

CONGO

A NEW DEPARTURE...



ÓGLAIGH NA HÉIREANN



IRELAND

CONGO

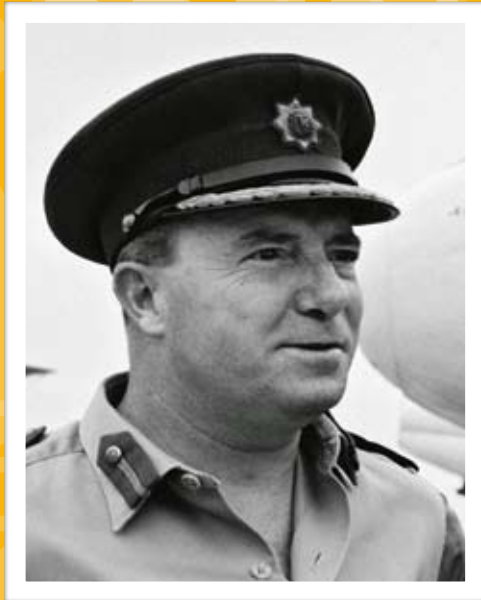


The Congo in relation to Ireland



CONGO

A NEW DEPARTURE...



General Séan McKeown
Commander of UN Forces in the Congo

Introduction

In July 1960 the 32nd Irish Battalion was airlifted from Baldonnell to the newly independent African country of the Congo. The Belgian Congo became an independent Republic on 30th June 1960 and twelve days later, the Congolese Government requested military assistance from the United Nations to maintain its territorial integrity. A courageous Irish Government decision of the day acceded to the UN request to allow an Irish troop participation to deploy on the peacekeeping mission. This represented a new departure both for the Defence Forces and the nation, demonstrating that Ireland, though small and still young as a state was willing to play its part on the World stage. A total of 6,000 Irishmen served in the Congo from 1960 to 1964 and the involvement was of great benefit to the Defence Forces in terms of experience and morale. This involvement however was to see Irish soldiers taking part in heavy fighting, suffering fatalities and injuries. 26 Irish soldiers lost their lives in all, nine died on the 8th November 1960 in one action alone, the Niemba ambush. This event represented a seminal moment in the history of the Defence Forces and greatly shocked the nation. There were to be subsequent, larger involvements and some Congolese placenames like Jadotville and Elizabethville were to become forever associated with fierce engagements where Irish soldiers were severely tested but triumphed. For the Irish soldier, overseas service has provided an opportunity to practice their profession in an operational environment, historically rejuvenating the Defence Forces, improving its professionalism and becoming an important tool in recruitment. 50 years ago the Congo commenced overseas peacekeeping troop participation; an international involvement which has brought pride, praise and prominence to the Defence Forces and Ireland.

Connor of Dublin on arrival.

amid scenes of purposeful activity, members of Irish force for the Congo poured into the head-quarters Curragh Camp.

Munster, Leinster and Connacht they determined troops—the cream of the 32nd Irish Battalion of the Emergency Force.

men army ser- mingled idlers as the, Private (19); fears of t of his

Not that they were under any illusions. Private Dan Pollard of Clonmel spoke for them all when he said: "This

And, incidentally, no one could tell these officers anything about the political, economic or geographic situation that they didn't already know. Here in the newspaper offices daily we put through our hands a massive pile of information about the situation—but these officers were every bit as informed as we.

Maj.-Gen. Mac Eoin, the Chief of Staff, could not but have felt satisfied as he arrived on an inspection as we were

by Desmond Cryan

So, there it is—a great day among a great body of men. Some of whom like James Ryan of the 32nd Irish Battalion expressed the name of would ensure a big welcome

Congolese Welcome Our Troops • Pipers Lead March Into Goma Town • Battalion Relieves Belgian Soldiers

CHEERS FOR THE IRISH

Situation Is Still Tense

GOMA, Congo Republic, Friday. ARMED troops of the new Congo army held back thousands of cheering Congolese as the main body of Irish troops called in by the United Nations landed at the tiny airport here to-day.



