An Cosantóir
We Have Moved

An Cosantóir,
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FEATURES
11 Silent Warriors
By Sgt David Nagle
14 Here Come the Girls
By Wesley Bourke
16 NBG Vox Pops
By Sgt David Nagle
23 Money Matters

REGULARS
6 On Parade
10 World Strategic Picture
18 Def Tech
20 Strategic Review
25 Tac Aide
26 History
28 Sport
31 Gadgets
32 Noticeboard
33 Reviews
34 What I do...
GANBO/GACBO Life Cover Increased to €155,000
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WITH NEW FEATURES AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

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- Partner or Spouse: €155,000
- Death of Child: €5,000

**Subscriptions**
- Member: €6.23 per week
- Partner or Spouse: €4.62 per week
  (Member plus Partner or Spouse: €10.85 per week)

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**Plus!**

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**NEW FEATURES AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS**

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Contact your local barrack representative or call 01 6711841
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Website: www.cafnbo.com
Write to: Secretary CAFNBO, CAFNBO House, 33 Infirmary Road, Dublin 7

**Second Medical Opinion**
Best Doctors
To obtain a second medical opinion from Best Doctors, call:
1800 882 342

**Whole of Life Continuation Option**
Marsh
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1800 781 781

*Terms and conditions apply. Retention of Membership: A Member of GANBO who has retained his/her membership of CAFNBO may retain his/her GANBO membership for a maximum period of 17 years or up to 65th birthday, whichever comes first.

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Our lead article in this issue is a feature on our visit last November to Irish troops who took part in the Nordic Battle Group exercise in Sweden. We got an opportunity to talk to the troops between their battle preparation, before they went on the ground as part of an Taskforce ISTAR asset.

Last December, two important anniversaries were marked. First was a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the first female cadets and recruits to join the Defence Forces. Wesley Bourke met with some of the original female trailblazers as they came together in McKee Bks, Dublin to reminisce on days gone by.

The other occasion marked in December was the 70th anniversary of the first edition of An Cosantóir which began in December 1940. Little did the magazine staff back then realise that they would be starting a publication which is still going strong today. To mark this anniversary throughout 2011, we intend to republish articles from the 1941 issues. In this issue we have printed an article, penned by Col MJ Costello, on a talk to NCOs on the occasion of their passing out parade. Though it was written during a national emergency and a World War, his sentiments are still valid even in today’s Defence Forces.

We have an interesting article which appeared on the Department of Defence website (defence.ie) that outlines the possible co-operation of EU and UN forces on peace-keeping missions abroad. In Def Tech and to coincide with the launch of a new book on Irish medals and the Defence Forces 2011 calendar, we have reproduced a poster designed by the Defence Forces Printing Press on Irish, UN, EU and other medal ribbons currently available.

You should also take note of our Money Matters section and how recent changes in relations to pensions and life insurance might affect you!

As usual, we have our regulars – Tac Aide, Gadgets, Reviews and What I Do. Also in this issue, we are giving you free a Defence Forces calendar.

Subscriptions Due

Subscriptions are now due for this year’s magazine. For just €30 (or £25 by standing order) you can get An Cosantóir sent straight to your home address. If you have any queries about your subscription, simply use our contact details in the column on the left. Payment can be made by: PayPal, cheque, postal order, standing order or from salary deduction (PDF and RDF only). Don’t send cash by post.

Writing articles and letters

Ideally we would like submitted articles and letters in by email or on disc. Hardcopy articles are also accepted.

As a general rule, we look for two to three page articles with 600 to 700 words per A4 page. Larger articles are considered, though they may be spread over two issues or submitted to the Defence Forces Review with the author’s approval.

All material submitted should be of a military related topic.

Sending in a photograph

When sending photographs in, especially by email, please consider the following:

• Save as jpeg format
• File size: No less that 1.5Mb and no bigger than 3Mb (as jpegs)
• Resolution: 300 DPI
• Dimension: 150x100mm (6x4in) minimum

Naturally, if you are sending in a number of digital photographs, burn them to disc and post in!

Clearly mark envelope ‘CD with Photographs’.

Also submit a short note with details like:

• Who took the photograph
• What was the occasion
• Where did it happen
• Who is in the photograph (left to right, back to front, rank, first and surnames)

If sending in photographic prints, avoid writing on the back of them.
Horse Soldiers

Pictured here with his team of riders, grooms and school support staff is Lt Col Gerald O’Gorman (OC Equit Sch). Each year, the school competes in countless national and international horse showjumping and eventing championships, bringing glory to both the Defence Forces and Ireland. They also showcase the very best of Irish horses, attracting investment and interest from abroad. Photo by: Armin Paddy Reilly (105 Sqn Photo).

A Family Affair

In November, the Thomas Ashe Branch of ONE, based in Kerry, made Maj Gen Dave Ashe (DCOS Sp) an honorary branch member at a reception in The Grand Hotel, Tralee. General Ashe, himself from Dingle, is the only serving soldier related to the Irish Republican leader who during the 1916 Easter Rising led the Frongill Battalion in a successful attack on British Forces at Ashbourne, north of Dublin. Thomas Ashe later died on hunger strike in September 1917. Pictured at the presentation are (l-r): Ger Landers (Nat Chair ONE), Mick Scannell (Br Pres), Maj Gen Ashe, Mossie Roche (Br Chair) and Sgt Maj John Mulhall (Br Tres). Photo by: Joe Hanley (Thomas Ashe Br).

Ice Cold in Duncannon

Two army reservists, Capt Roy O’Connor and Lt Eoin O’Connor (both ROFTA) took their arctic warfare training a bit serious recently (albeit for charity) when they spent a night in an igloo to raise funds for the RNLI. The igloo was built by the people of Duncannon, Co Wexford. Photo courtesy of: Lt O’Connor.

 Courtesy Call

The Finnish Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Pertti Majanen got an opportunity in November to visit the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Sean McCann in his new headquarters in Newbridge, Co Kildare. The Defence Forces has a long and professional relationship with the Finnish Armed Forces, especially overseas and Finland, like Ireland is participating in the Nordic Battle Group along with Sweden, Norway and Estonia. Photo by: Armin Greg Dorney.

Top Marks

Congratulations to Cpl Dennis Farrell (BPSSO McKee Bks) who received a Diploma in Employee Assistant and Social Support from NUI Galway in September. Dennis is pictured here with his wife Anna at the graduation ceremony. Cpl Farrell has 34 years service (including eight trips overseas) and this is the first time he has appeared in An Cosantóir. Photo by: Mr Gerard O’Gorman (The Lane Studios, Galway).
Blue Light Day

Pictured at the ‘HQ’ of Blue Light Day in the Market Square, Mullingar Town are members of the Gardaí, County Ambulance and Fire Brigade Services, Open Door Project, WCD and Mullingar Drugs Network. The charity promotes awareness throughout Ireland about drug use and abuse and its chairman, Sgt Maj O’Callaghan (4 Fd Arty Regt) would like to thank the Westmeath County Council, John Corcoran and staff of The Greville Arms and the people of Mullingar, who made the day an outstanding success.

Photo courtesy of: Sgt Maj O’Callaghan.

Waiting snowman

During the cold snap in late November and early December that gripped most of the country, the gunners from the 4 Fd Arty Regt, based in Columb Bks Mullingar made an extra man for the sergeant major to put on barrack guard, while most of the unit was out assisting the local HSE, St Mary’s Hospital and the Society of St Vincent De Paul. Sadly, his love of the army quickly melted away and he is nowhere to be seen.

Photo courtesy of: Sgt Maj O’Callaghan.

Sisters in Law

Security of Government Buildings is 24/7 and is also a joint effort by members of An Garda Síochána and the Military Police Corps.

Pictured here on the beat over the festive period were Garda Jennifer Bell and Cpl N Casey.

Photo by: Pte Robert McAney (Govt Bldg MP Coy).

What the papers say...

Women on the front line across Defence Forces

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the enlistment of women to the Irish Defence Forces in 1980. While Irish women fought in the 1916 Rising and were combatants in the War of Independence and Civil War, they were largely excluded from the newly formed Free State Army of the 1920s. Dr Bridget Lyons Thornton was an exception to this rule and was commissioned as an officer with the rank of lieutenant in 1923. She was demobilised in 1924, and aside from the Army’s Nursing Service, the Defence Forces were to remain an all-male preserve for almost 60 years.

The Irish Times, December 10th

Soldiers set for Lebanon mission

Hundreds of soldiers are to be deployed to a peace-keeping mission in Lebanon in the new year, it has been announced. Defence Minister Tony Killeen said 440 troops would be sent to the troubled Middle Eastern country before next summer to serve under the United Nations. The Cabinet has approved the proposal and Mr Killeen will seek the backing of the Dáil in the coming months.

The Irish Independent, December 14th

Small army of 10,000 applies for just 230 jobs in the military

More than 10,000 people applied for just 230 jobs in the Defence Forces – or 43 for every job. A total of 6,522 job seekers applied in response to a recruitment campaign for 160 vacancies for privates in the Army. These have now been processed and two groups of 40 each will be deployed in the Eastern and Southern commands before Christmas, while the two more 40-strong deployments will be sent to the Western command and to the Defence Forces Training Centre at the Curragh, Co Kildare early in the new year.

The Irish Independent, December 19th

What the papers say...
New GOC
Air Corps

Congratulations to Col Paul Fry (Chief of Air Staff Operations) who was appointed the new General Officer Commanding Air Corps in January. He takes up the appointment which was vacated by Brig Gen Ralph James, who was promoted to major general and appointed Deputy of Staff (Operations) last year. As GOC Air Corps, Brig Gen Fry will fulfil the role of Director of Irish Military Aviation.

Brig Gen Fry was commissioned as a pilot officer in 1976 and is a qualified flight instructor with over 5,000 flying hours on fixed-winged and rotary aircraft. He is still an operational pilot, flying the PC9M turbo-prop trainer. During his career he has flown numerous Search and Rescue, Air Ambulance, Ministerial Air Transport and Maritime Patrol missions. He has also served in a variety of command and staff appointments in the Air Corps, including overseas service in 1995 with MINURSO in the Western Sahara.

