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THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE
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Fostel comhthábhachtach is a Na hÉireann Ghrá.”
NBG – Northern Exposure  
The commander’s perspective of the NBG exercise.  
Report by Wesley Bourke

The Human Touch  
Irish conduct humanitarian training in Kosovo.  
Report by Lt Col Jerry Lane

NBG – Cold Comfort  
The harsh environment of the Arctic Circle.  
Report by Wesley Bourke

War Crime  
The investigation of war crimes – Course Report.  
Report by Col Des Travers (Retd)

NBG – Vox Pop  
Troops give their viewpoints on the NBG exercise.  
Report by Wesley Bourke

Not Forgotten  
Sgt Charlie Forrester remembered.  
Report by Sgt David Nagle

Medals for Peace  
Ireland’s first involvement with the UN in 1958.  
Report by Capt S Ó Domhnaill

On the Run  
Results from the 2007 Defence Forces’ Cross-Country Championships.  
Review by Comdt Tom O’Keeffe

Military Insignia  
Badges of the Air Corps ‘Wings’ courses.  
Report by Flt Sgt Jim G Perkins

On Exhibit  
The life and times of Col William Ferguson.  
Report by Col William H Gibson (Retd)

Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen  
Profile of an ARW ranger.  
Report by Ranger Mono

Letters to the Editor  
Readers give their opinions.
Smile Please
Pictured (centre) is newly promoted Brig Gen Sean McCann (GOC DFTC) with troops from the DFTC, who are in training prior to their deployment to KFOR on overseas service. Photo by: Sgt John Ryan (HQ DFTC).

And a Peaceful New Year
An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD wishes Capt Frank Colclough (OC MP Det Gov Bldg) and his staff a peaceful and safe New Year for 2008. Photo by: Armn Billy Galligan.

Clean Sweep
Against significant opposition from Industry and other Public Sector organisations, the Defence Forces won two awards at the Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) 2007 Energy awards ceremony held in November. The Defence Forces was commended for its energy awareness campaign and for the renewable energy project involving the use of waste ship oil and cooking oil as fuel for heating boilers in the Naval Base. Pictured at the ceremony are (l-r): Mr Eamon Ryan TD (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources), Lt Karen Byrn (SO D Engr) and Mr David Taylor (CEO SEI).

Ho Ho Snow
The winter conditions at Camp Clarke in Kosovo over Christmas and New Year saw temperatures fall to -14°C, though some reports said it dropped to -17°C. But this didn’t stop (l-r) Ptes Robert Keyes and Aimeain Maher in making an extra (snow) man for duty. Photo by: Comdt P White (37 Inf Gp KFOR).

United Colours
In December, the students of the 64 Sen C&S course took time out from their studies to dress up and celebrate Christmas in style. Pictured in the Off Mess, Mil Col are (l-r): Maj Ye Chunlei (China), Lt Col Saibek Belmessous (Algeria), Comdt Bob Duggan (Student Ambassador), Maj Ghulam Muhammad (Pakistan), Capt Ronan Corcoran (Student Ambassador), Majs Dimitri Amaxaris (Cyprus), Holger Offenhausen (Germany) and Steven Futthoff (US), Comdt Bernard Markey (Student Ambassador) and Comdt Paddy Flynn (Course Coordinator). Photo by: Comdt Paddy Flynn.

Top of the Class
Congratulations to Capt Ken Barry (Sch Mi Engr), seen here with Lt Gen Dermot Earley (COS) on achieving top marks during the 17 Jr C&S Course. Photo: Armn Billy Galligan.
In safe hands

Armin Billy Galligan’s photo shows some of the members of MP Detachment Government Buildings in Leinster House during a visit by GOC 2 E Bde just before Christmas. They are:

standing (l-r): Cpl Cormac Young (MP Det Gov Bldg), Capt Louise Fitzsimons (2 LSB), Capt Mick (ADC An Taoiseach), Capt Frank Colclough (OC MP Det Gov Bldg), Brig Gen David Murphy (GOC 2 E Bde), Cpl Bobby Nolan (MP Det Gov Bldg), Comdt Brian Colclough (OC 2 MP Coy) and Sgt Alan McKenna (2 LSB).

Kneeling (l-r): Pte Frank Walsh, Cpls Robert Byrne, Peter Murphy, Pte Robbie McAney, Coy Sgt Paddy Barrett (2 MP Coy) and Pte Ray Ronan (All MP Det Gov Bldg).

All aboard

Armin Billy Galligan’s photo shows some of the children and staff from Our Lady’s Hospital for Sick Children during a visit to LÉ Eithne at St Rogerson’s Quay, Dublin. The kids got an opportunity to meet Santa and a few of his friends before Christmas.

Reserve Remember

Pictured at the launch of the history of the 23 Inf Bn FCÁ (1959-2005) in December are (l-r): Lt Col Sean O’Meara (OC 1 S Bde RDF), Comdt Tom O’Neill (2i/c 34 Res Inf Bn), Col Michael O’Dwyer (D Res Fces) and Lt Col Ger O’Halloran (EO RDFTA). This book contains many memories, recollections and photographs as it captures the life of the battalion over its 46 years and is a must have for historians and former soldiers. Copies are available from Comdt Tom O’Neill and Capt Paul Hourihan.

Slán Nollaig

Col Conor O’Boyle (Dir SPO) is seen here with Sgt Maj Noel Mooney on the occasion of his retirement after 34 years service. Nollaig was passionate for the ‘cúpla focail’ and encouraged those who wish to speak it. Just before he retired, Noel was instrumental in the drafting, production and distribution of an Irish-English military phrases and dictionary.

Better Late Than Never

Journalist Tom Felle got a surprise in January when during a visit to DFHQ he was presented with his long overdue FCÁ Service Medal by the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Dermot Earley. Photo by: Armin Billy Galligan.
"We have faced many challenges since we arrived," said Comdt Whittaker, "not least of which is the climate, which has a major impact on operations, personnel and equipment. We are not generally used to working in such extreme cold. It's –20°C at the moment, and thankfully there's no wind chill. However, we are equipped extremely well in terms of our clothing, and our equipment is at least on a par with our NBG colleagues, if not superior in some areas."

