a proud constituent element of Ogláigh na h-Éireann.”

New President for RDFRA

At the RDFRA conference, Lt Martin Durcan (62 Res MP Coy) was elected as President RDFRA. Based in Cathal Brugha Bks, Lt Durcan joined the FCA in 1982 and has previously served with the 20 Inf Bn. Martin has been a committed member of RDFRA for the past 12 years and worked on many different projects that he has been tasked with since he joined. He was a member of the clothing committee during negotiations for the working dress and subsequently the combat issue.

Lt Durcan was tasked by EBRDF HQ with producing the first national leaflet for the RDF for use as a recruiting document at recruitment fairs in the RDS and elsewhere.

As a keen parachutist, he successfully negotiated with the Military Authorities for places on the DF Parachute courses for reserve personnel. Martin was tasked by the National Executive with the design and production of the new RDFRA ID Membership card working closely with the Comdt Des Coleman (Gen Sec RDFRA) on this project. Martin helped redevelop the logo and corporate identity of the RDFRA and worked on numerous different projects, with the co-operation of his colleagues in FIRE Design.

In 2006, Lt Durcan was tasked with targeting certain units in the East that had low RDFRA membership. This he has done with some success, and he has assisted with establishment of new blood in these units that are prepared to get involved.

Martin is highly respected by the Military Authorities and the RDFRA members alike, who respect his commitment to the Defence Forces as a whole.

If you are interested in becoming a member of RDFRA, contact them at: RDFRA Office, Clarke Bks, DFTC, Curragh Camp, Co Kildare.
Tel: 045-445204.
Email: info@rdfra.ie or www.rdfra.ie
One of the Air Corps’ primary tasks is the important role of aerial maritime surveillance. From 1977 until the arrival of the CASA, maritime surveillance was performed by two Beechcraft Super King Air (SKA) 200s. These aircraft were not equipped with sensors, with the exception of the ‘Mark I human eye’. Neither did they have the necessary corrosion protection system to ensure the integrity of the airframes and engines.

Flowing from Ireland’s entry into the EEC, the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) had extended out to 200nm and the state’s responsibilities to police this vast area increased. The government realised that the SKA 200 aircraft were a temporary solution and a new system was required. A competition was held to select a system to fulfil the EEZ policing requirements. The EADS/CASA CN-235 Persuader aircraft was selected as the winner and our first CASA, ‘Charlie’ 250 (C-250), was delivered to the Air Corps to prove the platform, and to give pilots, crews and technicians experience on the type. ‘Charlie 250’ was a cargo transport version of the EADS/CASA CN-235. This aircraft was not equipped with sensors and was essentially a stopgap before two purpose-built aircraft were delivered in December 1994. The two new aircraft (‘Charlie’ 252 and ‘Charlie’ 253) entered operational life with the Air Corps in January 1995.

At present, 101 Squadron is tasked with: fishery protection; search and rescue (SAR); customs and excise; and pollution detection and monitoring. The Irish EEZ consists of 132,000 sq nm of ocean and these waters off Europe’s westernmost state are fertile fishing grounds and also promise to yield much-needed hydrocarbons. To adequately police this vast area, a sophisticated aerial platform is needed.

The EADS/CASA CN-235 aircraft were delivered with the Litton (now L-3 Corp) AN/APS 504 V 5 radar as the primary sensor. At the time of delivery this was the state-of-the-art in maritime surveillance radar. With a max range of 200nm it is a fine tool for maritime surveillance. However, it is no longer in production and support is expensive and difficult.

The secondary sensor is the FLIR 2000F, a thermal-imaging camera mounted under the nose of the aircraft. Operating in the 8 to 10 micron band, its primary role is SAR and it has a minimum temperature discrimination of 0.250°C. However, the FLIR has not performed as well as was hoped as its operational frequency is not ideally suited to the maritime environment. Speed limitations, no daylight TV camera and its inability to traverse through 360° further restrict its usefulness.