IRISH RED CROSS TEAM GOING TOO
The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies launched in Goma an appeal for medical teams for service in the Congo of the World Health Organization.
A caption was issued at the Irish Red Cross headquarters and it was decided to send a team.
Capsule



IT WAS JUST ROUTINE FOR OUR TROOPS

Out on patrol along a Congo road

by Michael O'Halloran, IRISH PRESS Reporter in Goma.

The sun was climbing high already and pouring heat into the roofless back of the landrover at Bushusha, North Goma, as the driver let out the clutch with their eyebrows as we raced northwards out of Goma on a good road.
We were on a patrol in this unknown country the object of exploration and contact with civil life in the villages and the blue helmets and colour articles in a way to the scattered communities of a remote area in a remote
Banana trees we could recognise — tall ones with large leaves which bore heavy green clusters of fruit. The kind the Congolese call as a vegetable as important as our potatoes. There were
Jim Eves, the hurler, was the
fell away another few thousand feet to a hazy plain that was still higher up than two Mount Bradfords. "You couldn't tell them about this at home, could you," they wouldn't believe it in Mullingar anyway, what-possibly, sitting across from us, rifts between his knees.
Every now and then we passed two or three of the local people on the road.
Guns and lorries meant danger to these people. Some
watched, the boys with their guns ready. Misunderstandings can easily arise in the first moments of a mission.

Airlift of Troops To Albertville

IRISH IN KATANGA

CALM RESTORED AFTER CLASHES

ELISABETHVILLE, Katanga, Wednesday

IRISH U.N. troops were to-day being airlifted to Albertville on the Katanga shore of Lake Tanganyika, to replace Belgian paratroops who went there after clashes in which several Congolese were reported killed.
MONDAY, JULY 25, 1960



Lumumba Threatens Invasion

LEOPOLDVILLE, Wednesday

M. R. LUMUMBA, Congo Prime Minister, said to-night he would send Congolese troops into Katanga in a week's time unless the U.N. Security Council resolution on the Congo was "entirely satisfactory."
He told a Press conference that the Congolese army would go into Katanga "with the aid of"

U.N. TROOPS GO INTO KATANGA

Congolese lay down their arms

THE New York Times said, in a dispatch from Leopoldville to-day, that Belgium was reported to be preparing a compromise plan permitting the United Nations to extend its intervention in the Congo to Katanga Province, despite the Provincial Government's announced decision to secede from the Congo Republic.



EVENING PRESS

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Big queues form at B&I office