Operating in the desolate, inhospitable Boden area inside the Arctic Circle in northernmost Sweden, the NBG took to the ground for 'Northern Resolution', an exercise that brought together the contingents from the five contributing countries to the battle group, Sweden, Estonia, Norway, Finland and Ireland, to train as a single unit. The aim of the exercise was to test the NBG’s readiness and capability to deploy as part of an early entry force in a crisis response/crisis management operation, no matter the conditions.

As the NBG assembled the multinational nature of the 2,500-strong NBG was very evident in the array of languages, weapons and vehicles unfamiliar to the average Irish soldier. Most of the vehicles were tracked, purpose-built for operating in the snowy, icy conditions.

With heavy-lift helicopters flying over our heads and what appeared to be a Giraffe air defence radar rising out of the surrounding trees as it scanned the skies, it was all go. Comdt John Whittaker, (OC DF IEDD Tac Comp), filled us in on how the Irish have been getting on in Sweden. "We have just been tasked by the Force Commander with clearing a route in an area search around the airfield and the Escort Platoon has just gone in to secure the area with an inner cordon. Our Engineer Specialist Search Team will then clear the route. If they find anything they will call in the Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Team from our Ordnance detachment."

"The exercise is going very well," added Coy Sgt Graham Nuttall (6 Inf Bn). "Morale is high and everyone is enjoying themselves. We have infantry, engineers, ordnance, CIS, transport and vehicle maintenance personnel and we have contingents from all the NBG countries operating under the one umbrella. It's been great so far and I can't overstate how hospitable the Swedish have been towards us. They really have gone out of their way to make us feel welcome."

The Irish contingent arrived in Sweden on October 18th and prior to their deployment to the Arctic Circle they worked closely with the other contingents, getting to know how they operate and working on interoperability issues, in addition to getting acclimatised to the cold conditions that lay ahead.

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It doesn't take long for the cold to start creeping up your legs if you stand still in sub-zero temperatures, and that is even without the wind chill, which has a serious effect on temperature. During the Irish contingent's training their Swedish hosts had warned everyone of the dangers of injury from the cold, and particularly from wind chill. Any increase in the wind causes...
the temperature to drop: at –20°C a 5mph wind causes the temperature to drop to –34°C, and a 25mph wind would bring the temperature down to –52°C!

At night the temperature could drop to –30°C, so the timber burning stoves in the tents were essential to keep the troops warm: each person in the tent took an hour watch to make sure the stoves didn’t go out.

“Irish troops have encountered temperatures like this before, in Kosovo or Bosnia,” Coy Sgt Nutall told me, “but there you would have a nice barracks to go back to or a warm office to work from. This exercise is a good test for all the contingents to see if we can operate in the worst conditions possible. If we can then we can operate anywhere we’re sent after this.”

To keep their energy up the Irish troops were issued with ARW pack rations, which provide 5,000 calories a day; 1,500 calories more than their Swedish equivalent.

The Irish have slotted straight in with their Nordic colleagues and working together is not a problem, as many Defence Forces personnel would have operated with one or more of these armed forces on overseas missions, such as Kosovo, Liberia or Lebanon. The other countries also have similar SOPs and a similar way of thinking when it comes to peacekeeping operations. What became apparent to me is how highly regarded the Irish are as a highly-skilled, professional, full-time, volunteer army.

“What we bring to the NBG is our corporate knowledge in the areas of improvised explosive devices and bomb disposal, gained from 23 years experience in Lebanon and 30 years experience during the Troubles,” explained Comdt Whittaker.
To protect the IEDD and EOD teams as they clear a safe route the Escort Platoon moves in first, securing an inner cordon and setting up roadblocks and letting no one else in.

Under the command of Lt Derek McCourty and A/Sgt Phil Allen the personnel of the 25-strong, armoured platoon, all of whom are from 6 Inf Bn, have been operating and training together since early Summer 2007 and are ready for anything.

Like the rest of the company the Escort Platoon hit the ground running and went straight into Exercise ‘Thunderstrike’ with the rest of the NBG in Skovde.

“That gave us a taste of working in the conditions and gave a bit of cohesion for the unit operating on the ground,” says Lt McCourty. “We returned then to Eksjö and took part in a survival, evasion, resisting and extraction (SERE) course to prepare us for operations in the Arctic Circle.”

Everybody in the company took part in the SERE course conducted by the Swedish Cold Weather Operations Unit. For the infantry soldier, adapting and being able to function in the Arctic conditions is the key and their Swedish instructors taught them how to stay warm and injury free. “One of the most important things is that everyone has a ‘buddy’,” Lt McCourty told me. “The Swedish harped on about this: you check each other for signs of frostbite and watch out for each other.”

The cold-weather boots, balaclavas, parka jackets, gloves and hats that are all part of the NBG issue that made the guys look like stormtroopers to me as they faded in and out of the frost- and snow-covered trees, but they are warm, which is the main thing. As was pointed out to me, if you take your hat off with the surrounding temperature at -20°C you will lose 75% of your body heat in no time.

“The other Scandinavian countries are used to these conditions,” said A/Sgt Allen, “we are not, but still we’re managing ok. At noon today the temperature rose to -13°C it’s now dropped to -20°C but we are operating fine.”

Lt McCourty and A/Sgt Allen were keenly aware of
the dangers their platoon faced from the freezing conditions. “You have to watch the lads to make sure they don’t lax,” Lt McCourty said, as A/Sgt Allen nodded in agreement. “If you switch off you’ll go down. But they’re a good bunch of lads and they’re taking no chances; we’ve had no problems so far.”

Believe it or not as part of their survival training the Irish were shown how to light a fire in the snow; this was a first for everyone. “Yes, we did have to learn how to start a fire in the snow,” said A/Sgt Allen. “It’s an important part of our survival training as we could be told our vehicles have broken down or put out of action and we would have to make our way back to camp on foot and we need to know how to keep warm. We have all been issued with a ‘fire stick’ that sparks when you rub your knife along it: a bit of cotton wool and a few twigs and there’s your fire.”

