

AFFAIRS OF THE NATION



IRELAND'S NEUTRAL NATO PARTNERSHIP

IN THE same month that the Government underlined its plans to ditch the triple lock governing the deployment of Irish troops overseas, the deepening partnership of Ireland's Defence Forces with Nato was on display in the Curragh.

It will not surprise *Phoenix* readers that there is no reference on the Óglaigh na hÉireann/Irish Defence Forces Facebook or X pages to the fact that Ordnance School Ireland hosted Nato's Home Made Explosive International Workshop. But a post on the @UKDefenceDublin X account – the official account of the UK defence attaché assigned to the British embassy in Ireland – was keen to commend the Kildare jamboree. British defence attaché Colonel Sean Grant lauded the “multiagency participation, global expertise, enhancing interoperability. Great work by the Ordnance School”.

Grant has developed quite the cosy relationship with the top brass of Ireland's Defence Forces over recent years. In 2023 he attended the biennial Delegate Conference of Raco (the Representative Association of Commissioned Officers) and was welcomed to the event on the association's X account: “Great to host our friend Col Sean Grant”.

Indeed Brigadier General Stephen Ryan, the general officer commanding of the Irish Defence Forces 2 Brigade, joined Grant last month to commemorate the Battle of the Somme at an event organised by the Royal British Legion of Ireland at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens in Islandbridge.

Ireland's relationship with Nato is conducted through the Partnership for Peace (PfP), of which Ireland has been a member since 1999. Nato's PfP is a framework designed to enhance political and military co-operation between countries and the military alliance. Under this agreement Irish troops have been deployed alongside Nato forces in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In recent years Ireland has

also participated in ‘live-fire’ cyber defence exercises organised by Nato's Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia, and has started to co-operate with Nato in relation to maritime security.

In November 2023 Ireland agreed an Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) for 2024 to 2028, which governs the continued co-operation with Nato. In March 2024 Brendan Howlin TD asked then tánaiste and defence minister Micheál Martin about future projects to be pursued under the ITPP. The response was at best vague. Martin talked about attaining “maximum interoperability, enabling of capabilities and the enhancement

of the professionalism of the Defence Forces”. He asserted: “There are no specific projects contained in the ITPP... this is about co-operation.”

In July 43 bomb disposal technicians met at the Ordnance School in the Defence Forces Kildare training centre, including soldiers from the US, Germany, France, Britain and Canada. These bomb experts did not just look at how to identify and safely dispose of homemade explosive devices but also how this can be done in

co-operation with national police forces.

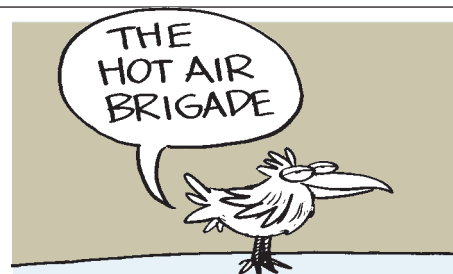
The fact that the Irish Defence Forces has world-class expertise in terms of countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has been exploited by Nato. Since 2010 the Ordnance School in the Curragh has offered these counter-IED training courses to both Nato allies and partners.

With Nato deepening its connections to Ireland, Goldhawk is also intrigued by the career trajectory of Irish academic Jack O'Doherty. He is currently researching US nuclear strategy and policy at the University of Leicester and was recently selected from over 350 applicants to work on Nato's NextGen Futures platform. This is a forecasting programme that will provide Nato with probability estimates regarding key events and trends and examine “second-order effects, question assumptions, and surface overlooked dynamics shaping the future of war and warfare”.

This is not O'Doherty's only Nato connection. He is a junior associate fellow with the Nato Defense College in Rome and in 2017, when studying for his masters in international relations at University College Cork, O'Doherty represented UCC at the Nato allied command transformation crisis simulation exercise at the University of Bologna.



Stephen Ryan



I would certainly want to be fairly remunerated. At a time when Premiership footballers are earning £25m a year... I wouldn't necessarily think I should be earning that kind of money, but if I'm going to sign up for another four or five years to deliver industry-leading performance – and not just me, the rest of the senior management team – then the reward package would reflect industry-leading performance. **Michael O'Leary, Sunday Independent**



Michael O'Leary

Storyed minutiae of my past will be an asset to researchers of the future. **Terry Prone on donating her papers to the National Library, Irish Examiner**

Our former president is a role model, not just for women, but people. She is also a poster child against ageism, with its sly denigration of senior citizens: aged 81, her firepower burns more brightly than ever. **Martina Devlin on Robbo, Irish Independent**

Brad Pitt. **Martin Heyden SC, who is acting in the high-profile legal action over an alleged sale to John Magnier of the Barne Estate, suggests the Hollywood heartthrob as an actor who could play the role of Judge Max Barrett in any movie of the High Court stand-off, Sunday Independent**

Later that evening, I find myself crossing the Hyde Bridge. It's raining. Even so, I stop for a couple of minutes, lean on the bridge and listen to the rushing waters of the Garavogue river sweeping underneath, as if unseen creatures are urgently calling to each other as they pass by. If towns have distinctive sounds, this is what Sligo sounds like, and always has. **Rosita Boland, Irish Times**

A concept store called Baggotonia. Located on Leeson Street Upper in Dublin, the bijou boutique/deli/exhibition space quietly opened in spring with its “eclectic mix of stylish items”, from pantry goods and plimsoles to perfume and ceramics, and is, Lambe-Murphy declares, his first “proper job”. **Marie Kelly on Gavin Lambe-Murphy's shop, Sunday Times**

In an age when luxury travel risks becoming indistinguishable from one city to the next, a quiet rebellion is underway, one that favours soul over sameness, storytelling over standardisation. **Brenda Collins, Irish Tatler**

In the stadium of relationships they were in the lifers' area. With Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell or Bono and Ali, or Brian and Amy. They give off the “excited to be together” vibe of which most of us can only dream. **Mary McCarthy lamenting Cat and Pat's break up, Irish Independent**



Please send suitable contributions to: The Hot Air Brigade, The Phoenix, 44 Lr Baggot St, Dublin 2 or email: hotair@thephoenix.ie