The new general graduated from the Command and Staff School, Military College in 1994 and last year he completed a Strategic Leadership Course with NUI Maynooth. Brig Gen Fry is also a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

Brig Gen Fry is married to Gillian and they have three children, David, Claire and Andrew, who is also an Air Corps pilot. They live in Firhouse, Co Dublin. The new GOC’s interests include volleyball, running, golf, target shooting, scuba diving, cricket and fishing.

Raising the roof
Defence Forces Annual Carol Service

This year’s Defence Forces Carol Service was held in Arbour Hill Church, Dublin City on December 8th. The church was packed with soldiers and their families as they were treated to a collection of Christmas hymns and popular festive airs. The Army No1 Band accompanied by the Cantari Avondale choir gave an outstanding performance for those who braved the cold and icy roads to attend the carol service. Thanks to everyone who helped out on the night.

Centre: Head Chaplain, Msgr Eoin Thynne speaking during the service.

Above: Lt Gen Seán McCann (COS) with conductor, Capt Fergal Carroll at the carol service.
With Met Éireann recording some of the coldest temperatures in a century coupled with heavy snow falls last month, the Defence Forces swung into action providing troops, helicopters and vehicles to assist the HSE and local authorities nationwide in carrying out their day-to-day functions. Soldiers braved the elements and drove essential medical staff to and from their workplace, delivered countless meals to snowbound elderly stuck at home and cleared hundreds of footpaths in many towns around Ireland.

A view of the Red Cow roundabout on the Naas Road from an Air Corps helicopter.

Soldiers from the DFTC clearing footpaths in Naas, Co Kildare.

Top left: An Air Corps AW139 helicopter landing at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel. Note the snow skis fitted to the aircraft’s wheels. Ground aircrews worked tirelessly throughout the recent cold spell to keep the runways and apron cleared and safe to use.

Above: Air Corps trucks fitted with snow ploughs clear snow from the airfield’s runways.
**Europe**
- The trial of some 200 retired and serving Turkish military officers, charged with plotting to bring down the government, began in early December. The prosecutors have sourced thousands of military documents they hope will prove that there was a real plot to bring down the government. Some of these documents, published by Turkish newspapers, outline the conspirators’ plans to bomb mosques and provoke a clash with Greece to justify the takeover. The trial has divided Turkish society and is expected to last a few months.
- At the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo in December, the imprisoned Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, in his absence, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, though the Chinese government condemned the award. A professor of literature, Liu is in a Chinese prison for ‘inciting subversion of state power’.
- The British Army has begun to issue ballistic underpants to its troops serving in the Helmand province of Afghanistan. The trousers are designed to protect a soldier’s groin and pelvis from blast injuries caused by roadside bombs.
- Also in the UK, the British Security Services are assisting their Swedish counterparts following two explosions in Stockholm on December 13th. The bomber, Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly, was an Iraqi born Swede who previously lived in the UK and was the only one to die in the attack.
- In December the Harrier Jump Jet made its last flight as the entire fleet was retired following the UK’s MoD decision to cut costs as part of an overall cut in defence spending in line with the government’s strategic defence review. The Harrier, as a close air support aircraft, was operational for over 40 years and saw active service in the Falklands, Iraq, the Balkans and Afghanistan. The decision to mothball this versatile fighter has drawn criticism from former UK senior military officers, who fear it could have an impact on Britain’s strategic capability especially as the Harrier’s replacement, the Joint Strike Fighter, will not be operational for another few years.

**Americas**
- In December US Senators voted to end the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ law, which bars gay men and women in the US military from revealing their sexual orientation. The bill was earlier passed by the US House of Representatives, while opponents argue that the change will damage troop morale, especially in time of war. Some 13,000 US military personnel have been dismissed under the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy since it was enacted in 1993 by President Clinton.
- At the UN General Assembly in New York in December, the Security Council voted to lift most of the sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1991, following Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait. The council also voted to return control of Iraq’s oil and natural gas revenue, and end the oil-for-food programme. In order to completely lift all sanctions, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon stated that Iraq must make every effort to agree a border and war reparations with the Kuwaiti government.

**Asia**
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) released a report in December citing that armed groups in Afghanistan are harassing the local population. The ICRC report also highlights that the growing civilian casualties and poor medical care have created a terrible humanitarian situation which will continue for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, US President Obama remains committed to his plans for the commencement of US troop withdrawals from July 2011. Speaking to the media recently, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said that ISAF should transfer full responsibility for security to Afghanistan by 2014.
- Another blow to the US effort in Afghanistan occurred on December 14th, when their Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr Richard Holbrooke (69), died. A career diplomat, Mr Holbrooke was also instrumental in creating the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 that ended the Bosnian War.

**Middle East**
- In Israel, 40 prison officers died in December when their bus was caught in one of the biggest forest fires the country has seen. The bus was travelling through the Carmel Mountains near Haifa to assist in the evacuation of a prison in the path of the fire. Some 17,000 Israelis living in the north of the country were also evacuated. Firefighters and aircraft from the US, UK, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Palestine and many other countries assisted in quelling the fires.
- Also in December in the Iranian city of Qom, a suicide bomber killed over 39 Shia Muslims outside the Imam Hossein Mosque. A Sunni Muslim militant group Jundullah claimed responsibility for the attack on pilgrims marking Ashura, a Shia holy day.
- In January, Moqtada Sadr (pictured below) told a crowd of followers to give Iraq’s new government a chance, following his return to the country from a self-imposed exile. His party has seven ministers and 39 seats in parliament. Sadr also told his followers to reject all occupiers and to denounce Israel.

**Far East**
- The Japanese government has committed itself to radical changes of its defence posture, in response to China’s increased military threat in the region. Japan also plans to bolster its missile defence system against the threat from North Korea. It is envisaged the new military strategy will take 10 years to roll out. Relations between Japan and China deteriorated last year after collisions between a Chinese trawler and Japanese patrol boats in the East China Sea.
- Tension between North and South Korea rose in December following live fire exercises held by the South Korean Army on Yeonpyeong Island. This follows the shelling of the South Korean island by North Korea on November 23rd. Intense talks at the UN Security Council failed to find a solution to the growing crisis.
- In January, the first pictures of a prototype Chinese stealth aircraft appeared on websites throughout the world. The Pentagon believes that China is years away from having an operational aircraft in service, though General Weirong of the Chinese Air Force stated that they intend to have it flying by 2017 at the earliest.
The EU’s battle group concept has been constantly developed over recent years to a point where it has become a major factor in the EU’s crisis management plans. In this feature An Cosantóir’s editor, Sgt David Nagle, and photographer, Armn Greg Dorney, report from a recent Nordic Battle Group (NBG) exercise.

As the sound of movement close by reached their snow-covered OP, four Irish soldiers silently aimed their weapons in the direction of the potential threat, in case their position was about to be compromised. About 50 metres away, two enemy soldiers slowly walked past heading down the hill, totally unaware of the Irish position. When the enemy disappeared from view the soldiers returned their attention to their TAI (Target Area of Interest), a small farm lying in a hollow a few hundred metres away.

These silent, highly trained warriors were part of a 140-strong Irish ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) company taking part in ‘Joint Action’, an all-arms tactical exercise held in Sweden last November for a Swedish-led EU Nordic Battle Group (NBG). The full battle group, comprising of over 2,000 troops from Sweden, Norway, Finland and Estonia, in addition to the Irish company, participated in the comprehensive exercise, which took place in and around the Swedish garrison town of Skovde, about 400kms west of Stockholm.

The Irish ISTAR company, along with key Irish military staff in the NBG Force and Operational headquarters, had been in Sweden since early October and had participated in a series of training exercises designed to hone the skills of every soldier, at every level of the battle group. The NBG is one of the crisis management tools the EU has at its disposal, ready at short notice to deploy to an area of conflict or humanitarian crisis. ‘Joint Action’ was the culmination of months of planning and provided an opportunity for the five NBG contributing nations to test their skills and equipment prior to their six-month period of standby commencing in January 2011.

The primary role of ISTAR is to operate covertly forward of the main body, usually alone and for prolonged periods of time to report back what they find. Consequently, the Irish troops on ‘Joint Action’ were effectively the Swedish Battle Group commander’s eyes-and-ears on the ground, providing vital intelligence on the enemy, the local population and the terrain. The troops lying in their OP had moved into the area under cover of darkness, building their position in total silence.

Having established their position the team quickly set up their routine, with one team member observing the TAI using a spotter scope, a camera and night vision equipment, while a second sent the information back to the company HQ through a laptop linked to VHF radio.
A third member of the team acted as security for the OP while the fourth was either resting, eating or packing away all non-essential kit in case the team had to ‘bug out’ at short notice. The OP duties were rotated regularly in order to keep everyone as fresh as possible throughout the operation.

Life in the OP is termed ‘hard routine’, as the troops can’t cook food or boil water, for fear of compromising their position. Also, they can’t leave their position, even to go to the toilet, so all body waste has to be collected and stored in the OP, and carried out by the team when their 48- or 72-hour stint finishes. On this operation the weather was also a major challenge, with constant low temperatures, rain, and even snow (which was unusual for this time of the year in Southern Sweden). Even wearing layers of clothing, body armour and helmet, and lying on a ground mat, it isn’t easy to keep warm and dry. In addition, the confined space in the OP can lead to muscle cramp and numbness so each individual has to wriggle quietly in their own space in order to generate some warmth and fend off cramp.

A few kilometres away, nestled in a forest away from prying eyes, a cavalry platoon from the IST AR company was maintaining an FOB (Forward Operating Base), providing support for the OP and acting as a vital link back to company headquarters by passing on voice and data messages from the OP. The platoon was equipped with two Mowag MRVs and two LTAVs and its personnel possessed a wide range of skill sets – infantry, cavalry, artillery, communications and medical - and included sniper and recce teams. Back at ISTAR Company HQ, with most of his troops on the ground either manning OPs, on reconnaissance patrols, both on foot and by vehicle, or operating the company’s UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle), the company commander was supervising and directing his HQ’s operations, intelligence, communications, and logistical officers and NCOs, as they collated and processed the intelligence constantly being fed into his command post.

Outside the HQ tent, the remaining Irish troops were diligently readying their weapons, Mowags, LTAVs, and personal equipment for deployment. If not at work, most are then catching a few hours sleep or eating.