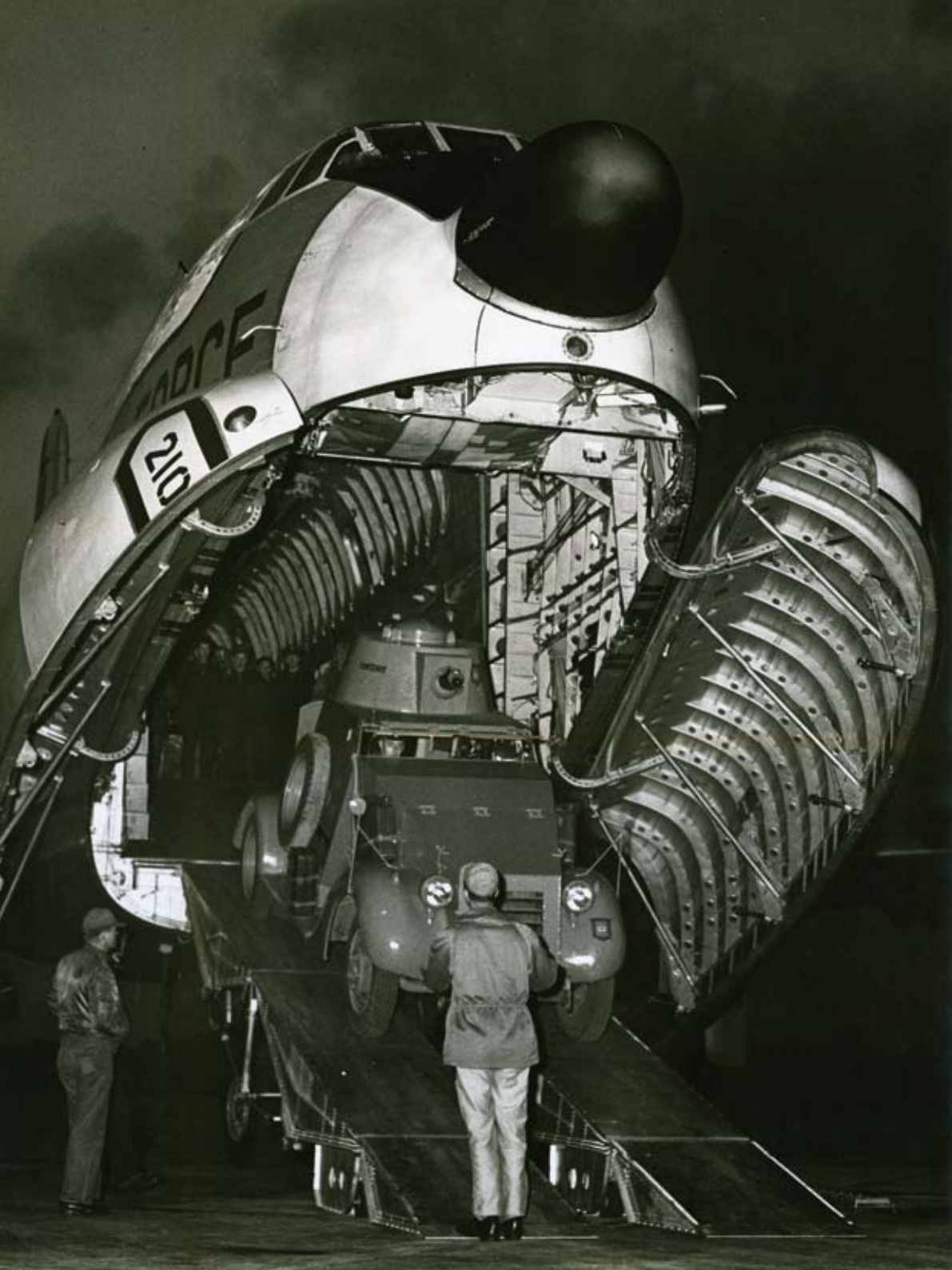
LAND'S 32nd CONGO BATTALION

History in the making at The Curragh: proud bearing of our soldiers

amid scenes of purposeful activity, members of Irish force for the Congo poured into the head-quarters Curragh Camp.

by Desmond Cryan





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ONUC MANDATE

The initial mandate of ONUC was to ensure the withdrawal of Belgian forces from the Republic of the Congo, to assist the Government in maintaining law and order and to provide technical assistance. The function of ONUC was subsequently modified to include maintaining the territorial integrity and political independence of the Congo, preventing the occurrence of civil war and securing the removal from the Congo of all foreign military, paramilitary and advisory personnel not under the United Nations Command, and all mercenaries.

PREPARATION

The embarkation of the Defence Forces first overseas deployment on a troop participating, peacekeeping tour of duty to the Congo, signalled the commencement of a new era for the Defence Forces and Ireland. It began a noble tradition, the continuance of which has lasted to the present day. Its impact on lifting the morale of a nation at the time was such, it is almost impossible to understand today.





For the first time the Irish public views the troops prior to deployment to the Congo.





An Taoiseach, Séan Lemass takes the first parade of an overseas battalion, July 1960.



At the time of deployment of the 32 Inf Bn and the departure of the 33 Inf Bn three weeks later, 1,400 Irish troops were serving in the Congo. This represented 20% of the total strength of the Defence Forces at that time.





Embarkation - loading of stores and equipment.



Initially troops were armed with the .303 Lee-Enfield No.4 Rifle, the Bren LMG and 9mm Carl Gustaf, SMG.



PEOPLE

It was by relating to the plight of the local Congolese people, as well as the individual Irish soldier's instinctive interest in the lives of those whom they were sent to protect, that made and marked out the Irish as effective peacekeepers from the beginning.