Even with the harsh conditions and the challenges that were put to them the troops took it all in their stride. “It does make it easier coming from the same unit back home and working together as a platoon since June,” A/Sgt Allen continued. “We all know each other’s strengths and weaknesses. There are ten to a tent, so it helps if you get on. Because this experience is so different from what we’re used to everyone is taking it all in and enjoying themselves.”

It was very evident watching the company on the ground that morale was high and there was a real ‘can do’ feeling in the air. “I’ve never operated in a unit before that has worked so closely together in all aspects, right down from the HQ to the sections,” said Lt McCourty. “It was a challenge bringing all the different elements together under one umbrella and operating as a single unit but look at us now, we could go anywhere and be ready for anything after this.”
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There are four medics and Comdt Corcoran MO with the medical detachment. The basics of medical care are the same out here but you also have the addition of cold-weather injuries. In all fairness, everyone is looking after themselves but you can get cold here without even realising it. As it is, people are coming to us with very cold hands or feet but as it gets even colder we’ll have to look out for more serious things, like frostbite.

“As part of the exercise we can be tasked to deal with ‘casualties’. Again the conditions here are a big factor as you can’t delay because with the cold coming up through the ground a person lying there would be frozen in no time; so our priority is to get them out of there quickly and warm them. We’ve been well trained for these scenarios and we’re ready.

“We have trained with the Swedish medical personnel and we’ve been over to their field hospital to see how they operate. They have a good set up. “Our equipment is holding up well in the conditions and I’m enjoying it. It’s totally different to anything we’ve done before and I am learning a lot”.

We asked the Irish and some of their Swedish counterparts what it’s like to be part of the Nordic Battle Group.

We asked the Irish and some of their Swedish counterparts what it’s like to be part of the Nordic Battle Group.
Pte Nigel Callanan
(6 Inf Bn)
"I'm with Escort Platoon and because I'm radio qualified, I'm the signalman for my section. The last time I was overseas was in Liberia, so you could say this is a bit different!

But no matter were you go you have to adapt. Here it doesn't take long for the cold to set in and you're layering up and layering down the whole time. When you're sweating you have to get layers off or your damp clothes will freeze and when you stop sweating you have to get clothes back on.

"Yes, you do sweat: the logs don't cut themselves and the tents don't put themselves up.

"We learnt a lot in the survival training we did with the Swedish. They gave great advice on how to adapt to the conditions; how to look after yourself, and your equipment.

"The accommodation is grand. You do an hour sentry duty during the night keeping the fire going in the tent and even though it could be 30°C outside the tents stay nice and warm."

Sgt Dave King
(6 Inf Bn)
"I'm the APC NCO. We have nine Mowags here; two for Ordnance, two for Engineers, two for Escort Platoon, a maintenance car, a command car, and an ambulance.

"The Mowags have been getting on grand and they've taken to the snow very well. They have eight-wheel drive and an anti-lock braking system. We had a long drive up here and they preformed very well on the icy roads. We've had a few minor problems, which you would get on any exercise, but that's why we have the fitters here.

"We check the vehicles throughout the night to make sure they are not freezing over, particularly the ramps and turrets and we have procedures for starting them in the cold. We have a heater that heats up the engine and the air inside the Mowag and this helps everything to defrost. We check over the vehicle, check all the levels, and then start the car and let it heat up. The night-time checks and the start procedures mean that it takes a minimal time to get the vehicles into action, which is vital as we have to be ready to go at any time, day or night.

"The parka suits and balaclavas are very warm; they're good pieces of kit. Operating in the Mowag you have to wear gloves all the time because of all the metal, which gets very, very cold.

"The crews are well experienced and have all served overseas with the Mowags before. Three of the guys are also Mowag instructors back home, so we have great experience between us."
Lt Cdr Per Gunnarsson  
(Swedish Navy)  
“Normally I work at the J5 branch but during this exercise I am following and handing over the plans to J3 in mid-term planning. It is very interesting for me as I have never been on a mission abroad before. So far I have worked with the Finnish and Norwegians and now the Irish. Language is a challenge because we could all be talking about the same thing to each other but we could express it in different ways.

“In the military system the Irish are a professional army. You have NCOs but we no longer have this, we only have full time officers and the rest are conscripts. For the NBG we have contract soldiers. Sweden and Norway are the only two armies in the world that no longer have NCOs. The Finnish also had this system but they are bringing NCOs back into the army again.

In Sweden we are looking at something similar. So this is new for us, working with professional NCOs at such a level, and it has been a good and very interesting experience.”

Maj Stefan Klarquist  
(Swedish Air Force)  
“I work in the J3 Air Cell in Force HQ where we plan all the air movement for the logs people in J4. Even though I’m Air Force I’m here on the ground and I help co-ordinate the tactical airlifts. So if units need for transportation, say from Lulea to a forward operating base, we co-ordinate all those runs.

“Today I was in the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) working with the current locations. I am like J4’s eyes, so I’ve been dealing with units that lack ammunition, or who have had accidents, either real or part of the scenario. In the JOC all the branches are represented. So if something comes up I’m able to decide that is for J4 now or if it is for planning in a few days time I will pass it on to J3.

“I must say I am very pleased to be working with such a talented individual as Comdt Con Barber (Air Corps). I think he is an excellent representative for the Irish armed forces. He is an engineer, which means he is very analytical, and he has good language skills; he’s even trying to learn Swedish during this period and is making great progress.

“Overall I am very glad we have this international mix in the Battle Group and I think that the Nordic countries and Ireland are very similar in many ways; similar training and operations. Although we do have differences. I have noticed the Irish are very formal and polite with ranks. Sometimes Con says to me, “How can you speak to a colonel like that? If I did that at home they’d shoot me!” and I say, “it’s just a colonel.”

