



## **Briefing Note: 66 Infantry Group UNDOF**

### **UN Security Council Resolutions**

On 31st May 1974, the United Nations adopted Security Council Resolution 350 to establish the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). UNDOF's mandate is to maintain a credible presence in the Golan and use its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and see to it that it is scrupulously observed. The resolution is updated every six months and the mission is currently operating under UN Security Council resolution 2639, until 31 Dec 2022.

On the 16 July 2013 the Defence Forces received authorisation from the Government to deploy with UNDOF. The first mission for Irish troops in UNDOF commenced in September 2013. To carry out the mandate, UNDOF maintains an Area of Separation, (AOS) between Israeli Occupied Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

### **Area of Operations**

UNDOF Area of Operations (AO) is primarily focused on the AOS between the Alpha and Bravo lines. Both lines stretch for a distance of 75 kms from Mount Hermon in the North, to the Jordanian border in the South. The area between both lines is known as the Area of Separation (AOS). At its widest, the AOS stretches up to 9 kms and is 200m wide at its narrowest point. The AOS separates Israeli Occupied Golan to the west of the Alpha Line with the Syrian Arab Republic to the East of the Bravo Line. The 66 Infantry Group Headquarters is located at Camp Faouar.

### **66 Infantry Group: Mission and Concept of Ops**

The 66 Infantry Groups' primary responsibility is to act as the Force Reserve Company, under the direct command of the UNDOF Force Commander. In order to achieve this task and maintain a credible presence in the Golan and uphold the mandate, the Irish contingent operate Camp Faouar on the Bravo side of the AOS. The Force Reserve Company's responsibility is to maintain a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) and also a Reserve Force within Camp Faouar at all times. The QRF is a small, highly mobile and flexible force which can respond to any request made by the Force Commander within 15 minutes. The requests can range from evacuation of UN personnel from UN positions for various emergency reasons to routine patrols of the AOS. The unit also has various support elements which allow it to operate self sufficiently.



Engineering, medical, ordnance transport and logistical personnel will deploy with the unit to act as the supporting elements.

## **66 Infantry Group**

The 66 Infantry Group will rotate into the mission area in October 2022 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel David McNamara. The group contains 130 personnel of all ranks, consisting of 14 Officers, 115 Enlisted Personnel and 1 Chaplain. A total of 34 personnel are on their first tour of duty overseas. The Group has a wide range of capabilities including Armoured Force Protection, Patrolling and Mobility, Surveillance, Communications, Medical and Operational Expertise. In preparation for deployment the Infantry Group are being tested during a Mission Readiness Exercise which puts commanders and soldiers through a demanding series of scenarios based on the current situation in the Golan Heights and potential threats that may be encountered in the mission area. Troops face a series of scenarios involving simulated explosive strikes, air strikes, helicopter drills, anti ambush tactics using a variety of advanced weapons systems, detailed planning and traditional peacekeeping methods.

The 66 Infantry Group Headquarters; as well as the Quick Reaction Force and Group Support Elements will be based in Camp Faouar, situated to the East of the Bravo Line in the Syrian Arab Republic. The location of the camp offers superior operational and logistical capabilities and its location increases the force protection and general security. It also gives good visibility of the AOS between Israeli Occupied Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

## **Rules of Engagement**

The Group have undergone extensive pre-deployment training, including dilemma training and scenario-based training. Each soldier has been thoroughly briefed in relation to the rules of engagement and each have received a Tactical Aide Memoire stating these rules which they will familiarise themselves with and carry at all times.

## **What are the Irish Troops doing?**

The Defence Forces is deploying a Group Headquarters, Two Mechanised Infantry Platoons, a Cavalry & Artillery Reconnaissance Troop and a Contingent Support Group of 130 personnel to the Golan. The Infantry Group will be carrying out peacekeeping duties under Chapter 6 of the UN Charter.