Although our Defence Forces can boast that it operates some of the most modern weapon systems and armoured vehicles in the world, when it comes to combat operations it is still basically down to the infantryman to advance on the enemy by foot and engage him with small arms, using tried and tested drills coupled with the sense of professionalism, pride, strong leadership and personal courage, that will ensure the mission is accomplished.

Our ISTAR company’s performance in the NBG readiness exercise shows that our troops have what it takes in these areas, and is an indication that our Defence Forces are up there with the best. They are ready for action.
The Swedish Perspective

At the height of the recent Swedish-led Nordic Battle Group’s exercise ‘Joint Action’, less that a kilometre from the Irish ISTAR Company FOB, a group of 30 Estonian, Finnish, Norwegian, Irish and Swedish staff officers and their civilian counterparts from the NBG Operational Headquarters (OHQ) were working hard as the exercise control.

Keeping a close eye on the developing exercise scenarios and ensuring that everything was running smoothly was Swedish officer, Colonel Stefan Jönsson, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff in the Planning Branch, Operations Directorate.

The colonel gave us a quick tour of his command post, located in a long, single-storey building in the vast Skovde army barracks. Here, his staff worked quietly in their respective areas, intelligence, planning, budget, CIMIC, gender advice and logistics cells, some alone behind a computer or on the phone, while others worked in small groups discussing the various aspects of the exercise.

‘Our task as exercise control,’ explained Col Jönsson, ‘is to make sure that the FHQ (Force Headquarters) has the proper training in all its branches and I will only intervene if a problem arises.’

When I asked him about some of the practical challenges he has faced so far, he said: ‘Communications have been an issue at times. We don’t have all of our OHQ CIS systems deployed, as we are acting mainly as exercise control. So, with the FHQ about three- to four-hour drive away it can be a challenge if you are trying to resolve an issue over the phone or by email.

And if you are going to travel down and have a face-to-face conversation with your FHQ colleagues, it’s either a long drive or you have to organise a flight down, and this could involve spending a day or two away from your post. However, in a way this issue is helping us to learn how to problem-solve over long distances, which will be an advantage, especially if, or when, the battle group deploys overseas (up to 6,000kms from Brussels) while our OHQ could be located at OHQ Atlanta in Northwood, England, or at one of the four other permanent OHQs in Germany, France, Italy or Greece.’

For Col Jönsson and his OHQ staff, Exercise ‘Joint Action’ is just another step in the long process of getting ready for the NBG standby period, January to June 2011. For him it all began in March 2008 when he was appointed to his current role and also as the head of the NBG Co-ordinating Team.

‘As the framework nation in the battle group, Sweden is responsible for ensuring everything is in place for a possible deployment. Over the past two years, I have held regular high-level planning and co-ordinating meetings, seminars and workshops with our EU political leaders and military staff, and the governments and armed forces of the troop-contributing nations (Ireland, Finland, Norway, Estonia and Sweden).

In our planning, we are guided by an instructional document called ‘Nordic Lion’, which again ensures that everything regarding the deployment, command-and-control, intelligence, and support for the Nordic Battle Group will be in place.

Sweden, like Ireland, has a long tradition of contributing troops to UN and UN-mandated missions abroad. This is the second time the Defence Forces has been part of a Swedish-led Nordic Battle Group, and soldiers from both countries have a mutual respect for each other forged over years of joint participation in peacekeeping.

For Col Jönsson it has also been a positive experience.

‘I served in Bosnia twice, the last time in 2006,’ he told me, ‘where I worked very closely with your army de-mining experts, and in this battle group OHQ we have five Irish officers employed in different staff appointments, while there are 13 Irish officers in the FHQ.’

Finally, regarding what the Irish bring to the battle group, Col Jönsson said: ‘My impression, and I can also speak for the Force Commander, is that the Irish troops are very professional and they bring a wealth of experience gained on overseas service. They definitely add value to the force.’
December 9th 2010 marked the 30th anniversary of the commissioning of the first females into the Defence Forces. For anyone of the current generation of Irish soldiers, serving alongside women, whether officers, NCOs, or privates, it is no big deal, but 30 years ago things were a lot different, not only in Ireland but around the world. At that time, most women in the military were serving in a medical capacity as was the case in Ireland with the personnel of the Army Nursing Service. The first woman to wear an Irish army uniform was Dr Bridget Lyons Thornton, who had fought in the 1916 Rising and War of Independence. Dr Thornton served in the fledging Free State army from 1922-24 and played a significant part in the founding of the Army Medical corps. However, it remained unthinkable for women to serve in other roles or to be trained in the use of weapons until the first four female cadets entered the Cadet School on March 10th 1980. Initially the Women’s Service Corps was established, but as part of the full integration of women into the Defence Forces this was disbanded on October 29th 1981, the same day that the first platoon of female recruits passed-out in McDonagh Bks.

Women were not permitted to serve in combat roles until 1992 when this restriction was removed, unlike in the UK where women continued to be precluded from combat infantry roles.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, members of the first female cadet class and female platoon, along with serving female soldiers, gathered in McKee Bks to mark the occasion. They also attended a reception hosted in their honour by President Mary McAleese in Áras an Uachtaráin. In his speech during the celebrations, the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Seán McCann said, ‘Women have made an enormous contribution to the Defence Forces over the last 30 years, serving with distinction alongside their male colleagues. A philosophy of equality is firmly embedded into all aspects of workplace culture within the organisation, based on mutual respect and professional recognition, which forms the bedrock of a cohesive Defence Forces.’

**Ursula Holly**
(first female recruit platoon)

‘I decided I wanted to join up when I was doing my Junior Certificate, which was basically a burst of insanity as there was no

**Frances O’Driscoll**
(first female recruit platoon)

‘I was in Paris working as an au pair for a year when my mother saw an ad in the newspaper for female recruits in the Defence Forces. She filled out the application for me as she knew I would love it, which I did, especially the fitness aspect. Unfortunately a lot of roles in the Defence Forces weren’t open to us at that time. I went into transport and stayed there for nine years before I got an opportunity to emigrate to the US where I am now a police officer in Chicago, a very busy, challenging job that I really love.’

**Frances O’Driscoll**
(first female recruit platoon)

history of military service in my family. I remember ringing up Collins Barracks in Cork saying I wanted to join the army. The sergeant I spoke to told me it would never happen; he had to eat his words later. There was great camaraderie in that first female platoon and we all became the best of friends. Of the 38 of us, 31 are here today. Eight of the class are still serving and one is overseas at the moment. Very sadly, two of our number died this year, Company Sergeant Caroline O’Shaughnessy and Susan Kane. After passing-out in October ‘81, I was sent to Cork where we got a fierce slagging off the lads because a billet had been done up just for us with fresh paint, washing machines and proper showers, whereas the lads still had pot-belly stoves. Different times! I later went on to serve in McKee Barracks Company and then CIS and left the Defence Forces seven years ago.’

**Coy Sgt Bernadette Kelly**

(first female recruit platoon)

‘I’ve spent all my time in administration. I absolutely love my job and I can’t believe it’s been 30 years. I was working in Murray’s Kitchens in Youghal when I got a notion to join the army. I had an uncle who served during the Emergency and I was always fascinated by his stories. Every time an army Land Rover passed by our house, I knew that was what I wanted, but I never thought I would get the chance. As the first female recruit platoon we were aware of the unique situation we were in; we knew we were paving the way for the future. Being the first female platoon meant that a lot of what happened to us was ground-breaking. In 1983 Ursula McCloskey, Trisha O’Shaughnessy, and myself became the first women to do an NCOs course, which was tough because we really felt we had to prove ourselves to everyone. We really got
stuck in and I came second on the course out of two platoons. Later I became the first female to reach the rank of company sergeant. I found today very emotional because my best friend from our platoon, Company Sergeant Caroline O’Shaughnessy died this year at only 46 years of age.

Comdts Miriam McCann and Maureen O’Brien (57 & 58 Cadet Class respectively)

‘While the first female cadets were part of the Women’s Service Corps, the next three of us were the first to be integrated with male cadets in the 57th Cadet Class in November 1980 and the following year Maureen was one of six females to join the 58th Cadet Class. We weren’t really conscious of the fact that we were the first female cadets and that it was new for everyone. It was a bit of a pilot scheme really as they were still trying to figure out exactly what we could and could not do. As it turned out we did practically everything. A lot of people might find it hard to believe nowadays but back then our training included a week of deportment and make-up. It was terrible at the time because the lads in the class gave us some slagging, while we just wanted to be doing what they were doing. But in retrospect it was fabulous. At that time air hostesses were seen as very glamorous and the head air hostess from Aer Lingus came down to the Curragh to give us classes on how to walk, dress properly and apply make-up – that sort of thing. We also got loads of free stuff, including a week of deportment and make-up. It was terrible at the time because the lads in the class gave us some slagging, while we just wanted to be doing what they were doing. But in retrospect it was a bit of a pilot scheme really as they were still trying to figure out exactly what we could and could not do. As it turned out we did practically everything. A lot of people might find it hard to believe nowadays but back then our training included a week of deportment and make-up. It was terrible at the time because the lads in the class gave us some slagging, while we just wanted to be doing what they were doing. But in retrospect it was fabulous. 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COMS Karina Molloy
(first female recruit platoon)

‘I joined up because I wanted to do something different and I had my mind set on becoming a physical training instructor. While it was great to get the opportunity to go through Sandhurst and training in Dublin, then in Limerick. I was a PE teacher before I joined and had no military background. Part of the criteria for the first female cadets was that we had to be graduates with work experience, which gave us a slight advantage over the lads as most of them had just left school and they were also a bit younger. We conducted our initial training in Sandhurst in the UK where they still had a Women’s Service Corps. It was tough for the girls who were from infantry units who weren’t allowed to carry any weapons training at all. At the time we didn’t think much about the uniqueness of our position in the Defence Forces. We just got on with it. Actually it wasn’t as strange for us as it was for the men getting used to serving with women. I got to serve in a wide range of places throughout my career; with DTraining in Dublin, then in Limerick. I was also in Aras an Uachtarán for a couple of years as ADC to the president, and then with the 5th Infantry Battalion. I also served in Lebanon and I was seconded to Goal in Rwanda in 1994. I left in 1997 to set up my own recruitment company in the UK and now I work for FETAC.’