“I must admit it is great to have an English speaker to talk to when it comes to all the framework with the SOPs and I am always asking Con ‘how do you express this?’ or ‘how do you spell this?’.”
This year marks 50 years of Defence Forces' involvement in peacekeeping operations with the United Nations. An Cosantóir has been there since the beginning and has throughout the years published articles written by contributors and by the magazine's own journalists and staff. At the moment we are putting together a special 64-page UN edition for June. As you can imagine the amount of material is enormous and we hope to give our readers a magazine that will recognise the value of the Defence Forces' contribution to peacekeeping, and especially of our comrades who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

To complement this special edition, in each of our issues this year we will republish articles on UN peacekeeping that have featured in An Cosantóir since the start of our overseas service. The first article, entitled Medals for Peace, was written by Capt M.S. Ó Domhnaill and originally appeared in the May 1960 edition. In his article Capt Ó Domhnaill describes our first peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL), with which he served as an observer.

It is hard to believe when you read the article, that in 1958 Irish officers where dealing with a situation so similar to the situation in Lebanon today!

Readers should also bear in mind that this mission took place only 13 years after the end of the Second World War and during the height of the Cold War. It was also printed just months before Ireland sent 32 Infantry Battalion to the Congo as part of the ONUC mission.

Ireland's place among the nations of the world assumed a new significance when fifty of her Army officers joined an international peace crusade to Lebanon in 1958. Her part in the United Nations' Mission brought to an end the centuries of isolationism imposed on her soldiers by geographical and historical considerations. Their contribution to the suc-
cress of the mission received national and international recognition when An Taoiseach recently presented them with the specially-struck medal of the United Nations. The recipients, as well as furthering the cause of international peace, also brought honour to their Army and their country. It will now be their proud privilege to wear a medal for peace in a world still recovering from the wounds of war and fearful of a worse one to come.

Background of Mission

The Mission to the Lebanon was initiated as a result of a UN resolution of 11 June 1958, establishing the United Nations’ Observation Group in the Lebanon. The mandate given to this group by the Secretary-General of the UNO authorised it “to ensure that there was no illegal infiltration of personnel or supply of arms or other material across the Lebanese borders.”

At that time the Lebanon, a country just a little larger than the province of Munster, was torn asunder by internal dissensions and external pressures. Its divided loyalty to the West and to the rising tide of Arab nationalism made it a common target for high pressure propaganda from Cairo, Moscow and Washington. Unlike other Arab countries, which are almost totally Moslem, the Lebanon is half Christian and half Moslem. President Chamoun and an influential section of Christians favoured a pro-Western policy, while the Moslem leaders looked to Damascus and Cairo for their spiritual and political inspiration.

The explosive situation boiled over when President Chamoun sought to extend his period of office further. Fighting broke out in Beirut and among the mountain tribes along the Syrian border. Partisan fighting was propagated throughout the country and tribal warfare settled old scores as well as current differences.

Over this scene of civil strife and external interference, the UN interposed an observer group of some 500 army officers drawn from 20 member-countries. They wrote a proud and successful chapter in the history of the United Nations, whose Secretary-General, Senor Galo Plaza of Ecuador; Major-General Odd Bull of Norway was his Chief-of-Staff and senior military observer. Col Justin McCarthy from Ireland was appointed Deputy Chief-of-Staff.

White and Blue

One of the wisest and most courageous decisions made by the head of the group was to launch the observers completely unarmed. Wearing blue berets with an UN badge and travelling in a white jeep, this moral force, armed with the peaceful mandate of the UN, imposed its will on both sides. Indeed, much of the success of the mission may be traced to this courageous decision.

Observers at Work

Within two days of the Secretary-General’s announcement observers had arrived in Beirut and set up headquarters in the spacious Riviera Hotel, overlooking the Mediterranean. The initial group came from nearby Jerusalem where they had served on the Truce Supervisory mission between Jordan and Israel. They were quickly joined by others who had served in UN missions in Korea, Kashmir and Gaza.

By the end of September, fifty officers had arrived from Ireland and taken their place in the teams of observers from the countries of South America, Europe and Asia. Five stations were set up: Baabek, Chitaura, Marjayoun, Sidon and Tripoli. These in turn set up sub-stations, until finally the UN had its eyes and ears alerted all over the country. These sub-stations were in reality observations posts; patrol teams constantly moved in and out in a non-stop coverage of roads and tracks leading to and from the borders.

In the early stages the heaviest burden fell on the teams manning the eastern approaches to Syria. Here the border areas were completely in the hands of local tribes, who were mainly concerned with maintaining a tribal autonomy and evading the writ of the state. Of the two hundred miles of border only twelve miles were within the control and jurisdiction of the national forces. Except for the patrols and reports of the observer group, this zone was completely isolated from both national and international supervision. Yet, within a few weeks the observers had secured a peaceful right-of-way for the government forces throughout this no-man’s land; they had established friendly relations with Moslem sheikhs and Christian Patriarchs; they were greeted and treated with embarrassing hospitality by mukhtars and Bedouins alike. The Lebanese were reverting rapidly to their historic role of hosts, traders and middle-men for East and West.

The Twain Meet

Despite the oft-quoted lines of Kipling, East and West met in harmony once more in the Lebanon. This happy result was a victory not only for UNO, but also for the Lebanese leaders. One of the greatest dangers which confronted them throughout the whole affair was the possibility of political differences following on the lines of religious affiliations. The Lebanon had already a sad history of Ottoman oppressions and Druse massacres; a war fought on strictly religious basis could only cause untold suffering and a further legacy of bitterness. The main credit for avoiding this disaster is due firstly to the head of the armed forces and President-elect, General Chehab. His strict impartiality and compromising powers in both offices helped considerably to assuage rival passions and restore public confidence. Secondly, the powerful influence of the Maronite Patriarch, Meoch, was used to support the political and economic rights of the Moslems, while it helped to calm the religious antipathies of both sides.

Finally the moral persuasion of the observer group, by their firm but fair impartiality, allied with their technical skill and qualities of leadership brought peace and stability to the historic Land of the Cedars. They wrote a proud and successful chapter in the history of the United Nations, whose Secretary-General, as presently reported: “mission accomplished.”