A data link system was incorporated as part of the original system. This operated in the HF band and it was subsequently upgraded to incorporate SatCom. While a useful system, there is a data transmission/reception rate bottleneck caused by the radio (Collins ARC-230HF).

The Tactical Data Management System (TDMS) has been highly developed by EADS-CASA and the Air Corps. The TDMS software has been refined by the Air Corps and is very user friendly but, due to hardware obsolescence, further upgrades are not possible.

As there is no redundancy in the system, the loss of several key pieces of equipment would result in the
The Irish EEZ consists of 132,000 sq nm of ocean and these waters off Europe’s westernmost state are fertile fishing grounds and also promise to yield much-needed hydrocarbons. To adequately police this vast area, a sophisticated aerial platform is needed.

loss of all sensor information.

While ageing, obsolete and difficult to support, the aircraft’s mission equipment has given excellent service and was at the time of delivery, better than many of the top military systems then available. The CASA’s mission equipment has proved to be the one of the most useful tools for maritime surveillance available to the Irish state.

In 2003, the CASA’s mission equipment went through a difficult period of serviceability, with the radar in particular proving difficult to maintain. As a consequence of all the abovementioned difficulties, various radar, data management systems, reporting systems and electro-optical equipment were evaluated. A competition was conducted and EADS-CASA, based in Spain, was selected to supply its FITS (Fully Integrated Tactical System).

The upgrade system consists of:-
- The Telephonics AN/APS 143CV3 OceanEye Radar
- FLIR Systems Inc’s Star Saffire III Electro-Optical (El-Op)
- EADS/CASA’s Fully Integrated Tactical System (FITS)
- SAAB Aerotech’s Automatic Identification System (AIS)
- Collins HF 9000 High-Frequency Radio
- Honeywell INS/GPS
- RF Española’s TX-ARQ SatCom/HF Datalink
- Mission Support Facility III mission reporting system

The Telephonics OceanEye radar is a state-of-the-art sensor and is the radar of choice for Spain’s SASEMARR and the US Coast Guard’s Deepwater Programme. The radar can be upgraded to include Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and Inverse SAR (ISAR) Air-to-Air and Moving Target Indicator (MTI) modes as an option. These additional modes offer a wide range of extra capabilities to increase the Air Corps’ mission flexibility. These additional modes remain options for the Air Corps and can be easily retrofitted in the future.

The FLIR Sys Inc’s Star Saffire III electro-optical system represents a great leap forward in capability over the old FLIR 2000F. Operating on the 3 to 5 micron band it is better suited to the maritime environment. No aircraft speed limitations apply to the Star Saffire III and it is the system of choice for the world’s best. Installed on a wide variety of platforms and having much commonality with the earlier Star Saffire II, the FLIR is supportable well into the future. The FLIR has excellent 5-axis stabilisation, virtually eliminating camera shake, an inevitable risk of mounting the system on a fast moving platform. Image quality from the FLIR is impressive and the turret is supplied with two daylight TV cameras.

The Star Saffire III is integrated into the FITS data management system, allowing the capture of video and stills for onward transmission via datalink or download at base. The primary camera has low-light level (LLTV) capability with near IR sensitivity, while a second camera is a long-range spotter scope used for discrete long-range surveillance.

EADS-CASA’s FITS is the software glue that binds the system together. Developed with EADS-CASAs, the Spanish Air Force and the Irish Air Corps, FITS is a mature product in service with a number of countries. FITS offers sensor and tactical information in a friendly, windows-style presentation. Simple to operate yet powerful, FITS will offer the aircraft crew vastly improved situational awareness.

SAAB Aerotech’s Automatic Identification System (AIS) will provide the Air Corps with new capabilities. AIS will be integrated into the FITS mission system. Simple and reliable in operation, AIS will be an excellent cost effective sensor aboard the aircraft.

The communications suite aboard the CN-235 aircraft has been upgraded over the past number of years with a new HF data link system, SatCom and Collins ARC 210 V/UHF radios and SINCGARs tactical radios. The replacement of the existing Collins HF 230 radios with the far superior Collins HF 9000 system is the final part of the communications upgrade. The new system is better suited to data-over-radio.