Collette Harrison
(first female cadet class)

‘I was one of the first four women to join the Women’s Service Corps in March 1980. It was the novelty and the opportunity that attracted me to it. I was a PE teacher before I joined and had no military background. Part of the criteria for the first female cadets was that we had to be graduates with work experience, which gave us a slight advantage over the lads as most of them had just left school and they were also a bit younger. We conducted our initial training in Sandhurst in the UK where they still had a Women’s Service Corps. It was tough for the girls who were from infantry units who weren’t allowed to carry any weapons training at all. At the time we didn’t think much about the uniqueness of our position in the Defence Forces. We just got on with it. Actually it wasn’t as strange for us as it was for the men getting used to serving with women. I got to serve in a wide range of places throughout my career; with DTraining in Dublin, then in Limerick. I was also in Aras an Uachtarán for a couple of years as ADC to the president, and then with the 5th Infantry Battalion. I also served in Lebanon and I was seconded to Goal in Rwanda in 1994. I left in 1997 to set up my own recruitment company in the UK and now I work for FETAC.’
NBG Vox Pops

Here, some members of the Irish ISTAR Company give their views on the NBG exercise.

Capt Conor Gorey
(2/Lc and Ops Offr)

‘We are part of the ISTAR Taskforce and are currently gathering intelligence on different target areas of interest (TAl) and named areas of interest (NAI) in preparation for a possible entry into the area by the NGB’s core mechanised battalion. We have an MUAV (Medium Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) on standby to fly, and two sniper teams inserted on two separate target areas at present – these will be followed up by the insertion of OP teams for up to 48 to 72 hours.

We are working closely with our Swedish counterparts and the exercise directing staff in the taskforce. Our Swedish colleagues are very professional, with good staff officers and a lot of expertise in the field of intelligence gathering.

Our mechanics and drivers have done a fantastic job keeping our 18 armoured vehicles serviceable in harsh conditions over two 10-day exercises. The new LTAVs are working well and we had only one vehicle off the road for a short time.

Our personal equipment is of a very high standard and is as good as, if not better, than the Swedes.

It has been great to be involved in a level of operations that we would not get the chance to conduct at home, such as a combined-arms exercise that included Swedish Air Force Grippens fighter jets, UAVs, and the deployment of sniper teams and armoured vehicles, and it was a fantastic experience for our ops and int personnel to be involved in the seamless co-ordination of all these assets.’

SQMS Michael O’Donovan
(Company Quartermaster)

‘My role is to ensure that the troops on ground are replenished with food, water, ammunition and fuel. Yesterday, we were re-supplied with three days’ rations by air drop from a Swedish Air Force C-130 Hercules.

We had to select a suitable field, mark the drop zone and give the pilot the wind speed and direction using the Kestrel weather system. I work with the QM and we have a stores sergeant, a corporal, and three ordnance lads looking after the weapons and optics. The Swedes have been great to us with regards to accommodation, feeding and laundry.’

Sgt Mark Greaney
(Fitter NCO)

‘My job and that of my three fitters is the basic maintenance and repair of the company’s eight Mowags; 10 LTAVs; 11 Nissans; two Scania 6x6s; and one Scania 6x6 truck, plus trailers. We have a Mowag recovery APC and three containers with tools and spare parts, which allows us to undertake first- and second-line maintenance.

Keeping the fleet on the road begins each morning with the drivers’ BOS (before operational service), which involves checking all fluid levels, tyre pressures and a visual inspection of their vehicle. If they come across any problems they can’t resolve, they come to us.

We have a great relationship with the Swedish transport officers. Not only have they given us access to their workshops when we need them, last week one of them also brought us to his house for dinner with his family.

Apart from some minor teething problems with the new LTAVs, we haven’t had too much difficulty keeping all the cars on the road.’

Capt Conor Gorey

SQMS Michael O’Donovan

Sgt Mark Greaney

Cpl Ian Delaney
(OP Commander)

‘My team of four will move shortly from the platoon FOB (Forward Operation Base) and insert into our assigned area to establish an OP to observe a suspected enemy camp. Everything we observe will be recorded and passed back to our Int Cell; enemy strength, weapons, clothing, vehicles and buildings; the terrain; and anything else that will help us build up a picture of the ‘pattern of life’ in and around our TAI.

As it’s vital to the success of our mission that we are not discovered, we have to be very careful as we move into our site and once in, it can take up to six hours to dig in and camouflage the OP. All movement into and out of the OP has to be done without leaving any signs, which is particularly difficult given the recent snowfall, especially since the Swedes are using experienced trackers to try to find our positions.

As soon as we are up and running we will establish our OP routine, ensuring that the TAI is constantly under surveillance and that all relevant information is sent back to HQ in a timely manner.’

Sgt Mark Greaney

Cpl Ian Delaney

OP Commander
Cpl Graham Forde (Mowag Crewman)

‘Our tasks out here are basically to drop off the recce and snipers teams. Our company is operating the infantry, cavalry, recovery and ambulance Mowag variants. We have four Mowags in our platoon, one with the platoon commander and the other three transporting the dismountable teams. The weather has been the biggest challenge. Although we have extensive experience driving Mowags overseas, these driving conditions are still challenging and any training in the future that could be given to prepare our crews for this kind of weather would be very helpful. Also, better cold weather gear, especially crew balaclavas and gloves would go a long way.’

Cpl Kevin Barry (Recce Detachment Commander)

‘My role is to lead a four-man recce team on intelligence gathering operations as tasked by my platoon commander. When we are briefed, my team discuss the plan and I return to the platoon commander with our suggestions. He then gets final approval for the plan from the company commander. This exercise was a great opportunity for us to operate on a larger scale and in a different environment. Whereas in Kilworth you know every good OP site, here you have to study your maps and aerial photographs in detail in order to get the right location. The weather was a big challenge, not only from the point of view of personal discomfort but also because the snow can hide features on the ground. We got some great lectures on cold weather and survival techniques from the Swedes who are used to operating in temperatures of –30°C. Routine in the OP is hard as no cooking or boiling water is allowed, in case either the heat signature or smell gives your position away. However, the effectiveness of such restrictions were brought home to us when a Swedish patrol searching with dogs passed within 10 feet of one of our OPs without spotting it. After 48 or 72 hours in an OP, it is great to get back to our platoon FOB, where the lads have hot water, sweets and dry sleeping bags ready for us after our debrief. In general, our kit worked well, although the cold shortened the life of our batteries. Apart from that, if I come back to Sweden, I will definitely invest in extra gloves and a pair of snow boots.’

Sgt Henry Leahy (Ops Sergeant)

‘I am the company’s Ops Sergeant and I work closely with the Ops Officer, who is also the company 2i/c. Our primary role is to monitor our own forces’ activities in our area of operations. At times in the company CP (command post) you can have quiet lulls and then all of sudden you will get a burst of activity. You have to be on top of things all the time, especially when we regularly have OP and recce commanders, including at times some foreign troops and Swedish exercise directing staff, in for briefs.’

Pte Michael McGrath (Sniper)

‘As a sniper, my main job is to work with my spotter (also a qualified sniper) to get close to the enemy (sometimes as close as 50 metres) without being detected, in order to gain information. I carry the Accuracy International sniper rifle, a Steyr rifle and a pistol, while the spotter carries a Steyr with an M203 grenade launcher and a pistol. We also carry night vision equipment, radios and lots of ammunition. We can also be tasked to go into a ‘trigger OP’, where we will take out a high priority target if the opportunity arises. I found the biggest challenge here was the temperature. I don’t think our cold weather clothing is designed for this level of cold and we lack white ‘gillie’ suits, which would be ideal for the snow. However, experiencing such low temperatures has been beneficial as it has shown us the need to be better prepared for the elements.’

Cpl Ian Delaney

‘I’ve never been involved in such a large exercise before and I have really learned a lot.’

Sgt Henry Leahy

Pte Michael McGrath

Cpl Graham Forde

Cpl Kevin Barry

Sgt Henry Leahy

Pte Michael McGrath
Food for Thought Paper – Enhancing CSDP Capabilities

Exploring the potential for the deployment of CSDP capabilities as a integral component of UN peace support operations

The need to enhance co-operation between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) was formally acknowledged in the 2003 European Council Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management which was later reinforced by a further Joint Statement in June 2007.

These statements called for greater co-operation between both organisations, particularly in the areas of planning, training, communication and exchange of best practices. In order to further this aim, a joint consultative mechanism (known as the steering committee), bringing together EU and UN representatives involved in crisis management, was created which now meets biannually with additional ad hoc meetings as required.

As elaborated in the 'EU priorities for the 64th United Nations General Assembly' the EU fully supports the UN in the fields of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building.

The EU has recognised that the surge in peacekeeping operations coupled with over stretched UN capacity require the strengthening of UN prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building capacities. The EU supports the ongoing review of UN peacekeeping which implies, in particular, the reinforcement of the UN Secretariat's capacity to plan and manage effectively operations, a more systematic elaboration of peacekeeping mandates to take better account of troop, logistical, financial and other requirements and intensification of contacts with troop-contributing countries.

Currently the UN is engaged in a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping initiative. This is being undertaken as an exercise, informed by recent experience, to endeavour to forecast some aspects of the likely future of UN peacekeeping over the next five to seven years.

This initiative is being undertaken against the backdrop of the UN being required to undertake operations requiring robust expeditionary capabilities in an environment where UN member states are currently experiencing major financial and political obstacles to increasing the supply of capability to the UN.

There has been a range of complementary initiatives and seminars, sponsored by various UN member States, examining the future of peacekeeping, reflecting a renewed impetus and focus on how more effective and robust capabilities can be delivered to UN peace support operations. In this context, it is appropriate that we should look to how the EU can extend it support for the UN, including by directly supporting the planning and operational cycles of missions.

The UN-mandated EUFOR Tchad/RCA bridging operation from January 2008 to March 2009 was an example of a close EU/UN co-operation. The UN took over from EUFOR on March 19th 2009. EUFOR and the UN Mission (MINURCAT) co-operated closely to prepare the handover. Both 'Lessons Identified' and 'Lessons Learned' processes in relation to EUFOR Tchad/RCA and the subsequent handover have yet to be conducted, but the general consensus is that it was very successful.