Large numbers of refugees flee the fighting and make-shift camps are set up.





Murphy,
Street,
Kenny,
of Ireland.

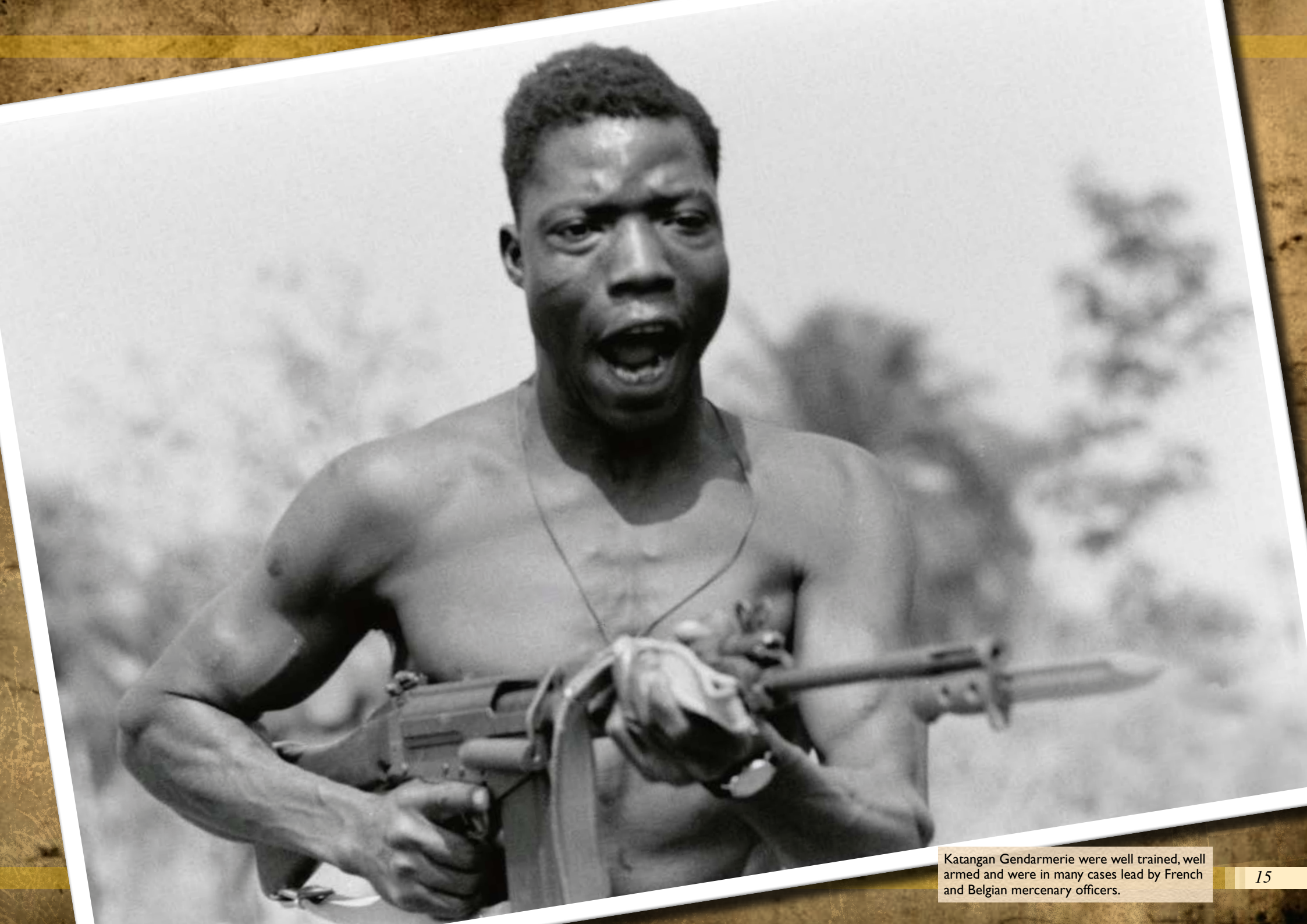
Postcards from the Congo





The Baluba tribe was prominent among the diverse tribal groupings in the Congo, particularly in their homeland province of Katanga.