In addition, a new datalink software package from RF Española (a subsidiary of the Harris Corporation) the TX-ARQ will also be installed. This, allied to an upgraded radio system in the ground station, will enable reliable HF voice and data communications. Post-upgrade, the aircraft will have sophisticated broadband secure communications via voice and data over SatCom, tactical VHF, UHF and HF systems.

The ground-based mission data upload/download system, designated Mission Support Facility III (MSF III), will be supplied by EADS-CASA. Based on Windows PCs with a Windows-based server, it will enable the operators to upload new information to the aircraft databases and produce reports post-mission for its Air Corps customers.

First delivery of the upgraded aircraft is expected in October 2007 with the second aircraft following in June 2008.

The prospects for maritime surveillance mission look bright, as the package proposed by EADS-CASA to meet existing Air Corps requirements is excellent and expands the Air Corps’, and Ireland’s, ability to police our vast EEZ and beyond.
What was once a minority sport within the Defence Forces, predominately played by officers, is most definitely now a sport encompassing players of all ranks. This year’s golf championship, now the biggest event in the Defence Forces sporting calendar after the Cosantoir 10k, was hosted by 4W Bde in the resplendent Glasson Golf Hotel and Country Club.

The event started on Sunday June 24th with a relaxed singles ‘Stableford’ competition for DF personnel and Glasson members. This gave competitors a chance of a practice round in advance of the more serious stuff to follow. The spies were out, however, the future they have offered very attractive rates for Defence Forces personnel for golf and/or accommodation. In this regard a special word of thanks must be made to Gareth Jones and Fidelma Reid in Glasson.

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This year’s event saw 162 competitors from 98 clubs enter from the three brigades, the DFTC, DFHQ, the Air Corps and the Naval Service, with a strong representation also from retired personnel.

The Reid family, who own and run Glasson, provided an excellent facility, not just affording us the opportunity to test the abilities of our notable golfers but also in providing luxurious accommodation at very attractive rates. They worked extremely hard from the outset to ensure that the Defence Forces’ participants were made welcome and for

Murphy and included myself, Comdt Frank Sheeran, COMS Denis Earley, Cpl John Harte, Coy Sgt Frank Coyne, Cpl Noel Cleary, BQMS Gerry Monaghan, Capt Murtagh Brennan and Sgt John Kilroy.

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and a study of previous weeks' timesheets for the club revealed that quite a few DF players from around the country hadn't been satisfied with just one practice round and were taking the challenge very seriously! Sunday's event was won by Capt Alan Bolger (2 E Bde).

At 0730hrs on Monday morning, Lt Col Ian Hanna and Sgt Maj McArdle announced the first starters on the tee box with one of the first golfers off, ex-Sgt Murty Quinn, putting in a fine score to keep him well in contention among the retired competitors. The assistance of IT equipment in running the event was crucial, especially as most of our handwriting is not up to scratch and we have to resort to the use of printers. Fortunately for us, one of our loyal volunteers, Ms Sinéad Murphy, doesn't suffer the same ailment and, under the watchful eye of her father, Lt Col Dan Murphy, and Comdt Niall Dowling, she maintained the records and details of the competitors in the registry, ensuring there were no 'hic-ups'.

The 'big guns' who made up the pre-tournaments favourites were staggered in their start times but a lot of attention was focused on the grouping of Sgt Mick McLoughlin (4 W Bde), Sgt Kieran Kennedy (12 INF Bn) and Cpl Dougie Houlihan (DFTC), particularly as Sgt Kennedy was the reigning champion from previous years, and was playing with a further improved handicap.

The first day threw up a few surprises, not least the fact that the 10th hole threw up less than eight pars or better. It also was estimated that there was a significant rise in the water level of Lough Ree due to the number of balls in the water at the par-3 15th (my two included).