A total of five EU member states, including Ireland, continue to contribute to the MINURCAT mission. Capability development for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) crisis management operations is continuing within the EU. The EU Battlegroups Concept is now fully operational and is an indication of how the EU has improved its capacity for crisis management operations requiring a rapid military response. It provides for the possibility of EU-led Crisis Management Operations, utilising Battlegroups, being deployed in response to a request from the UN Security Council.

Effectively, the EU has developed a highly recognisable and discrete capability asset which is available for CSDP operations. This capability can also be made available to the UN in the appropriate circumstances. Outside of the Battlegroups, the EU has demonstrated its capacity to generate appropriate military forces and force components reasonably quickly for specific operations and deploy them operationally.

In addition, commitments under the Headline Goal 2010 point to a whole range of capabilities which, subject to availability, could be deployed as part of UN-mandated missions. In light of the above, this paper looks at how the EU through its ongoing CSDP capability development process, might identify niche or modular capabilities developed for CSDP crisis management operations, or force generate specific force components, which could be made available to and fully integrated into a UN-led crisis management operation on a modular basis.

The objective of this paper is to examine the potential to go beyond separate EU-led and UN-led missions (where the EU provides the Initial Entry Force or an additional supporting operation for example) to the concept of EU force components forming an integral component of a UN 'Blue Hat' operation.

Naturally such a proposal will raise organisational, procedural, financial and command and control issues, which in themselves may be quite complex. It will be necessary to reconcile the issue of EU autonomy of action and the role of the PSC in providing political control and strategic direction to CSDP operations, with the operational requirements of UN missions operating under the control of the UN Security Council.

Notwithstanding the institutional complexity, in essence, the challenge remains as to how the Union, which has the sort of capabilities so necessary to make UN operations more effective, could provide EU
Enhancing EU/UN Co-operation as a integral component in UN ‘Blue Hat’ Crisis Management Operations

force components under CSDP to ensure the greater capacity and effectiveness of UN operations and over a longer period.

Given the Union’s commitment to support UN peacekeeping and crisis management operations, the institutional and organisational issues arising may be difficult but should not be insurmountable. From an operational perspective, whether the EU takes on a component of the operation or is a fully integrated element of a UN Force is worthy of debate and should not be preordained.

In the context of the debate different organisational, command and control and structural arrangements may present themselves which could open up variations and different options for the EU to act together in contributing to UN operations. From an EU member states’ perspective the benefits of such an approach would be that more coherence could be built into their national planning for crisis management operations in general. Their personnel would be serving in an CSDP orientated environment which would bring with it the attendant benefits of increased interoperability and familiarity with EU standard operating procedures and structures.

In the current economic environment, when all countries are stretched in terms of what they can provide to crisis management operations – be it UN, CSDP or NATO led operations – UN reimbursement (which would be available were the force is part of the UN operation) would offset some of the costs involved. A force generated component under an EU flag – even more so if it was fully integrated into a UN ‘Blue Hat’ operation – would provide a clear and unequivocal demonstration of the Union’s support for UN peacekeeping at the highest level of capability.

EU member States would have the reassurance of being part of an EU force element, while at the same time contributing directly to, and reinforcing, UN-led crisis management operations. It would increase the standing, influence and visibility of the Union as a whole within the UN, particularly in relation to peacekeeping/peacebuilding operations, as EU member States would not alone be promoters and financiers of missions, but also major mission contributors as a collective of TCCs.

From a UN perspective a major benefit would be that clearly identified capability requirements could be met on a ‘one-stop-shop basis’, thereby potentially simplifying and providing significant benefits to the UN in the planning and deployment phases of operations. More capable components might be deployed by EU member states to a greater degree and for a longer period than has been the case with CSDP deployments to date.

It could also provide an opportunity to increase the international composition of UN forces and reverse the trend of UN operations being staffed solely from the region in which a conflict arises, particularly with regard to missions in Africa, which is a particular focus for the Union. It would help alleviate, to some degree, the burden which has in recent years been placed on developing countries through the growing expectation that the bulk of resources for a UN operation will be provided from the region in which a conflict arises, while at the same time not undermining continued regional ownership.

This initiative is intended to be complementary to existing and future EU, UN and other bilateral and multilateral initiatives to improve peacekeeping capabilities generally, but most particularly African capabilities and the overall capacity of the African Union.

While the focus of this paper is primarily on EU military capabilities and force packages for UN operations, this is not to obviate the requirement for the comprehensive approach, but rather to seek to support and reinforce the important and critical military/security dimension of such operations.

Options under this initiative could include:

• Placing an EU generated force component operating under an EU Flag within a UN Force;
• The EU generating and deploying the force mobile reserve or quick reaction force for a UN force under an EU flag;
• The EU undertaking responsibility for a particular role within a UN led mission or for a particular sector of a mission area;
• The EU providing a framework capacity to which suitable like-minded countries might contribute;
• The EU providing the core of the Operational or Force Headquarters for a UN led operation;
• The EU acting as a subcontractor by managing a specific operation for the UN.

The important issue is to initiate a conversation among member states on how and where the Union might act collectively in contributing force components to UN blue hat operations.

Notes
Council of the European Union: Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management (September 19th 2003)
Council of the European Union: Joint Statement on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management (June 7th 2007)
Council of the European Union: EU priorities for the 64th United Nations General Assembly (document No10809/09 of June 9th 2009)
Budget 2011 – Public Service Retirement Benefits

In addition to the usual factors such as pensionable service and pay, the recent emergency measures introduced by government in the last budget are also relevant when calculating Public Service Retirement Benefits. This relates in particular, to the reduced pay rates already in existence since January 1st 2010 and the new Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) introduced on January 1st 2011. A person’s actual date of retirement will also be of significance.

As announced in the budget, the government has decided that public service pensions above €12,000 a year will be reduced by an average of 4%. The actual reduction will be progressively more for those with higher rates of pension.

Pensions below €12,000 a year will be exempt from the reduction.

The new PSPR applies to those currently receiving public service pensions, including dependants’ pensions and public servants who retire on pension during the ‘grace period’ up to and including February 29th 2012.

For this group, annual public service pensions above the €12,000 level will be reduced on the following basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Pension €</th>
<th>Reduction rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First 12,000</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 12,001 and 24,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 24,001 and 60,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance above 60,001</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table shows the effect of the reduction on different levels of public service pensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pension before reduction €</th>
<th>Annual reduction €</th>
<th>Annual reduction %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>2,160</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>3,060</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>3,960</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>6,360</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>8,760</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in the budget, the PSPR does not involve any change in existing public service pension terms. All public service pensions will first be calculated in accordance with those terms. The PSPR is then applied after the pension has been calculated in the normal way.

Public service pay reductions and the ‘grace period’

The pay reductions were implemented from January 1st 2010, while the government has decided to extend the ‘grace period’ to February 29th 2012 under which retirement benefits are calculated by reference to the pre-cut rates of pay (operative from September 1st 2008). This grace period was due to expire on December 31st 2011.

This means that for public servants retiring before March 1st 2012, their pensions will first be calculated in the normal way based on the pre-cut pay rates, and then reduced as appropriate by the PSPR, while their retirement lump sum will be calculated on the pre-cut pay rates.

As a result of the PSPR, there will be an average reduction of 4% in pension paid to relevant existing pensioners and to those public servants who retire before 1 March 2012.

However, public servants who retire on or after March 1st 2012 will not be affected by the PSPR. Their pay is already reduced by about 7% on average and because their pension and retirement lump sum will be calculated by reference to those reduced rates of pay, the Government has decided that the pension reduction measure will not apply to this group.

Related matters

Retirement lump sums or death gratuities are not affected by the PSPR. As decided by government, retirement lump sums below €200,000 will continue to be exempt from income tax.

There is no change in the method of calculating employee pension contributions payable by public servants, including the Pension-Related Deduction (the ‘pension levy’). However, from January 1st 2011, such contributions will be subject to employee PRSI and the new ‘Universal Social Charge’.

There is no change in the method of determining occupational pension increases for serving public servants and existing pensioners.

As announced in Budget 2011, there is no reduction in the rate of State Pension payable by the Department of Social Protection. Where a public service pensioner also gets a State Pension, the State Pension is not subject to the PSPR.

GANBO/GACBO Benefits Increased

The CAFNBO Management Committee recently reviewed its GANBO/GACBO Group Life Assurance Schemes and has now entered into an agreement with AVIVA, who will be the new underwriters of the schemes. With effect from January 1st and for the next three years, the following death benefits will be payable:

GANBO Death Benefit: €155,000 Premium: €6,23pw
GACBO Death Benefit: €155,000 Premium: €4,62pw

Death of a Child

A death benefit of €5,000 is payable for children from birth (including stillbirths) to the age of 21. There is no upper age limit for members’ children over the age of 21 years, if they were dependent on the member and an invalid and incapable of self-support.

Accelerated Terminal Illness Payment

Where a member is diagnosed as being terminally ill and, in the opinion of an attending consultant and the insurers CMO, has a life expectancy of less than 12 months, an interim payment of not more than 40% of the benefit payable under the GANBO/GACBO scheme may be made. This facility applies to serving members and their spouses only.

Best Doctors Scheme

Again from January 1st, if a GANBO/GACBO member is diagnosed with a serious medical condition, they can get a second medical opinion from Best Doctors without leaving home. To access this service and seek a second medical opinion, call Best Doctors on 1800 882 342.

Please note that you will need your scheme name and scheme number as a reference before Best Doctors can provide the service.

Retention of Membership

On discharge from the Defence Forces, members who retained membership of CAFNBO, may also retain membership of GANBO/GACBO for a maximum period of 17 years or up to their 65th Birthday, whichever comes first. The premiums remain the same as for those still in service. Members who are in receipt of a Defence Forces Pension will have the subscriptions deducted from their pensions. Members not in receipt of a pension will have their subscriptions deducted monthly by Direct Debit from their bank account.

Continuation Option

AVIVA will offer a whole of life continuation option to a maximum sum assured of €15,000 to be exercised within 31 days of leaving the scheme.

For any queries on the increased benefits, contact your local CAFNBO Rep or the CAFNBO Office at 01 6718841 or (2780 DHQ) or write to: Secretary CAFNBO, 33 Infirmary Road, Dublin 7.