Editor’s Note: The style and grammar of the original article has been retained.
Before I go into detail about the actual badges, it is necessary to know the difference between the Young Officer (YO) Course and the Regular Air Corps Cadet Class (RACCC). The ‘Wings’ course was the general title given to the flight-training course, which all pilots would complete in order to become an Air Corps flying officer. Since its establishment, the Air Corps has evolved its flight-training to meet its requirements, depending on the type of aircraft in service and the role the Air Corps played as the military air-arm of the Defence Forces. Apart from an eight-year period (1953-61) when the Air Corps ran a Short Service Officers Wings Courses, in the main it has conducted two types of flight-training courses (Regular Air Corps Cadet Class and Young Officer ‘wings’ courses).

YOs enter the pilot training programme as commissioned officers in the rank of 2/Lt, following the completion of their military training in the Cadet School, Military College, in the Curragh Camp. The RACCC candidates report for flight training as cadets after completing the first module of military training in the Cadet School. It is only on successful completion of training, that they receive their wings and are commissioned as 2/Lt.
The most recent, the 27th RACCC, commencing training in 2007 and the first badge was worn by the 11th RACCC, who received their wings in 1977.

The first YOs Course was in the 1930s and the last, 25th YOs, was in 1992-93. The members of 14th YOs Wings Course were the first to wear a badge in 1980. As you can see, the badges were produced in different shapes, sizes, and colours, with various forms of illustrations and cartoons. Each class designed their own badge and would endeavour to make it unique to them, often reflecting the spirit of the class.

The earlier badges were very basic in design and only a small number were made. The thing that makes them special is that they were individually named.

The badges were normally worn after the Wings ceremony, which marked the completion of flight training. Badges were worn on the pilot’s flight suit and jacket. This changed in 2007, when the classes where permitted to wear their badges during flight training, then replacing them with their squadron badge on passing the wings course and posting.

For more on Irish military badges, log onto: www.irishmilitaryinsignia.com

Regular Air Corps Cadet Class and Young Officer Wings Course

By Fit Sgt James G Perkins
who had been on selection and from the unit itself. I was very fortunate in the fact that my previous unit was very encouraging when it comes to soldiering and also my section commander in recruit training was an ex-Ranger. These, and many other factors, fuelled my determination to join the ARW.

After failing at my first attempt to pass selection due to injury, I started training straight away for my second shot at it. I had learned my lessons from the first course and I concentrated mostly on running, wearing kit of varying weights, and spending time in the hills carrying heavy backpacks; starting off at low intensity, as my priority was to stay injury free.

Unloaded running and swimming are very useful for recovery days and, as a certain amount of upper body strength is required, gym/circuit sessions should not be neglected either.

There is an excellent training programme available from the ARW before every course that can easily be adapted to suit the individual. Sleeping, resting and especially eating are very important during this phase of intense training, and although it can be difficult to put on body weight I achieved it through eating huge amounts of proteins, complex carbohydrates and healthy fats, which was important as I lost almost a stone during the course.

Regarding supplementary foods to bring on the course, I found energy bars to be invaluable, especially those of the ‘power bar’ variety; I bought a couple of boxes and always had them close to hand, and I can safely say I consumed every one of them and wished I had brought more! Tuna and creamed rice were also good and anyone considering the course should have a large supply of energy drink-mix, such as ‘High-5’ or ‘Viper’.

As soon as I began training I arranged my kit as

BOOM! The whole truck shuddered as the explosion detonated; a fraction of a second later the rattle of automatic fire deafened me as we all dived from the vehicle and frantically returned fire in the general direction of the enemy ambush while we looked for cover in an attempt to form a fire base.

BOOM! I felt the shockwave of the next explosion through my chest, followed seconds later by a wave of heat. With my head spinning I dived for cover and let off a burst on automatic.

By this stage one of my fellow students had taken control of the situation and had a baseline formed. Straight away we all knew what to do and like clockwork our contact drills kicked in. My heart was pounding as we went into all round cover and I roared for an ammo/cas state.

I was cold, wet, tired and hungry and all I had to look forward to was an all-night forced march over some of the worst mountains in Wicklow with the weight of a small person on my back. Yet, to tell the truth I wouldn’t have wanted to have been anywhere else in the world as I knew I was within days of passing ARW selection.

I’m known as ‘Mono’ and I’m 26 years old. I’ve been in the Defence Forces for five years and come from an infantry background. In March last year I passed selection course ‘Oscar One’, a small part of which I described in the opening of this article.

Selection was followed immediately by a five-month skills course. Since September, I have served as an assault team member and I will deploy to Chad with the ARW.

My interest in the ARW started in my teens, when I first heard about the unit, and has grown ever since. In my four years in the infantry I researched and acquired as much information as I could from people who had been on selection and from the unit itself. I was very fortunate in the fact that my previous unit was very encouraging when it comes to soldiering and also my section commander in recruit training was an ex-Ranger. These, and many other factors, fuelled my determination to join the ARW.

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per the prescribed selection layout, which was also available from the unit. It’s important to train wearing your kit in the specified configuration to ensure it will be second nature to you to know where everything is on occasions such as when you’re looking for your rain gear in a pitch black forest.

The night before selection began I was as nervous as hell and I remember frantically checking over every piece of my kit, no matter how small. I dragged everything out of my pack and renumbered everything, down to socks and the brushes in my rifle cleaning kit. I double-checked that all my spare warm gear and clothes, especially my sleeping bag, were sealed in waterproof bags. I knew from previous courses that if your sleeping bag gets wet, you’ll find yourself in an unfavourable situation, to say the least!

Even though it adds a pound or two to your total load weight, I would recommend the ‘Sealine’ variety dry bags, as there will be times when your pack will be totally submerged and you want to guarantee your kit stays dry.

Although it may sound ‘soft’ to some, one of the most valuable items I bought was Neutrogena hand cream which I used it any time I got a spare second, because when your hands are constantly wet and cold they can crack and are prone to cuts and infections, which can make the simplest of tasks very difficult.

As a private, I approached some of the most competent NCOs I could find in my barracks and asked them to go through orders, map reading, navigation, TAMS and model-making with me and I found their advice was invaluable.

As far as mental training and attitude are concerned, everybody has their own reasons for wanting to become a Ranger. One of the main reasons for me the second time round was that I had failed on my first attempt and it wasn’t going to happen again. No matter what your reason is, it should be rock solid in your head and something you can fall back on when you are cold, wet and tired.

