**126 INFANTRY BATTALION**

**BRIEFING NOTE**

The 126 Infantry Battalion (126 INF BN) will deploy in May 2025 to South Lebanon as part of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon). The Unit was formally activated on 17 FEB 2025 following completion of Phase 1 training. This marked the commencement of Phase 2 training, where personnel from across the Defence Forces reported to Dún Ui Mhaoilíosa, Galway, to begin administrative, logistical and tactical preparations for both Phase 3 training and overseas deployment to Lebanon. Phase 3 training, commenced in Coolmoney Camp, Glen of Imaal in Co. Wicklow, on the 07 April 2025 and ensured personnel were 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.

126 INF BN will deploy to the UNIFIL area of operations with 308 personnel; (ten (10) personnel from the Armed Forces of Malta, 298 Irish Defence Forces personnel. 126 INF Bn will deploy in three (3) Chalks to Lebanon throughout May, rotating with, and replacing the 125 INF Bn.

126 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 2749 (2024).

1. **Stats & Figures**
2. The total number of personnel deploying to UNIFIL with the 126 INF BN on this rotation is three hundred and eight (308) personnel, (10) personnel from the Armed Forces of Malta, two hundred and ninety eight (298) Irish).
3. Sixteen (16) females will deploy with the 126 INF Bn. 15 DF & one (1) AFM.
4. Seventy Eight (78) personnel are travelling from 1 BN, Galway.
5. One Hundred and ten, (110), personnel will be travelling overseas in an operational capacity with the Defence Forces for the first time.
6. Personnel travelling with the 126 INF BN represent 23 counties across Ireland, with the majority coming from Galway.
7. **Officer Commanding 126 INF BN**

Lieutenant Colonel Edward McDonagh is the Commanding Officer of the 126th INF BN. A native of Bangor-Erris, Co. Mayo, he joined the Defence Forces in 1992 and was commissioned from the 69th Cadet Class to the 12th Infantry Battalion in Limerick in July 1994. Lt Col McDonagh is an Infantry officer and has accumulated over thirty years of experience in a wide variety of command and training appointments in both Ireland and overseas which include; Officer Commanding 1 INF BN, Chief Instructor in the Infantry School, Military College, EO, Combat Support Branch, Ops Division, Staff Officer Comdt, J7 Training & Education Branch, Coy Comdr, 1st BN, OC No 1 Security Coy.

Lieutenant Colonel McDonagh is a graduate of the Command and Staff School, Military College and Maynooth University and holds a Master of Arts Degree in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies.

This will be Lt Col McDonagh’s eleventh overseas tour of duty having previously served in UNIFIL on five occasions in 1997, 2011, 2014, 2018 and 2022. He was DCO with the 113th BN UNIFIL in 2018. He has also served overseas with the following missions, with NATO to ISAF, one tour to MINURCAT (Chad) as Coy Comd, one tour to MONUC (Democratic Republic of Congo) as a UN Military Staff Officer and one tour to EUTM Mali as the J4 Chief. His most recent overseas tour was in 2022 in UNIFIL HQ where he served as Branch Chief G5/7 in Sector West HQ, UNIFIL.

Edward, is a keen sportsman with a love of GAA, Rugby and Golf. An avid reader he is also a keen historian with a strong interest in early Irish history. He lives in Oranmore Co. Galway with his wife Elaine and their two daughters Ciara and Sadhbh.

1. **Youngest and Oldest Soldiers:**

RSM Andrew Marlow, serving in Battalion Headquarters, is the oldest member of the contingent travelling at fifty-nine (59) years old.

Pte Charlie O’Leary from Galway, serving with A Coy, is the youngest member of the Battalion at nineteen (19) years of age.

1. **Most Overseas Deployments:**

Sgt Higgins has the most overseas deployments with a total of twenty (19) deployments.