CAFNBO is registered under the Friendly Societies Act (1896).
PROFESSIONAL DRIVING SKILLS

IT'S NOT A TARGET!

MAINTAIN THE CORRECT SPEED...
REDUCE your speed and INCREASE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND THE VEHICLE IN FRONT of you in bad weather and heavy traffic.

Arna uilmhú le Stiúrthóir Iompair agus Cothabhála Feithicili
Issued by the Director of Transport And Vehicle Maintenance
Here, we will look at some of the practical aspects of military training and show you how the Defence Forces prepares soldiers for service, at home and abroad. Though informative, the articles however are not designed to replace the military instructor, but we hope they will spur our readers to want to learn more. Likewise, it might rekindle in former soldiers, memories of how they were taught. All suggestions for future articles are welcomed.

No matter what you drive: Know your ability, your vehicle’s capability and plan your route.

There is no doubt the winter months can bring all sorts of weather. Ice, sleet, snow, heavy rain, flooding, high winds can all make driving that bit more dangerous. Accidents can happen.

To help drivers (civilian or military) to deal with such hazardous conditions, the Transport Corps has kindly allowed us to use this easy to follow guide which sets out a few tips to help make that journey safer.

Preparing for winter driving
- Know yourself: Be aware of your own driving abilities, skills, state of mind and limitations
- Know your vehicle: Its condition, capabilities and limitations
- Know the situation: Be aware of what is happening and what is likely to happen around you

Prepare for your journey
- In bad conditions, driving should be kept to a minimum and only done if absolutely necessary
- Check the weather forecast. Listen to Radio, TV or checkout the web for updates

- Plan your route and chose the best route for the journey
- Allow sufficient time for your journey
- Don’t rush

Equipment checklist
Essential: Vehicle tool kit, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, snow chains, tow rope, ice scraper, breakdown (triangle) warning sign, snow shovel, door lock oil and de-icer.
Extra (depending on your journey and conditions): Blankets, sunglasses, torch, hot drinks (thermos), snacks, mobile phone, map, waterproof clothing and footwear

Vehicle maintenance (All serviceable)
External: Tyres, windscreen, windows, lights, battery, coolant level, oil level, windscreen window washer fluid and fan belt
Internal: Lights brakes, steering, clutch, heater, horn and fuel level

After Starting Cold Engine
Never over rev or race engine when cold. For temperatures –15°C and below: Gear lever may be stiff, suspension may not respond for initial period of journey, diesel will solidify if not treated with anti-waxing agent.

Drive gently for first few miles to allow mechanical parts to warm up gradually.

Remove ice and snow from footwear before entering vehicle.
If diesel engine, ensure you pre-heat starter plugs.

Before starting your vehicle
Remove all ice and snow from windows, lights and mirrors
Clear airflow entry grills
Remove compacted snow from inside wheel arches
A Talk to NCOs

This article appeared in the first edition of An Cosantóir, dated December 27th 1940. The article outlines the salient points given by Col MJ Costello (OC Southern Command) to a group of NCOs on their passing out parade. Back then, the world was gripped by the Second World War and Great Britain stood alone against the prospects of invasion from Nazi Germany, whose forces had conquered most of Western Europe. Though Ireland was neutral, the Irish army’s numbers swelled and An Cosantóir was widely used by the military authorities as a medium to impart essential war fighting lessons and techniques to both regular and reserve soldiers. Written some seventy years ago, Col Costello’s views are still relevant to the Defence Forces today in how junior NCOs and officers are vital as the future leaders of a 21st century modern fighting force.

Importance of Good NCOs

We cannot get on without good NCOs. The NCO is the authority who is in closest touch with the soldiers. He is in the best position to understand how their minds are working and to influence and control them by his advice and example. It is his task to lead, train and discipline the men. Even the best Officers cannot produce crack fighting units unless they have good NCOs. I am sure that the Army will have no complaint about its NCOs while we have men like you going back to the Units. You have had to earn your stripe by plenty of hard work and by showing zeal and devotion to duty. You have now to prove yourselves worthy of it. You must keep on learning. You must acquire all the practical experience you can. If experience is to be of any benefit to you, you must reflect, think over it, learn from it. A famous general once remarked about this matter that he had a mule which had been through 20 campaigns, but it was still a mule. You are not mules, far from it, but you cannot stand still. If you do not constantly strive to advance in skill and knowledge, you will slip back and even forget all you have learned.

Great Responsibility of the NCO

You are being given a great responsibility. In time of peace only the judges of the court are given power to take away life. They have days to consider their decisions; and they have a lot of learned men to help them to make a right decision. These judges spend their lives preparing for their great responsibilities. In time of war, questions of life and death are in your hands. The State is placing the lives of six or seven men in your hands. Upon your leadership, your determination and your skillful training of these men depend their survival in battle. And your responsibility may be even greater than this. The safety of the state, of the whole people, is a bigger matter than the lives of six or seven men, and this may depend upon the valour, devotion to duty and skill of you and men like you. Your superiors will show you where your duty lies, but you must, yourselves, prepare now and keep on preparing for the situations you may have to face in battle. You must constantly realise your great responsibilities. If you keep these in mind you will neglect no chance of fitting yourself for the supreme moment of action. It is up to you to be worthy of your positions as leaders.

Leadership and Morale

It is up to you to set a high standard of loyalty, discipline, devotion to duty and smartness. Men learn more from example than they do from preaching and you will not be much of a success unless you practice what you preach. You have shown on the course that you can do both.

One of the most important things in the army is its spirit. They have two French names on this – ‘Morale’ and ‘Esprit de Corps,’ but even if you have not heard these terms you know what they mean, because you have seen this spirit in action yourselves. When you have seen good teams fighting stiff opposition at games, you have seen that spirit, that fire burning in every man which enables the members of the team to do things they
Discipline

Discipline is to a great extent a state of mind also. It is a habit of mind. It is the habit of obeying at once, cheerfully and above all obeying intelligently the orders that are given. This has got to be as habitual in the army as the habit of walking like a soldier with your head up and your chest out. We can have no exceptions to this habit and when men have formed the habit it will stick to them, and there will be no difficulty in obeying any order that is given. Without this habit we would have no army, but a conglomeration of fellows each going his own way and having to be shepherded like a flock of sheep.

The first thing the NCO has to do about discipline is to give good example himself. If you are an example of prompt, cheerful and intelligent obedience to orders, your men will be the same but if you give bad example you can be sure they will copy you and flout your own authority.

Another thing which is of great importance though not as important as example is the way you drill your men. If you drill is sloppy, slovenly, slow and careless it is going to have a definitely bad effect on discipline. Five minutes of drill when everybody is on his toes and when the whole lot are moving like one body, having the same cohesion and unity in their movements (the way you have been drilling yourself), will do a lot to develop the habit of prompt obedience. Men get an exhilaration in, this kind of drill if it is not overdone and they will respond without a question to control.

The first thing you must do is give good example. The second is to have clockwork drill.

Pride of Unit

Pride of Unit (Esprit de Corps)

In order that a man may be proud of his unit, you must make the unit something to be proud of. Try to make your unit better than other units in some way or other without falling below the required standard in any other respect. Some units may be better than others at shooting, some at scouting, some at marching, some may have the best kept vehicles, some the cleanest billets. Make your section excel all round but try to win first place at something. Nothing succeeds but if you give bad example you can be sure they will.

Orders

All kinds of people get into trouble – Generals, Colonels, etc., in the army, because they do not understand orders they get. If an officer comes along and you have only a faint idea what his orders are, you may, in peace time only get yourself into a bit of trouble, but in time of war you may get yourself and your men wiped out. Make sure, when you get an order, know exactly what you have to do. The man who gives out an order is responsible for making himself clear to you. You are therefore entitled to expect him to explain clearly whatever he wants you to do. Do not hesitate to ask a question and keep on asking questions until you are clear as to the exact intention of the person giving the order.

Just as I said you are entitled to a clear order from the man over you, the men under you are entitled to a clear order and from the very first you would want to practice giving clear and definite orders. If you go into a room don’t say ‘come out here and do so and so’, or ‘some of you go into that house’. These kind of orders always cause trouble and if you are in command you should give your orders specifically. You should say: No 1 Section, go into that house, or you should name the man or look him straight in the face or point to him. If you do not do that it will be hard to condemn the man if he comes along and says: ‘I didn’t think you meant me to do that’ or some other excuse like that. In a field of battle that would be more serious. Be definite and firm in giving orders.

Initiative

I have said that your duty would be pointed out to you but you cannot always expect to get orders or the situation may have changed so that your orders are no longer applicable. You will therefore have to act on your own initiative, if you are to avoid one of the greatest crimes which a leader can commit – the crime of inaction. No man can be a good leader unless he is capable of showing initiative of acting when necessary without specific orders. It will be easy for you to do this intelligently. If you seek every opportunity of fully understanding the intention or general purpose of your superior commander, you will then be able to act in accordance with his plan and the spirit of his intention, even if you have no exact order to guide you. Several of the most famous victories of the past have been won by subordinate leaders who saw an opportunity of striking a really good blow at the enemy or frustrating his intentions and who acted on their own responsibility in seizing these opportunities.
After months of planning, the day eventually arrived on October 6th last, when 14 intrepid military mountaineers, loaded down with climbing equipment, headed to the El Chorro region of Southern Spain to participate in a Defence Forces Association of Mountaineers (DFAM) advanced rock-climbing camp.

As we were waiting for the flight in Dublin airport we received an ominous text message from the advance party that we were going to a place that resembled something from a Dracula 'Transylvania' movie. Not the text you want to receive at the start of your week's training.

After landing in Malaga, just a 45 minute drive south of our destination, we were able to cancel one car, which saved us some money. Leaving the airport and using the car's built-in GPS satellite navigation system, it wasn't long before our car full of qualified navigators was lost! After the text scare and our initial tracking glitch, we eventually found our new home and the accommodation chosen a lot better than the purposed tents. We quickly dropped our kit and did a hasty vehicle 'recce' to savour what the area had to offer.

Though Spain for most Irish families is a mecca for its beaches and sun, from October to April each year the El Chorro region is an ideal location for rock climbers and walkers alike who travel from all over Europe to tackle some of the most spectacular climbing routes on the limestone rock under a beaming sun and clear skies.