Forty nervous looking soldiers turned up for ‘Oscar One’ on the Friday night and exchanged small talk before the main event kicked off. I’m sorry I didn’t get to know all of them as only ten of us finished, three officers, four corporals and three privates.

No matter how much I suffered on selection, the feeling of marching through the gates, with the whole unit clapping and cheering, was worth it a million times over. On passing the course, the successful officers returned to their units, proudly displaying the coveted ‘Fianóglach’ flash, while the remaining seven of us, joined by another guy, remained to face the great unknown, the skills course.

The skills course was a definite eye-opener, containing some of the hardest yet most rewarding things I’d ever been part of. At the end of the course in September only four of us remained to finally receive the precious ‘green beret’.

Since I became a fully-fledged member of the ARW things have been intense. The first week after the skills course involved parachute packing and jump training, where we learned the techniques and mechanics of being flung out of a helicopter and prepared ourselves to do our five mandatory unit jumps. By the end of that week the Chad mission was confirmed and on my second week the unit went straight into overseas training. Language training, combat PT and weapon skills were the flavour of the day for the rest of the unit, while the new guys were involved in driving courses (up to truck and special recce vehicle standard) and weapons courses such as the vehicle-mounted HMG, GPMG and GMG.

Tactical training was also a priority and we did a week of live-fire training in the Glen of Imaal. This gave me a chance to work with my new team and learn all the new techniques I’d need to adapt to work in this new environment and I can’t wait to deploy to Chad with my new unit.

Since I’ve joined the ARW I’ve been constantly busy and constantly learning but the rewards are endless. No matter how tough and challenging the process of getting here was, the end result is worth it a thousand times over.

The next Army Ranger Wing Selection Course, ‘Papa One’, commences on April 4th and all applications must be in by February 22nd. A prelims course, which will include a physical test (as per IT2000), along with a briefing on selection, will take place on March 4th. For more information, ring ext 5248, or checkout the ARW website on the Army Intranet.
In recent years military forces have been exposed to scrutiny in the area of their adherence to human right issues. Furthermore, the high-level panel on UN Peace Operations “Brahimi Panel” specifically stressed in its 2000 report “the importance of training military, police and other civilian personnel on human rights issues and on the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law”. The Panel also emphasized the organization of “human rights training for all personnel in peace operations, including the law and order components”.

The response in general terms has been to formulate and develop human rights education programmes. The Defence Forces has been no exception and has a comprehensive and affective human rights education programme.

“In the execution of our mission our behaviour must be above reproach and be rooted in professional competence, a sense of decency and fair play. In supporting the rule of law and human rights standards we must display an impartial attitude in dealing with all ethnic groups – firm, but friendly.” Brig Gen Hegarty, Commander MNTF(C), in his ‘Commander’s Intent’

Irish personnel serving in KFOR have recently benefited from a Human Rights awareness programme, which is described in this article by Lt Col Jerry Lane, who is serving as Legal Adviser (LEGAD) to MNTF(C) (Multinational Task Force Centre), KFOR. Ireland is currently the framework nation in MNTF(C)...
Human rights are legal entitlements, which protect individuals and groups, without discrimination, against actions and omissions, which interfere with fundamental freedoms.

The multinational troops serving in MNTF(C) in Kosovo recently benefited from a human rights awareness programme. The current commander of MNTF(C), Brig Gen Gerry Hegarty, launched the programme, stating: “When you have to act, do so decisively and with determination, but with the restraint of disciplined and professional soldiers, and not in the way that will cause us to lose the hearts and minds of those people who we have been sent here to protect.”

“… Every profession is bound by ethics and the laws of warfare and the principles of humane treatment are the guidelines of the professional soldier.”


The stated aim of the awareness programme was to “increase human rights and rule of law awareness amongst the task force personnel in order to support the mission of the task force and improve our standing amongst the local community.”

The study of human rights and their application in peace support operations must go hand-in-hand with the rule of law. Kofi Anan also stated: “In an increasingly interconnected world progress in the areas of development, security and human rights must go hand-in-hand. There will be no development without security and no security without development. And both development and security also depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law.”

Articles 55 and 56 of the UN Charter set out the obligations of all UN Members to promote “… universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.”

The range of instruction included a basic awareness of human rights and the rule of law as well as key principles and concepts of human rights. Our Defence Forces instruction was put to good use and a ‘soldier’s card’ outlining human rights details (see below for an extract) was included in the package prepared by

Excerpts from the soldier’s card: Human Rights Awareness in MNTF(C)

1. Dress, think, talk, act and behave in a manner befitting the dignity of a disciplined, caring, considerate, mature, respected and trusted soldier.
2. Do your job professionally and effectively and while doing so display the highest integrity and impartiality.
3. Have pride in your position as a peacekeeper and do not abuse or misuse your authority.
4. Respect the culture, traditions and customs of Kosovo.
5. Treat all Kosovars with respect, courtesy and consideration.
6. Respect and regard the human rights of all persons you encounter.
7. Support and aid the infirm, sick and weak where possible.
8. Do not indulge in immoral acts of sexual, physical or psychological abuse or exploitation of the local population, especially women and children.
9. Exercise the utmost discretion in handling confidential information and matters of official business, which can put the lives of others in danger.
10. Show respect for and promote the environment of Kosovo.
Right: An investigator searches this room and records evidence after receiving reports that it was used as a possible interrogation room.

The Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI), which is based in The Hague, was founded some seven years ago when it became apparent that the investigation of ‘war crime’ or crimes in breach of international humanitarian law (IHL) required additional and co-ordinated skills in order to bring perpetrators to trial. These skills, which included investigators, forensic anthropologists, lawyers, military analysts and others, impact on all aspects of the investigation process, from witness interview to crime scene investigation to the management of the chain of evidence and applicable law.

The IICI is the only organisation in its field and it provides a unique and necessary programme of training and support for international justice mechanisms. In so doing it contributes significantly to the enforcement of international humanitarian and human rights law and the development of enhanced human rights structures in post-conflict countries.