Sgt Kennedy was well in contention after day one, with PO Pat Harrison and a large DFTC contention well placed on the leader board showing that time spent on recce is not time wasted!

Meanwhile in the Junior Championship, a late entry from 2 E Bde, Capt Brian Walsh, looked a dead cert after an excellent opening round.

Comdt Frank Sheeran's logs team had planned for an outdoor barbeque on the lawns overlooking the lake at the end of the first day's play but a decision was made in late afternoon to change this to an indoor event due to the poor weather outlook.

Brig Gen Padraig O'Callaghan (GOC 4 W Bde) hosted the barbeque and invited guests included Tom and Breda Reid and officers of Glasson and Portumna Golf Clubs. Brig Gen O'Callaghan presented Tom Reid with an artillery shell mounted by Ord Coy, 4 LSB, as a memento of the occasion and Mr Dermot Fox (Glasson Captain) presented Capt Bolger, the winner of Sunday's Stableford event, with an antique lamp. The Band of 4 W Bde provided the entertainment for the evening.

Sleep, like leave, is a privilege at these events and good and bad shots were recounted over the course of the evening and a party atmosphere prevailed into the late hours.

A damp start on Tuesday meant forward pin positions were preferred and despite the threat of difficult weather conditions most competitors enjoyed a dry round of golf.

The finale of the event saw a great battle between PO Pat Harrison, Sgt Kieran Kennedy and the eventual champion, Cpl Dougie Houlihan. Sgt Colm Slattery from DFTC was Junior Champion, while Capt Regina Foley (DFTC) was Ladies Champion. Sgt Tim O' Keeffe (1 S Bde) was the Veterans Champion with ex-PO Tony Hughes winning the Retired Members prize.

A feature of the DF Golf Championship worth mentioning was the great support from local volunteers and retired personnel. Col Eoin Moloney (ret'd) oversaw the checking of all scores over the two days, while Sinéad Murphy, mentioned above, worked tirelessly in the registry. The lads who weathered the rain in finding balls for the wayward hitters were Aonghus Hanna, Jack Byrne, Conor Delaney and Steven Lawless, and their work was also greatly appreciated.

Next year's event will be hosted by the Air Corps and we look forward to what will, I'm sure, be another great occasion.
The Summer, even a ‘Summer’ like this one, is what all hurlers live for. The months of gruelling training, starting in the wet, cold winter evenings are all made worthwhile with the arrival of the Championship season. The summer is when all the championships are played out and decided at club and county level, and also in the Defence Forces.

The precursor to the Defence Forces hurling championships, namely the Chaplain’s and Parson’s cups, were played recently in the Defence Forces grounds in the Phoenix Park on July 17th and 18th. These competitions were originally the inter-unit hurling championships but due to a decline in numbers and other factors they are now played as 11-a-side games at unit or formation level. However, these changes have not reduced the prestige of these competitions and victory is still just as eagerly sought by both the players and the units or formations they represent.

While the GAA are constantly trying to strengthen the game of hurling, particularly in Leinster, through various means, such as giving intermediate and junior players the chance to play with the ‘big boys’ in the league, this is exactly what happens naturally in the Defence Forces’ games.

In the Defence Forces, players just out of recruit training and seasoned hurlers get the chance to play against the cream of the sport. For me, as a hurler coming to the end of his playing days, it is a privilege to be on the same pitch with players like Pte Eoin Larkin (Kilkenny), Lt Andrew O’Shaughnessy (Limerick) and Lt Stephen Molumphy (Waterford) and it also motivates you to keep on playing the game you love.

For the younger and newer players on our hurling teams it is not only a privilege but also a great training ground where they can improve their hurling by watching, listening and competing against players of such skill. And our big name players didn’t disappoint in this year’s games in the Phoenix Park, displaying excellent fitness levels, touch and skill.

Seven teams took part this year, one from the Air Corps, DFTC and 2 E Bde, and three teams from 1 S Bde, (3, 4 and 12 Inf Bns) and 4 W Bde. The competition was run off in two groups, with the top two teams in each group qualifying for the semi-finals. The two winning semi-finalists then contested the Chaplain’s Cup, and the two losing semi-finalists fought it out for the Parson’s Cup.