Our week began with some lessons in multi-pitch climbing techniques. For those of you not familiar with the jargon surrounding modern rock-climbing – let me explain! Climbers, usually operating in pairs, endeavour to climb the rock face following cracks and holds up a route. Using ropes, wires, chocks and friends (terms for equipment to safely attach themselves to holes in the rock) a lead climber will head up the route, reach the top and then bring up their partner. A single-pitch climb is one in which a climb no more that 45/50m in height is completed in one rope length by the lead climber. Whereas a multi-pitched climb can be hundreds of metres in height and it involves each climber taking the lead on alternative pitches. In essence, they frog leap each other as they move up the route.

With the lessons over, most of us undertook a few single pitched climbs on fixed bolted routes, which was revision for most of us. The use of bolts is very common on the continent and not in Ireland and the UK (except on indoor climbing walls). Popular climbing routes are fitted with bolts for you to secure your ropes to as you climb. They can allow you to move faster up a rock face and also allow you to reduce your weight by not carrying as much climbing equipment.

As the week progressed and climbers gained confidence in their own ability and that of their partners, the rock and their equipment, some took the opportunity to don their walking boots to try some of the numerous walking routes available. Remember that DFAM camps are not just for the climbers!

Each day, climbing pairs headed out armed with local guide books, climbing equipment and packed lunch to tackle ever increasing harder grades of rock climbs and heights, some in excess of over 300 metres in height. One unique route traversed was the 'Camino Del Ray' walkway. This via ferrata (Italian for road with irons) route involved climbers attaching themselves to fixed cables and moving literally along a narrow gangway bolted to a rock face and takes some head for heights to complete.

Probably the best part of the trip was the magnificent weather coupled with cheap accommodation and easy access (by air, road and foot) to some great climbing routes and walks.

If you are interested in taking up hillwalking or rock-climbing this year, why not apply for one of the DFAM-run mountaineering courses. Each brigade has a DFAM rep who will give you advice on how easy it is to get involved. Alternatively, they are countless civilian mountaineering clubs around Ireland and to find out more, log onto: mountaineering.ie.
Pillar to Post Cycle Challenge 2011

Lt Col Mick Dolan (2 Fd Arty Regt) is looking for participants who would be willing to fundraise and take part in a unique cycling challenge this April for the Irish Heart Foundation. Limited to 40 cyclists, the challenge will cover 1,200k from April 8th to the 17th starting at the GPO, Dublin and finishing at Áras an Uachtaráin.

Stages will vary from 80 to 160k with overnight stays in: Dundalk, Cavan, Finner, Mullingar, Galway, Limerick, Cork, Kilkenny and the Curragh Camp. They will also visit Gormanston, Athlone, Haulbowline, Kilworth, Clonmel, Glen of Imaal, Kilbride, Baldonnel, Cathal Brugha and McKee Bks.

Each participant is expected to raise €500 as a minimum prior to the challenge or €200 for cyclists to complete one stage of the challenge.

The challenge will be more suited to the touring rather than the racing cyclist, with places in the group allocated as follows: DFHQ (5); 2 E Bde (6); 4 W Bde (8); 1 S Bde (6); DFTC (4); Air Corps (5); Naval Service (4); Mechanic (1); Reserved (3).

Anyone interested in taking part should contact Lt Col Dolan at: 01-8046100 or at: mick.dolan@defenceforces.ie.

An Cosantóir 10k Clarification

In the last issue, we incorrectly stated that the 32 Res Inf Bn won the 2010 An Cosantóir 10k RDF Block event in October last year. We would like to clarify that it was in fact the 34 Res Inf Bn that rightly took the RDF block pennant and trophy back to the south.
ARMY V GARDAÍ
NAVY V AIR CORPS
PRIZE ANGLING COMPETITION

Are you ready for the Lake Ontario/
Niagara Angling Challenge?

Lake Ontario & Niagara River, Canada - 3rd - 10th June 2011

Raise €3,500 per person and fly to Canada for a week’s salmon and trout fishing at one of the
world's most scenic angling locations.

Open to all army, gardai, navy and air corps and confined to 10 participants from each
department past, present, and retired members welcome. Includes flights, transfers, hotel,
full board, guide, all equipment, taxes, insurance, donation to Simon and lots more.

Full details and booking forms available from Simon on 01-6711606 or email
fundraising@simoncommunity.com

Simon – the homelessness charity
The recent cold snaps have exposed the fact that many Irish people are completely unprepared for what Mother Nature can throw at them. With three consecutive winters with good dumps of snow and sub zero temperatures, maybe it’s now time to stock up on some proper winter gear. As the old Scandinavian saying goes ‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.’ Here we take a look at some serious winter gear for when the mercury drops.

**Mountain Equipment Annapurna Down Jacket**
Price: €299.90
The feeling of zipping up a good down jacket on a really cold crisp dry day is the feeling of pure comfort. The insulating quality of down is second to none and combining it with a wind proof outer fabric means that you will be well equipped to handle the coldest of cold spells. The Mountain Equipment Annapurna Jacket is a legend among down jackets and has been in existence in one form or another for the past 40 years. Over that time it has evolved, embracing new technologies as they become available and refining itself into what is widely regarded as one of the best jackets available for expeditions and exploration. Every feature of the jacket has been tested to the extreme from the harsh arctic or high altitude conditions, so you get a full modular mitt layering system for your hands combining a next to the skin stretch fleece liner. The highly insulating fibre pile inner layer and outer shell that is wind proof and water resistant, a zip baffles to the fleece lined pockets, all ensuring the wearer warmth and comfort in arctic or high altitude conditions...or here in Ireland recently.

**Sorel Caribou Wool Snow Boots**
Price: €149.90
Keeping your feet warm and dry is absolutely essential in cold weather. Wet feet spell misery for any outdoor activity, but combine that with sub zero temperatures and it is pure hell. Sorel Snow Boots are designed for serious cold weather and this, their Caribou model, is hardcore. It features a fully waterproof leather and rubber outer combined with a removable felted wool liner that is good in temperatures down to minus 40 degrees. These are bona fide Canadian style winter boots, but Sorel Caribou Wool Snow Boots are just as at home in the Phoenix Park as they are in British Columbia.

**Traction Aids**
Price: €24.95
If there is one product this winter that has captured the attention of the Irish general public, then Traction Aids is it. It seems like the now infamous guy slipping on the ice from RTÉ News last winter touched upon some deep fear within Irish people of going head over heels. The good news is that these products work great, ensuring fantastic grip on icy pavements. They come in lots of different styles and are easy to attach to most types of footwear. Having a pair or two of these tucked away for when the freeze hits is a no-brainer.

**Mountain Equipment Fitzroy Mitts**
Price: €110.00
Mitts, as opposed to the more popular five finger variety of handwear, are much warmer. It’s the equivalent of having four people all huddled up together keeping each other warm rather than trying to do the job on your own. The Fitzroy Mitts are the king of mitts, a virtual layering system for your hands combining an insulating Primaloft/Drilite outer layer that is wind proof and water resistant, a highly insulating fibre pile inner layer and a next to the skin stretch fleece liner. The layering system means that you can take out or add layers depending on the conditions, so you get a full modular mitt that will take you from an autumn walk in the park with the fleece liner to the South Pole if you go for the full three layers.

This month we feature a number of products that might just make your life a bit more comfortable when out on the ground. Thanks to The Great Outdoors for supplying all the products for review.

**January Competition**
This month we have a Ronhill MP3 Armband to give away, kindly sponsored by The Great Outdoors Store. To be in with a chance to win this excellent piece of kit, simply answer the following questions which all relate to this month’s magazine:

1. How many years is An Cosantóir in existence?
2. Can you name the women who helped to set up the Medical Corps in the 1920s?
3. In DefTech, how many classes (types) of the Distinguished Service Medal are there?

Competition closing date is February 24th.

Send all entries with your name and address to:

January Competition
An Cosantóir,
DFHQ,
An Cosantóir,
3. In DefTech, how many classes (types) of the Distinguished Service Medal are there?

**Octobers’s Winner**
The answers to the October competition were:
1. Lt Gen Seán McCann
2. Nordic Battle Group
3. 5th Infantry Battalion

Congratulations to: David Lee from Fethard, Co. Tipperary. A pair of North Face E-Tip Gloves are on their way to you.
Staffcare 1800 409 388
www.alone.ie 01 6791032
www.samaritans.org 1850 609 090
www.citizeninformation.ie
www.teenline.ie 1800 833 634
www.aware.ie 1980 303 302
DF Benevolent Fund 01 8046185
www.cafnho.com 01 6718841
www.caoga-defenceforces.com 01 8042785
www.anascu.ie 01 8554489
www.mabs.ie 1890 268438
www.odf.ie 01 8633222
www.oneconnect.ie 01 4850600
www.inuva.com 01 6791262
www.iarco.info
www.irlrishsoldiers.com 01 6778531
www.republic-of-ireland.britishlegion.org.uk 01 6713044
www.rac.ie 01 8042517
www.polfira.ie 1800 200 250
www.rdfrai.ie 01 445204

**Medal Mounting**
VOC Medal Mounting Service, Competitive prices. Contact Vinny at: 01-8475817

**ANSAC Credit Union**
December Draw
1st Prize €10,000 Ken Holland, Co Cork
2nd Prize €5,000 Jessie Hall, Dublin 15
3rd Prize €2,500 Sharon Griffin, Limerick
4th Prize €1,500 James O’Brien, Co Donegal

€500 Winners
Martin Byrne, Co Meath
Andrew Donnelly, Co Longford
Liam Russell, Co Donegal
Dolores Lynch, Co Wexford

€100 Winners
Gearoid Hooley, Co Cork
Kieran Crawford, Co Donegal
Fergus Kelly, Co Cork
Kathleen Gifford, Dublin 1
John Boyle, Co Donegal
Sean Mahon, Co Sligo
William Fitzmaurice, Co Westmeath
Kenneth Aldridge, Co Kildare
Martin Fennessey, Co Tipperary
Bernard Donovan, Co Kilkenny
Darren Greene, Co Wexmeath
Jerome Kearney, Co Kildare
Paul Martin Doolin, Co Galway
Gregory Laffan, Dublin 11
Stanley Notte, Co Cork

The next draw will take place on January 27th.

