

DEFENCE FORCES YEAR IN REVIEW 2019

The Defence Forces have compiled a comprehensive end of year summary of Defence Forces Security Operations and training activities throughout 2019, both at home and overseas.

Domestic Operations

The Defence Forces conducted a wide range of Defence & Security Operations in 2019. Deployments included Aid to Civil Power & Aid to the Civil Authority operations on a daily basis supporting An Garda Síochána, HSE, Local Authorities and other key agencies of the State. Some examples of these activities are:

The Army conducted over 195 Aid to the Civil Power Operations in support of An Garda Síochána involving Explosive Ordnance Disposal (Bomb Squad) call outs, Prisoner Escorts, Explosive Escorts, major Cash Escorts and Search Operations.

The Defence Forces deployed approximately 2,614 personnel on Joint Security Operations during State Visits including POTUS and VPOTUS.

Members of the Defence Forces continue to provide a permanent armed guard at Ireland's only maximum-security prison, Portlaoise Prison as well as the Central Bank and Irish Industrial Explosives.

The Defence Forces contributed personnel and expertise supporting the Department of Communications. Climate Action and Environment National Cyber Security Centre.

Over 336 personnel, including the Engineer Specialist Search Teams, deployed to assist in 14 various searches on request from An Garda Síochána.

Approximately 120 personnel were deployed to assist civil authorities during multiple operations, including combating gorse fires in Wicklow, Donegal and Mayo.

The Defence Forces deployed ambulances and crews on seven occasions throughout the year in Dublin, Cork and Kildare to assist the NAS.

As the State's principal sea going agency, the Naval Service conducts maritime defence and security operations within a patrol area of 220 million acres of sea (over 12 times the land mass of Ireland), representing 15% of Europe's fisheries.

The fleet conducted approximately 780 boarding operations and detained 12 vessels for alleged infringements of fishing regulations in support of the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority.

In April the LÉ GEORGE BERNARD SHAW was commissioned into service bringing the P60 project to a close.

The Naval Service Diving Section were deployed for 26 operations in 2019 including 4 separate search and recovery operations following requests from An Garda Síochána, and 2 requests from the Coast Guard.

The Air Corps conducts Maritime Defence and Security Operations in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) through its Maritime Patrol Squadron which carries out aerial surveillance of territorial waters using two CASA CN-235 maritime patrol aircraft. The Air Corps conducted in excess of *130 (current figure 128 on 29 Nov) Maritime Surveillance Patrol flights in 2019.

The Air Corps completed more than *233 Emergency Aeromedical Services missions supporting the HSE in providing a medical service for seriously ill patients in isolated rural communities.

The Air Corps provided *32 inter hospital Air Ambulance service support to the HSE in response to time critical medical emergencies. 20 of these flights required patient delivery to UK or mainland Europe.

The Air Corps responded to several requests to provide aerial fire-fighting to protect vulnerable property in the ATCA role.

The Air Corps participated in a multi-national pollution monitoring operation in the North Sea.

The Air Corps continues to support the Garda Air Support Unit flights in 2019.

(*most recent figures)



International Operations

The Defence Forces has the longest unbroken record of overseas service with the United Nations of any country in the world since first deploying to a United Nations mission in 1958.

In 2019, Defence Forces personnel served overseas on missions with the United Nations, NATO PfP (Partnership for Peace), EU and OSCE Peace Support and Security Operations across 14 missions in 13 countries. There are currently 595 Defence Forces personnel serving overseas.

The largest Defence Forces deployment is in South Lebanon with UNIFIL, where 338 Irish personnel are deployed to maintain a safe and secure environment. In November 2019, Ireland partnered with Poland on this mission, enhancing and developing its interoperability with Partner Nations. The Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) also contribute nine personnel to IRISHPOLBATT.

Ireland currently has 138 personnel deployed with the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights, Syria (UNDOF). Their ongoing Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) upgrade programme saw nine new APCs deployed to UNDOF in November 19, enhancing force protection and mobility for troops in theatre.

Brigadier General Maureen O'Brien took up the appointment of Deputy Force Commander, UNDOF in September 2019.

The Defence Forces commenced its first deployment to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in September 2019. The DF contribution to this mission includes staff officers in Force HQ in Bamako and Army Ranger Wing (ARW) personnel with the German Reconnaissance (ISR) Task Force.

Ireland currently has 3 personnel (2 x NS, 1 x AC) working in the Operational HQ of the EU Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR-MED) on Operation Sophia in Rome. The mission's strategic objective is to disrupt organised criminal networks involved in illicit activities, including smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and terrorism.