This year’s round of games saw two of the Southern Brigade teams, 3 and 4 Inf Bns, make it through to the main event, while the Air Corps and 2 E Bde played for the Parson’s Cup.

Following their recent success in the Medical Services Gaelic football championship, the Air Corps were very anxious to add another piece of silverware to their collection. On the other hand 2 E Bde had been training hard and had a fine panel made up of experienced club hurlers. On the day, however, there could be no argument as to the result as the Air Corps ran out clear winners by a 7-point margin of 7-6 to 4-8.

The Chaplain’s Cup final could not have been contested by two closer rivals. Cork’s 4 Inf Bn against Kilkenny’s 3 Inf Bn. As expected with any Cork versus Kilkenny hurling fixture, this was a very competitive and tense, yet highly entertaining affair, with the finest of hurlers displaying their skills and determination. In the end the 4 Inf Bn team squeezed out a narrow victory after a closely fought contest with a score of 2-5 to 1-6.

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Two excellent days of hurling had seen some fine play from very talented and committed hurlers, some of whom are still very involved in the latter stages of the All-Ireland hurling championships with their counties. Other fine performances came from former senior All-Ireland winners and current inter-county hurlers; men such as Capt Canice Brennan and Pte Stephen Grehan (Both Kilkenny), Pte Mick Cole (Meath), Pte Gallagher (Tyrone), Gnr Dowdall (Westmeath) and Cpl Mark Prendergast (Cork).

The Defence Forces’ premier hurling competition, the Defence Forces’ Hurling Championships, contested by the Air Corps, the Naval Service and the four Army Brigades, is set for the September 13th and 27th with the finals in October and promises to be another very tough tournament. Players always give their all for their brigade or service team, but this year there is even more incentive as the manager and selectors of the Defence Forces’ hurling team will be selecting their panel for the Representative Series based on performances in the championship. The opportunity to play in this year’s Representative Series is a real draw for players as this is the 25th anniversary of the series and is going to be a very high profile affair. The hurlers and footballers will play the Allied Irish Bank teams in Croke Park on Friday October 26th and against the Bank of Ireland teams on Friday November 9th in Parnell Park.
Denmark
Copenhagen was the next venue and saw Capt Carey in the winner’s enclosure on two occasions with both Killossery and Cashla Bay. Maintaining his good form, River Foyle jumped a clear round over a demanding track in the Nations Cup, where undoubtedly he would have impressed selectors.

Austria
At Linz, Comdt Flynn was teamed up with Shane Breen, Ryan Crumley and Connor Swail where the Irish overcame stiff opposition to win the Nations Cup. Mo Chroí made her presence felt by jumping superbly to be one of few double clear rounds under Comdt Flynn.

Belfast International action then moved to Belfast to the Balmoral Show. Capt David O’Brien had a great show, thanks to his reliable grey stallion, Ringfort Cruise, by winning the top score class and being placed second in the power and speed.

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Comdt Flynn and Capt Carey travelled to Poznan, which proved to be a very fruitful show as Comdt

France
The season got off to a great start when Capt Shane Carey on Cashla Bay, won a speed class and a competitive two-phase class in Chantille. Comdt Gerry Flynn rounded off a great show by taking second place in the feature class, the Grand Prix. The action moved to Maubeuge, where the consistent Cashla Bay under Capt Carey won the opening jump off class. Comdt Flynn on Mo Chroi were pipped at the post to finish second in the 1.50m jump off class. Capt Carey partnered the very promising River Foyle to fourth place in the Grand Prix.