The IICI’s eighth War Crimes Investigator Course, hosted in October of last year by UNTSI, had 29 students from 14 different countries, all of whom had to have experience of investigation to be eligible to attend. Many had come from active investigation sites in such places as Afghanistan, Cambodia and Darfur. Others were members of the war crime units of national police forces. Some would be involved in setting up war crime investigation units on completion of the course.

The two-week course concentrates initially on bringing students up to date on international humanitarian law. They then go on to learn techniques of witness interviewing, with or without interpreters, the management of evidence, and the importance of the...
maintenance of chains of evidence. They are also acquainted with other subjects that may impact on their work, such as mass graves and their exhumation, child soldiers and sexual violence.

Although the students are mainly civilians, a course of this nature relies heavily on military assistance in order to get across realistic aspects of the investigation process; after all, it is most often that it will be military people who are being investigated. Consequently the students need a crash course on the military and this sub-course, or module, covers subjects such as organisation; military ranks and rank structures; military operations or manoeuvre; combat arms and equipment and how they are employed; weapons and armoured vehicles; chain of command and command responsibility; and more.

Another important aspect of this module is the need to alert student to hazards that may be encountered in a post-conflict environment (PCE). These hazards may include encountering armed elements, experiencing confrontations at checkpoints, mines, booby traps and unexploded devices (UXB/UXO).

Students also need to be aware of the stresses of having to work in such a hostile environment. This requires that they have an understanding of stress; how to recognise it in themselves and in others and how to deal with it.

The culmination of the course involves students conducting a war crime investigation in a PCE. This very practical exercise entailed the use of Curragh facilities as mass grave sites, interrogation/torture centres and as an operations centre. The DFTC and ‘B’ Coy, 3 Inf Bn, provided the necessary troops for the exercise, to man ‘enemy’ checkpoints and other such activities. Normally this military assistance has been available to the IICI through the good offices of the Royal Netherlands Army School for Peace Missions, based in Amersfoort, but in recent years extra demands on that School’s services for its own troops’ peacekeeping training caused the Institute to look elsewhere for this very essential support. The Irish Defence Forces was considered a very acceptable alternative option and the Institute was therefore very grateful to the Chief of Staff, GOC DFTC and to the School Commandant UNTSI when they acceded to its request to facilitate such a course, and they acknowledge their indebtedness to them for its successful outcome.

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Sgt Charlie Forrester died of natural causes aged only 37 years of age on May 21st 1989, while serving on peacekeeping duty with 65 Inf Bn, UNIFIL, in South Lebanon. His sudden death left his widow, Catherine, and their young family to grieve at the loss of a father and husband. Equally it left the gunners of Charlie’s unit, 2 Fd Arty Regt, and his former unit, 7 Fd Arty Regt FCA, reeling at the loss of a dedicated and professional soldier.

The Defence Forces, in particular at unit level, is very like the traditional Irish family; soldiers, through comradeship, foster a bond of friendship and duty to each other during their military career. We celebrate the new recruit like a newborn child. We are proud of them when they achieve personal goals; we encourage them in developing their careers and a professional attitude; and berate them at times for acts of stupidity and foolishness. Ultimately, the death of a colleague, especially in service, is felt by everyone and is akin to the loss of one of their own family.

Though Sgt Forrester’s memory was kept alive by his unit at their annual Mass and through former colleagues, it was hard for the younger gunners, who never knew Sgt Forrester, to gauge what this man brought to soldiering and to the unit.

Charlie loved the artillery and knew everything there was to know about gunnery: he could list aspects of the 25-pounder or 105mm gun out of his head and, as an instructor, taught a generation of gunners to hit the target.

With this in mind, RQMS Tommy Whelan, along with Coy Sgt Frank O’Connor and other unit members, came up with the idea of dedicating one of the unit’s training rooms to Charlie. Permission was duly sought and granted by Lt Col Séamus McDermott (OC 2 Fd Arty Regt) and the process of contacting Charlie’s former colleagues for assistance began. Throughout the preparations, Charlie’s family were kept informed of the progress of the project.

Like all well-laid artillery fire plans everything went like clockwork and the official dedication of the Charlie Forrester Hall was held on Oct 26th 2007. With Charlie’s wife, Catherine, his mother, Marie, and many of his family and colleagues in attendance, Col JJ O’Reilly (EO 2 E Bde) opened the room in his honour. Fr Robert McCabe (CF) blessed the room before Col JJ O’Reilly and RQMS Tommy Whelan spoke a few words.

Col O’Reilly said that he was delighted to be representing GOC 2 E Bde, who apologised for his absence due to his attendance at another engagement. Col O’Reilly praised the members of 2 Fd Arty Regt for creating a fitting tribute to one of their former comrades. He said that while he hadn’t known Sgt Forrester personally, he had worked with his brother, Cpl David Forrester (A Admin), while serving in DFHQ. Col O’Reilly noted that Charlie would be proud to see so many of his family, his nieces Deborah and Lisa (both gunners in 2 Fd Arty Regt), his nephew, John (a fitter with 2 LSB), and, in particular, his son, Robert (a sergeant in 5 Inf Bn), continuing the family’s tradition of soldiering.

After the speeches, Catherine unveiled a portrait of Charlie and then those present got an opportunity to view some Sgt Forrester’s personal effects, now permanently on display. These include his overseas medals, photographs of Charlie during his time in the Defence Forces, a wooden cross that was brought back from Lebanon and the bugle that Gnr Ned Kelly played during Sgt Forrester’s removal home to Ireland.

The Charlie Forrester Hall is a fitting tribute to a former comrade, which in the future will evoke fond memories of a friend past on. But, more importantly, it will instil in the young gunners and newer recruits of 2 Fd Arty Regt the knowledge that although we all will pass on one day, our spirits will not be forgotten by our comrades.

In October, family, friends and colleagues of the late Sgt Charlie Forrester gathered in McKee Bks for the dedication of a training room in his memory.

Sgt David Nagle reports...
Marsh Ireland Ltd., Financial Consultants to CAFNBO, are pleased to advise the appointment of Friends First as insurer to the GACBO and GANBO Life Assurance plans with effect from 1st January 2008.