During 2019, the Defence Forces deployed one ordnance officer, on three occasions, as a member of the Joint Technical Group on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (JTGDDR) to Mozambique.

In August 2019, ten personnel deployed as part of the Force HQ Staff with the EU Battlegroup (EUBG) 2020 to Stadtallendorf, Germany.



Innovation and Collaboration

Publication of the Defence Enterprise Strategy

Formal guidelines and processes are now in place in the Defence Enterprise space. Innovation and collaboration projects now have this document to build on the positive policies given to this subject in the Defence White Paper.

Funding from DPER through OPS2020 for the MORIGEN project

This is a prime example of how the Chief of Staff Innovation Awards realised real resources from outside of the DF. It is also an excellent example of the valuable contribution of reserve personnel as it was an Army Reservist who developed the project, got seed funding from DF and has now received significantly larger monies from DPER to get this innovative Virtual Reality Training System off the ground.

ROCSAFE

The Ordnance Corps is a consortium member in a successful H2020 project with partners from national and international organisations, the project secured over 4.7m in research funding. This project is based on dealing with the aftermath of a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNe) event and is producing cutting-edge technology for use in the field of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). The Ordnance Corps of the Defence Forces provides front-line end user expertise and oversight to the project. The project concluded with a successful demonstration of the technology in Baldonnell Aerodrome this September.

Chief Of Staff Innovation Awards

This year's COS innovation awards built on the success of previous years and has become the flagship event of Innovation recognition in the DF.

Training and Education

The Defence Forces train for what they can predict, and they educate for what they cannot. As DF personnel are its greatest strength, they place a significant focus on training and education to ensure that they develop their personnel and prepare them for complex operating environments, domestically and overseas.

461 Recruits (21 Females) and 96 Cadets (14 Female) were inducted to the Defence Forces and began their military training in 2019. 8 of those cadets were serving members who moved from enlisted ranks and 24 Defence Forces personnel who began their Potential Officers course in 2018 were commissioned on 13 March 2019.

Approximately 166 Defence Forces personnel completed traditional Honours Degree courses, of which 2 Defence Forces personnel completed Masters Courses through Continuous Professional Development programmes.

1,051 Skill Courses were conducted by the Defence Forces in 2019 with 13,412 student days developing and maintaining Defence Force capabilities.

601 Defence forces personnel underwent 35 Career courses, developing their leadership,

planning and decision-making skills.

Approximately 1,900 Defence Forces personnel underwent overseas pre-deployment mission readiness training ranging from counter IED to medical first responder training, radio and communications skills to armour vehicle driving. This number also includes members of the army ranger wing deployment to Mali.

CEREMONIAL EVENTS 2019

The Defence Forces participated in more than 50 significant military and State ceremonial Events in 2019.

The Defence Forces participated in the annual State commemoration ceremonies, including the commemoration of the 103rd anniversary of the Easter Rising at the GPO, O'Connell Street; the 1916 Leaders Commemoration at Arbour Hill and at the National Day of Commemoration at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham.

The Defence Forces participated in the National Famine Commemoration, held this year in Sligo.

State ceremonial honours were afforded on the occasion of the State Visit to Ireland of the King and Queen of Sweden in May, The King and Queen of Netherlands in June and The President of Cuba in October. Honours were also afforded to Uachtarán na hÉireann, H.E. President Michael D. Higgins, on the occasion of his departure for a State visit to Germany in July.

The Defence Forces participated in a series of monthly ceremonies at Áras an Uachtaráin where a total of 35 Ambassadors presented their Credentials of Office to Uachtarán na hÉireann.

A Ceremony took place in Waterford to mark the naming and commissioning of the Naval Vessel L. É. George Bernard Shaw in April, attended by An Taoiseach.

A special State ceremony was held in Collins Barracks Dublin in April of this year to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Reserve Defence Force. As part of these commemorations, a parade was held at which Minister with responsibility for Defence conducted a review of The Reserve Defence Forces.

The Defence Forces Remembrance Ceremony was held at The National Memorial, Merrion Square in December to remember those members of the Defence Forces who have given their lives in the service of the State. As part of this ceremony The Minister with Responsibility for Defence laid a wreath at The National Memorial along with families of deceased members.

Throughout 2019, a variety of other ceremonial and support duties were performed across the country by members of the Defence Forces in support of State and other ceremonial events.