Datá: 16 OCT 23

**123rd INFANTRY BATTALION**

**BRIEFING NOTE**

The 123rd Infantry Battalion (123 Inf Bn) will deploy in November to South Lebanon as part of UNIFIL (United Nation Interim Force in Lebanon). The Unit was formally activated on Monday 11th of September 2023 following completion of Phase 1 training. This marked the commencement of Phase 2 training, where personnel from across the Defence Forces reported to James Stephens Barracks, Kilkenny (Battalion Headquarters and Battalion Support Group (BSG)), Kilworth Army Camp, Co Cork (Recce Company & A Company) to begin administrative, logistical and tactical preparations for both Phase 3 training and overseas deployment to Lebanon. Phase 3 training commencing in Coolmoney Camp, Glen of Imaal, Wicklow on 16th October 2023 will ensure personnel are fully prepared to participate in Chapter 6 Peace Support Operations and execute their allocated tasks in the mission area in accordance with the UNIFIL Mission mandate.

123 Inf Bn will deploy to the UNIFIL area of operations with three hundred and forty three (343) personnel, (nine (9) Maltese, three hundred and thirty four (334) Irish).

123 Inf Bn will deploy in two (2) Chalks to Lebanon, on 14 November 2023 and 24 November 2023 respectively, rotating with and replacing the 122 Inf Bn.

123 Inf Bn will then commence operations as part of a multinational battalion, comprising of Irish, Maltese, Polish and Hungarian personnel, collectively referred to as IRISHPOLBATT. IRISHPOLBATT will support UNIFIL’s mandates in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701 (2006) and UNSCR 2650 (2022).

1. **Stats & Figures**
2. The total number of personnel deploying to UNIFIL with the 123 Inf Bn on this rotation is three hundred and forty three (343) personnel, (nine (9) Maltese, three hundred and thirty four (334) Irish).
3. Eighty six (86) personnel will be travelling overseas in an operational capacity with the Defence Forces for the first time.
4. Twenty (20) females will deploy with the 123 Inf Bn.
5. Personnel travelling with the 123 Inf Bn represent 25 counties across Ireland with the following counties contributing the majority of troops.
   1. Cork – 35
   2. Kildare – 25
   3. Kilkenny– 33
   4. Dublin – 60
   5. Wexford - 17
6. **Officer Commanding 123 Inf Bn – Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Mac Eoin**

Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Mac Eoin enlisted into the Army as an Officer Cadet in 1999. Commissioned to the 5th Infantry Battalion in Dublin, he has served in operational, training and administrative appointments in 2 Bde, the DFTC, DFHQ and in 1 Bde, including as operations staff officer in the Curragh and Class Officer of the 94th Cadet Class. He has spent the past two years as deputy and A/Commanding Officer of the 3rd Infantry Battalion, the Defence Forces' oldest unit.

A NATO-accredited fluent French speaker, Lt Col Mac Eoin holds a double First in French and History from NUI, Galway and MAs from UCD and Maynooth Universities. He is a graduate with distinction of the 3rd Joint Command and Staff course (2021), where he received the award for the best research thesis.

As a former OIC of the Military Archives, Lt Col Mac Eoin has led heritage and commemoration projects within the Defence Forces since 2007, and was seconded to the civil service throughout 2016 as Defence Forces liaison officer for the centenary commemorations. He continues to serve on the State's Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations. He is a regular contributor to TV and radio documentaries and has been a spokesperson for Defence Forces heritage and commemoration matters for many years.

Lieutenant Colonel Mac Eoin has served overseas as a peacekeeper in both command and staff appointments in Kosovo; Chad; Lebanon and the Congo and served for one year as exchange instructor at the French St Cyr Military Academy, where he completed the French commando course at Mont Louis.

He is married to Linda Jane and has four children.

1. **Senior NCO 123 Inf Bn - Battalion Sergeant Major John Kelleher**

Battalion Sergeant Major (BSM) John Kelleher is the senior Non-Commissioned Officer travelling with the 123 Inf Bn. BSM Kelleher joined the Defence forces on the 9th Oct 1985 and has served in a wide range of appointments both at home and overseas throughout his long career.

Sgt Major Kelleher has significant operational experience across the spectrum of appointments within infantry units including the 4th Inf Bn; the CTD, BTC training installations; Brigade HQ; the Military college; the Infantry Weapons Wing and the NCO training wing.

BSM Kelleher has extensive previous overseas service and has completed a total of eleven overseas tours of duty, to Lebanon (UNIFIL), Kosovo (KFOR), CHAD (Minurcat) & UNDOF. His experience ranges from appointments at section level right up to company and battalion level. His current home unit is Sgt Major of the Oldest Infantry unit within the Defence Forces, the 3rd Infantry Battalion.

Sgt Major Kelleher is married to Christine and they have two children and two grandchildren, Jack & Caoimhe. They currently live in Glanmire Co. Cork.

1. **Youngest and Oldest Soldiers:**

CS Clabby, serving in the S5 cell, is the oldest member of the contingent travelling at Fifty-nine (59) years old.

Pte Kinnaird, serving with A Coy, is the youngest member of the Battalion at twenty (20) years of age.

1. **Most Overseas Deployments:**

BQMS Nicholas Scott, a member of Battalion Headquarters, has completed the most tours of duty of all personnel within the 123 Inf Bn with a total of Fourteen (14) tours, with this deployment being his 15th Tour of Duty.