The group acts as the Force Reserve Company, the main focus of which is constituting a Quick Response Force for UNDOF, as well as supporting the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation, (UNTSO). This group operates Observation Posts along the Alpha line in order to monitor the AOS. This will involve extensive patrolling throughout the AO in addition to monitoring the AOS. In accordance with Security Council Resolution 2530, duties will also include helping to ensure humanitarian access to the civilian population in the area.

## **Officer Commanding 66 Infantry Group**

Lieutenant Colonel David McNamara is the Officer Commanding the 66 Infantry Group. He joined the Defence Forces in 1989 and was commissioned in 1991 as a member of the 66<sup>th</sup> Cadet Class.

Lt Col McNamara has amassed a wide range of experience as an infantry officer across a number of roles at home, serving in command and staff roles at battalion level in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalions. He has significant experience in the field of Human Resource Management, having served in Brigade level staff appointments in 2 Brigade Headquarters.

Lt Col McNamara has extensive prior overseas experience in the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans, serving in command and staff appointments at battalion level and at UN Force Headquarters level in Lebanon, Congo and Kosovo.

Lt Col McNamara is a graduate of the National University of Ireland in Galway, and holds a Masters Degree in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies from the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He is a graduate of the Command and Staff Course run by the Command and Staff School in the Military College.

Lt Col McNamara resides in Naas, Co. Kildare. He is married to Mary, and has two children. He most recently served as Officer Commanding the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin.

## **Senior NCO 66 Infantry Group**

Regimental Sergeant Major Joseph Skelly is the senior non-commissioned officer travelling with the 66 Infantry Group. RSM Skelly joined the Defence Forces on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1987 and has served in a wide range of appointments both at home and overseas throughout his long career.

At home, he has operational experience across a range of artillery appointments within artillery units, mostly in the 2 Brigade Artillery Regiment, at all ranks up to RSM, and has previously served as the Regimental Sergeant Major of the 2 Brigade Artillery Regiment. He has also served in Defence Forces Headquarters.

RSM Skelly has served in a number of previous overseas appointments, completing a total of seven overseas tours of duties to Lebanon, Bosnia, and Kosovo. These cover a spectrum of appointments from section up to company troop leadership, in addition to a range of battalion and brigade staff roles, including working in areas such as operations and psychological operations.

RSM Skelly is married, and lives in Trim, Co. Meath.

Prior to serving with the 66 Inf Gp, he most recently has served as the Ceremonial Sergeant Major of the Defence Forces for the past year.

## 66<sup>th</sup> INFANTRY GROUP PERSONNEL PROFILE

**Troops Disposition (All Ranks):**           **130 All Ranks**  
14 Officers  
1 Chaplain  
115 Enlisted Personnel

**Average Age:**                               32 Years

**Youngest Soldier:**                       Pte Kyle Deegan, 21 (21 MAR 2001)

**Most Overseas Tours:**                   CS Des Mooney has completed 17 previous trips.

**First tour of duty abroad:**             34 personnel

**Accumulated trips:**                     Over 140 tours of duty

**Troops have previously served in;**    UNDOF (Israeli Occupied Golan and Syria), UNIFIL (Lebanon), SFOR (Bosnia), KFOR (Kosovo), EUFOR (Bosnia), EUTM (Mali), MINURCAT (Central African Republic and Chad), EUFOR (Chad), INTERFET (East Timor), UNTAET (East Timor) UNMIL (Liberia), UNMEE (Ethiopia and Eritrea), TCHAD, and Operation Sophia.

**Female Personnel travelling:**           5

**Notable particulars:**                   Serials 19 Sgt O'Halloran and 24 Pte O'Halloran are cousins.  
CS Mooney has already volunteered for Kosovo post-UNDOF.

**Total counties represented:**           19

### **Counties Represented:**

Dublin	Monaghan
Cavan	Wicklow
Sligo	Galway
Tipperary	Meath
Carlow	Wexford
Louth	Donegal
Antrim	Leitrim
Tyrone	
Cork	
Kildare	
Offaly	
West Meath	