The Equitation School’s riders are in fine form having already notched up a number of successes, in particular with Comdt Gerry Flynn and Capt Shane Carey, who have taken honours at shows throughout Europe including the recent RDS Horse show. Lt Stephen Maguire (Equit Sch) reports on the season to date…

Right: Comdt Gerry Flynn on Mo Chroi makes the jump.
Below: Lt Brian Curran-Courane on Kilcorna.
Bottom: Comdt Gerry Flynn with groom, Pte Linda Treacy and Mo Chroi – winners of the Grand Prix during the recent Dublin Horse Show.

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IN TOP FORM

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Defence and Jody Ronan in an equal share.)

The following week again saw a trip north to Tyrella event in Ede in Belgium where he had a good placing in the Grand Prix in Punchestown with the imposing Kilfinane and Capt Carey with Lismakin was third in Rolestown.

Eventing
(CNC and CCI are eventing classifications in Ireland.) In eventing Lt Geoff Curran and Lt Brian Curran-Cournane have had some good results. The season commenced in torrential rain in Dundalk where Ballymoney and Lt Curran-Cournane were second in the CNC*. The next outing, at the Tyrella event in Downpatrick, saw Lt Curran-Cournane come second on Kilcroney, who is the new addition to the eventing string, and was on his first outing in a CNC*. (This six-year-old gelding is owned by the Minister for Defence and Jody Ronan in an equal share.) The following week again saw a trip north to Tyrella where Lt Curran and Balladeer Alfred were fourth in the CNC*** in preparation for foreign trips to come. Lt Brian Curran-Cournane steered the six-year-old mare, Rossbeigh, to win the CNC*. This diminutive mare is also a new addition to the eventing string and spent her former years showjumping. At international level Lt Curran had an excellent event in Ede in Belgium where he had a good placing on the Maurice Cassidy owned Luggala to finish sixth in what a very competitive CCI*** class.

Dublin Horseshow
At the Fáilte Ireland Dublin Horse Show in August, both Comdt Flynn and Capt Carey jumped with the Irish team. In the Aga Khan Cup Comdt Flynn on Mo Chroí led the Irish contingent with a first clear round. Though the Irish didn't win they were placed in a respectable joint third with the Americans. The highlight of the show for the Equitation School was when Comdt Gerry Flynn on Mo Chroí won the Longines International Grand Prix event. On accepting the prize, Comdt Flynn praised his groom, Pte Linda Treacy for her dedication and hardwork in preparing Mo Chroí for the show.

We have been running our ‘Letters to the Editor’ page for some months now as it was a feature that regularly came up as something our readers would like to see in the magazine. Unfortunately, so far the response has been quite poor and we would like to encourage our readers to take pen to paper, or more likely ‘fingers to keyboard’, and let us know what you think of articles that have appeared in An Cosantóir, or on topical military matters or anything else you think your fellow readers might be interested in. It won’t be much of a feature if we don’t get any letters to print!

Thanks to Comdt PJ Doherty for this month’s offering.

The Editor

Dear Editor
I enclose a letter I received recently from Irish Dr Michael Dockery based in Edinburgh, who was a volunteer doctor on board the MV Anastasis, a Mercy Ship anchored off Monrovia, Liberia. I met Dr Dockery while I was serving with 96 Inf Bn, Unmil. Though the letter is addressed to me, I feel its contents would be of interest to your readers and in particular to the men and women who served in the last Irish battalion in Liberia.

Regards
Comdt PJ Doherty
HQ 4 W Bde

Trip to Liberia, April 2007

Dear PJ
I am writing to thank you for your hospitality when Eric Thibideau and I visited Camp Clara during my recent trip to Liberia to work with Mercy Ships.

You may be interested to know that the Irish UN battalion was held in very high regard by the staff on the ship on which I served, the MV Anastasis. This is particularly because the Irish UN battalion supplied the ship with regular tankers of water for the first few months of its mission in Liberia. The local authorities had agreed to supply piped water to the ship but were unable to do so for several months. Without water the ship could not continue to provide its services and would have had to leave for another port.

They were also very grateful for the help rendered by two soldiers in an Irish vehicle returning from the airport which stopped to provide assistance to the personnel in a Mercy Ships landrover. Their landrover was the only car to do so.

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