We have also taken the opportunity to introduce some valuable benefit enhancements to these plans which are also effective from January 2008.
Colonel William Owens Ferguson, born in County Antrim, was the oldest brother of the poet Sir Samuel Ferguson. He went to Demerara as a young man and enlisted in the army of Simon Bolivar, where he rose to the rank of colonel and served as the Liberator’s aide-de-camp. He was killed in Bogota in 1828 during an assassination attempt on Bolivar, and is buried there in the National Cathedral.

One of Ferguson’s most spectacular exploits was his forced march over the Andes from Peru to Venezuela in late 1826, with a small force of 120 men. The purpose of this mission was to put an end to a revolt by General Paez, when Bolivar was absent in Peru, and Ferguson was tasked with announcing the Liberator’s intention of marching on the rebellious Paez.

After reaching the border of Venezuela, Ferguson found that his companions were exhausted and unable to continue. Undeterred, he rode on alone, after a series of single-handed confrontations with the military and civilian administrators, he persuaded a significant number of the rebellious officers and soldiers to remain loyal to Bolivar. Subsequently, the rebellious General submitted to Bolivar and Ferguson went on to receive the gratitude of his chief when he joined his army in Caracas.

The Gamble family in Canada put me in contact with Mr Charles Paterson in Western Australia, who possessed the dress uniform and a handwritten diary belonging to Colonel Ferguson. Within days of our initial contact I received a fax from Mr Paterson and shortly afterwards he dispatched the artefacts to Ireland where they now form an important display in the ‘Soldiers and Chiefs’ military galleries at the National Museum, Collins Barracks, Dublin.

Charles Paterson and his wife were given a personal tour of the exhibition by its curator, Lar Joyce, a week before the official opening on October 5th 2006. Naturally, they were impressed by the display of the family’s treasured possessions, with William Ferguson’s uniform being given pride of place among the relics of the Irish military diaspora.

For more on The Military Heritage of Ireland Trust Ltd log onto: www.irishsoldiers.com

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The Defence Forces Cross-Country Championships 2007 was hosted by DFTC on the Curragh Plains on November 21st and 28th last year. The event organisers, Comdt Tom O’Keeffe, Sgt Stephen O’Toole, Cpl Martin McNamara and the staff of the DFPEC, used the same course that was used for the National Inter-Counties Cross-Country Championships, which were held on November 25th.

The runners from 4 W Bde completed a clean sweep of all team events, winning Junior, Masters, Ladies and Senior Men’s team prizes. Pte Noel Kelly (4 Fd Engr Coy), recent winner of the Cosantóir 10k and a competitor in the CISM World Games in India, won the Senior Men’s competition for the third time, ahead of another CISM competitor, Gnr Alan O’Brien (1 AD Regt).

Sgt Jack Doyle (2 Fd CIS Coy) won the Masters title, having first won this event in 1998. CPO Martin Buckley (Naval Service), last year’s winner came second.

Pte Jason Broderick (1 Cn Cois) was an easy winner of the Junior Men’s race, while Lt Maeve O’Grady (3 Inf Bn), an international orienteer and Defence Forces orienteering champion, was an impressive winner of the Ladies race, coming in ahead of the reigning Cosantóir ladies champion, Pte Louise Nolan (12 Inf Bn), and Cork inter-county camogie player Pte Gemma O’Connor (4 Inf Bn).

**Senior Men 10k**
- Winner Pte Noel Kelly (4 Fd Eng Coy) 35.09
- 2nd Gnr Alan O’Brien (1 AD Regt) 35.28
- 3rd Pte Paul Buckley (6 Inf Bn) 35.35

**Team Winners**
- 4 W Bde – Ptes Noel Kelly, Paul Buckley, Jason Broderick, Anthony Devaney, Gavin Crawford and Cpl Derek Nugent

**Junior Men 6k**
- Winner Pte Jason Broderick (1 Cn Cois) 20.18
- 2nd Pte Gerard Boyce (1 Cn Cois) 21.11
- 3rd Pte Eamon Dunbar (28 Inf Bn) 21.15

**Team Winners**
- 4 W Bde – Ptes Jason Broderick, Gerard Boyce, Eamon Dunbar, Anthony Farrell, Darken Graham and Cpl Peter Walsh

**Masters 6k**
- Winner Pte Karl Boyce (28 Inf Bn) 21.48
- 2nd Comdt Bob Duggan (3 Inf Bn) 22.42
- 3rd CPO Tom Hennessy (Naval Service) 22.43

**O/40**
- Winner CPO Martin Buckley (Naval Service) 21.42
- 2nd Pte Eddie Lynch (6 Inf Bn) 22.09
- 3rd Pte Tom McSweeney (DFPP) 22.29

**O/55**
- Winner Sgt Jack Doyle (2 Fd CIS Coy) 21.31
- 2nd Coy Sgt Willy O’Riordan (HQ 1 S Bde) 23.05
- 3rd Pte Tom Burns (3 Inf Bn) 24.13

**O/65**
- Winner Sgt Barry Potts (DDFT) 22.50
- 2nd Lt Col Denis Reidy (HQ DFTC) 25.01

**Team Winners**
- 4 W Bde – Ptes Karl Boyce, Eddie Lynch, Sgts Quinn and Ollie Marshall

**Ladies**
- Winner Lt Maeve O’Grady (3 Inf Bn) 17.42
- 2nd Pte Louise Nolan (12 Inf Bn) 18.01
- 3rd Pte Gemma O’Connor (4 Inf Bn) 18.04

**Team Winners**
- 4 W Bde – Lt Denise Murphy, Cpl Christina Reynolds, and Ptes Sinead O’Donnell and Rosie Masterson.
Dear Sir

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I appreciate the huge effort and dedication it takes to put together an issue of the magazine, and wish you and the staff at *An Cosantóir* all the best for 2008.

All the best
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Provost Sgt, IMP Coy, Camp Butmir, Sarajevo.

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Sincerely apologies to you for getting your name wrong! We always endeavour to be as accurate as possible. We are only to glad to have this opportunity to print your letter and rectify our mistake.

Regards

Sgt David Nagle
Editor
KAYAK STORE

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