**DF Contacts**
Defence Forces Headquarters
DFHQ/DOD 01 8042000 or 045 492000
www.military.ie or www.defence.ie
Finance Branch DoD 091 743700

2 Eastern Brigade
Cathal Brugha Bks 01 8046000
Aiken Bks 046 932296
Gormiston Camp 01 8412102
Kilbride Camp 01 4582169
McKee Bks 01 8046000
Military Archives 01 8046457
St Bricin’s Hospital 01 8042000

1 Southern Brigade
Ballymullen Bks 061 7121871
Collins Bks 021 4514000
Kickham Bks 054 21222
Kilworth Camp 025 24011
McCann Bks 0504 31503
Sarsfield Bks 061 314233
Stephens Bks 061 21174

4 Western Brigade
Cusname Bks 09064 21000
Carna Camp 09064 89133
Castlebar Bks 094 21275
Columb Bks 046 48391
Finner Camp 072 41488
USAC 091 751001

Defence Forces Training Centre
Curragh Camp 045 445000
Coolmoney Camp 045 404626
Range Service 045 404653
Waterford Bks 051 374425
Wexford Bks 063 22573

Air Corps
Casement Aerodrome 01 4037689

Navel Service
Naval Base 021 4884700

**Upcoming Lecture Series**
The Military History Society of Ireland over the coming months will host a number of lectures in Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin 8. Non-members are welcomed and all lectures start at 8pm.

2011 Lectures
February 11th - General Humbert (1767-1833): Citizen, soldier, friend or foe of Ireland. Speaker: Dr Kieranman
March 11th - Secret intelligence and the British Army in two World Wars. Speaker: Prof Jeffery

April 8th - Battle, blitz, blockade and the weather forecast: the Luftwaffe and neutral Ireland 1940-45. Speaker: Dr McCarthy
April 29th - The organisation and structure of the IRA 1921. Speaker: Mr Bacce.

**Request for Photographs**
A group of military historians based in Sarsfield Bks, Limerick City are working on a pictorial history of the FCA (1941 to 2005), called The FCA Remembered, due for publication later this year. They are looking for photographs from all reserve units as well as privately held photographs from individuals who served in the FCA. All photographs submitted will be considered for publication. Also, all the photographs (or copies of) will be retained by Military Archives for future research purposes. If you are sending a photograph, please attach a note with it outlining as much detail as possible (date, location and names) as well as a return address. Photographs should be sent by email to: thefcaremembered@gmail.com or by post to: The FCA Remembered, Sgt Michael Deegan, 31 Res MP Coy, Sarsfield Bks, Limerick City.

**Give Blood**
The Irish Blood Transfusion Services is always seeking individuals to give blood and platelets. They have numerous clinics around Ireland open to the public. For more details, checkout: giveblood.ie

**Skydive for ChildAid**
If you are looking for a challenge, while at the same time willing to do something for charity, well why not jump out of a plane for ChildAid this year. The Cork based charity (with close links to the Defence Forces) in conjunction with the Irish Parachute Club is offering you the chance to jump out of a plane from 10,000ft. All you need to do is raise the €640 and all the training is provided. For more details, contact Graham Tobin at 087-6886101 or checkout: childaid.ie

**Eolas Finance**
Looking for some sound financial advice on mortgages, pensions, investments, life assurance and house insurance? Contact Noel O’Grady for a free consultation at 01-6190232 or email: noel.ogrady@eolasfinance.ie
This month we have three books on various aspects of Irish military history
from the First World War, Peacekeeping in Chad and a book on Irish medals.

**A Coward if I Return, A Hero if I Fall - Stories of Irishmen in World War I**

*Author:* Neil Richardson  
*Publisher:* O’Brien Press  
*ISBN:* 101-84717-131-1  
*Price:* €19.99

This book, by army reservist Neil Richardson, is one of the best books published in 2010 on the bravery, struggle and hardship thousands of Irishmen endured during the Great War of 1914-18. For his efforts in writing this book, Neil was rightly awarded the best non-fiction book in 2010 at the Bord Gais Energy Irish Book Awards last November. His body of work is a testament to the thousands who left this island to fight and to those who never came back.

The author brings the reader on a journey, retelling the stories of countless officers, NCOs, men and in some cases boys, as they joined up, trained and marched off to war. Little did most of them know the real horror of a modern 20th century war? Interspersed between the text are countless photographs, letters, badges, emblems and poems all of which add to the reader’s understanding of what it was like to fight at Ypres, the Somme, Gallipoli and Palestine. This book is not just for the historian, but is essential reading for Irish soldiers today. Yes, though Irish men served in the British Army, wore khaki uniform and took the King’s shilling, most did in the hope that their efforts on the battlefield in Belgium and France would somehow aid Ireland’s case for independence. Those who were lucky to survive came back to a totally changed Ireland. A lot suffered alienation and rejection. This book is a fitting tribute to their sacrifice and the author is to be commended for reminding us all that you don’t have to wear an Irish Army uniform to love your country.

**Peace Enforcers - The EU Military Intervention in Chad**

*Author:* Dan Harvey  
*Publisher:* Book Republic  
*ISBN:* 978-1-907221-03-3  
*Price:* €19.99

This book, by Comdt Dan Harvey, outlines the Defence Forces’ involvement with the European Union UN-mandated mission to Chad in 2008. As a staff officer in Paris with the Operational HQ under the command of another Irishman, Lt Gen Pat Nash, Comdt Harvey was ideally placed to witness at firsthand the difficulty in getting the political will, and military resources into place before any EU Forces set foot on the ground. In a country literally in the heart of Africa, Ireland sent a battalion and a special-forces contingent to assist in protecting thousands of Internally Displaced People fleeing persecution in Darfur. Apart from the constant threat of rebel attacks, Irish troops patrolling in their Mowag APCs had to overcome vast distances, harsh weather and a hostile environment in order to carry out their mandate.

For anyone who is coming to this subject matter for the first time, this book is ideally suited to them. The author effortlessly gives the reasons and causes to the region’s turmoil and outlines the key players on all sides. Equally, anyone reading this would easily understand the complexity in sending and maintaining a military force in such a remote and inaccessible place.

Though this wasn’t the first time the Defence Forces had served in Africa, the EU mission in the Chad brought some of the biggest logistical challenges ever faced. The shear distance involved in moving the tonnes of armour, vehicles, containers overseas by rail and then on roads which were mere dirt tracks, is a feat in itself. Likewise, the first Irish battalion had to build an entire camp from scratch. With the EU mission to Chad now ended, Peace Enforcers is a book well worth reading to understand how the Defence Forces continues to add to its portfolio of overseas missions and as an organisation always willing to step up to the mark when called upon to do so. Such was the success of the first edition of the book, a second paperback edition is now available in selected bookshops and from amazon.co.uk

**Medals of the Irish Defence Forces**

*Publisher:* Defence Forces  
*Price:* Free

This long overdue and fine book was the brainchild of Bty QMS Gerry O’Connor (54 Res Arty Regt) and was put together by the staff of Ceremonial Section, A Administration, DFHQ. It is a must have for anyone interested in medals.

In both pictures and narrative, the reader can follow with ease how each medal was created. All current Irish, UN, EU and UN mandated medals on issue are featured. Plus, Ceremonial Section has included a section on War of Independence medals.

This invaluable reference book is well laid out and is a credit to the designers and printers of the Defence Forces Printing Press. Another bonus for reader is that this first printed edition is free and to obtain a book, simply drop a short note requesting a copy with your postal address to: Medals of the Irish Defence Forces, Ceremonial Section, A Administration, DFHQ, Colaiste Coimhín, Mobhi Road, Dublin 9.
The mission of Number 3 Operations Wing is to generate, sustain, and deliver rotary-winged multi-purpose air capabilities, in order to meet Defence objectives and government directive tasks through the commitment, skills and expertise of its personnel.

As Wing Commander, I have to ensure that we achieve the mission.

Whereas I do get involved in the unit’s daily routine, my role also involves engagement at a higher level, communicating with the General Officer Commanding Air Corps and his operations and logistic staff to ensure that we have the means to accomplish our goals.

The unit consists of three squadrons and a headquarters. 301 Squadron has the six Agusta/Westland 139s which are used mostly in an operational capacity. 302 Squadron has the two Eurocopter 135s used primarily for training, though they can be used for other operations as tasked. 303 Squadron is the technical element of the wing, while the headquarters performs all of the normal unit operational, administrative and logistical functions.

The focus of the wing has changed over the last number of years, from providing a national search and rescue (SAR) capability to now providing and developing helicopter air support for both the Army and Naval Service. We also have an aircraft and crew on standby 24/7 aircraft available to the HSE for air ambulance or for other emergencies, if the need arises. Apart from that, we are used for parachute training, troop and VIP transport and military SAR capabilities. Our unit also provides helicopter pilots, hangar facilities and logistical support for the Garda Air Support Unit (GASU).

In recent times, we have developed an aerial fire-fighting capability using the Bambi bucket system. If called upon by the civil authorities to assist in fighting gorse or forest fires, our helicopters, fitted with the bucket can pick up water from a lake and drop it over a fire, thus enhancing the firefighting effort.

Air mobility or the need to move troops into combat zones has become part and parcel of overseas deployment. As a unit, we take part in all the Mission Readiness Exercises, familiarising troops with helicopter embussing and debussing drills and providing the ground commander with a fast lift insertion and extraction capability. It has now been identified that troops need to be doing this on a more regular basis so, we are now involved in annual Brigade company and battalion level exercises. A new development is the ongoing training and flying at night by our helicopter crews using NVG (Night Vision Goggles). This gives us an added capability, allowing us to fly at night into areas that are normally not accessible to other aircraft. We also conduct regular training with the Army Ranger Wing in regards to fast roping and air gunnery with the AW139 aircraft, which now can be armed with either 7.62mm GPMG or .50 sniper rifles.

It can be a very busy and varied job. I am involved in the operational, logistic, technical and administrative areas on a daily basis. As a Wing Commander you deal with anyone from government officials to junior staff and everyone in between. Good communication is the key. I’ve been in the Defence Forces for 33 years and I have progressed from being a young operational pilot to being a relatively senior leader in the Air Corps and I’ve enjoyed every minute of it.
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