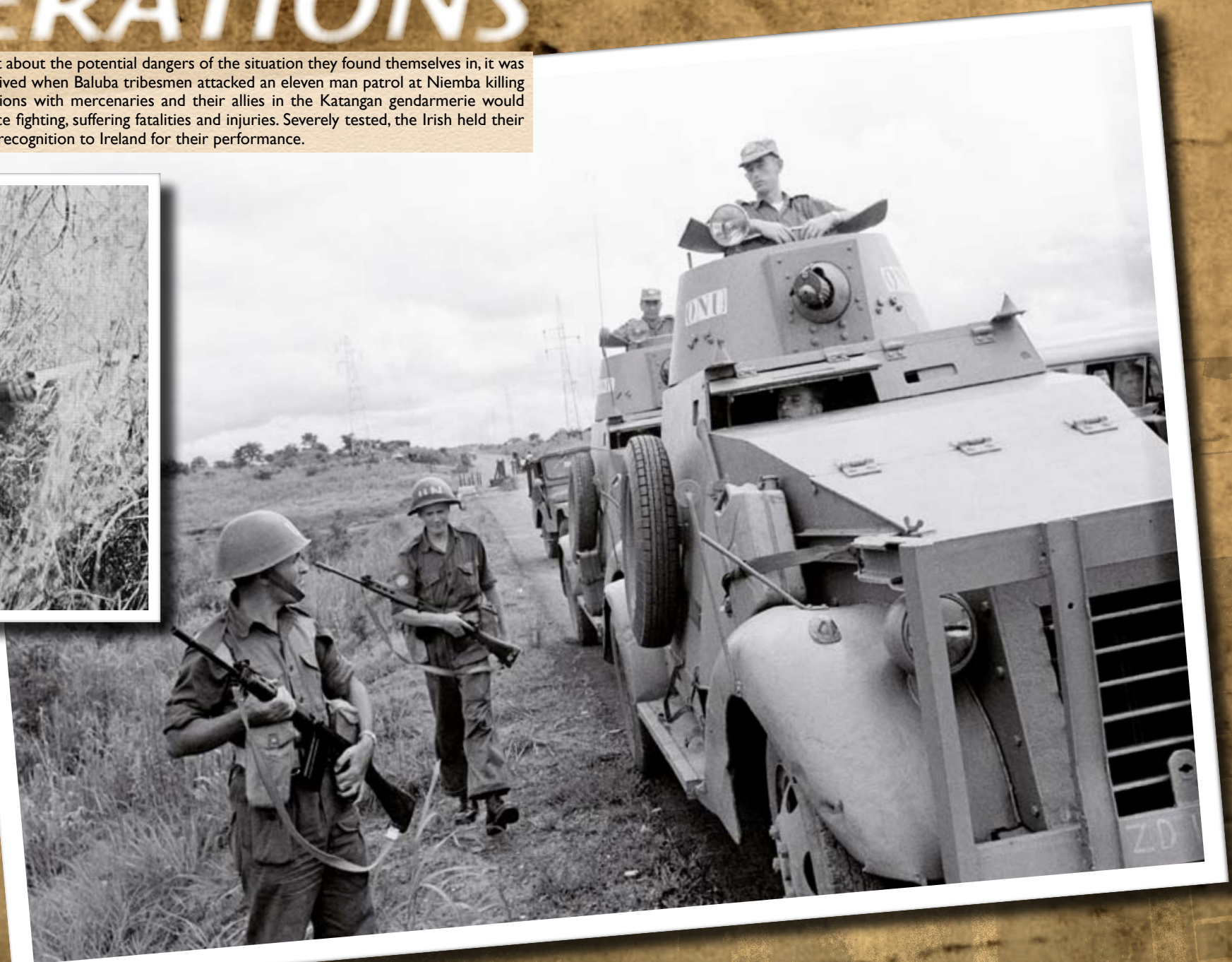
Baluba weapons
(poisoned arrows are shown wrapped in plastic)

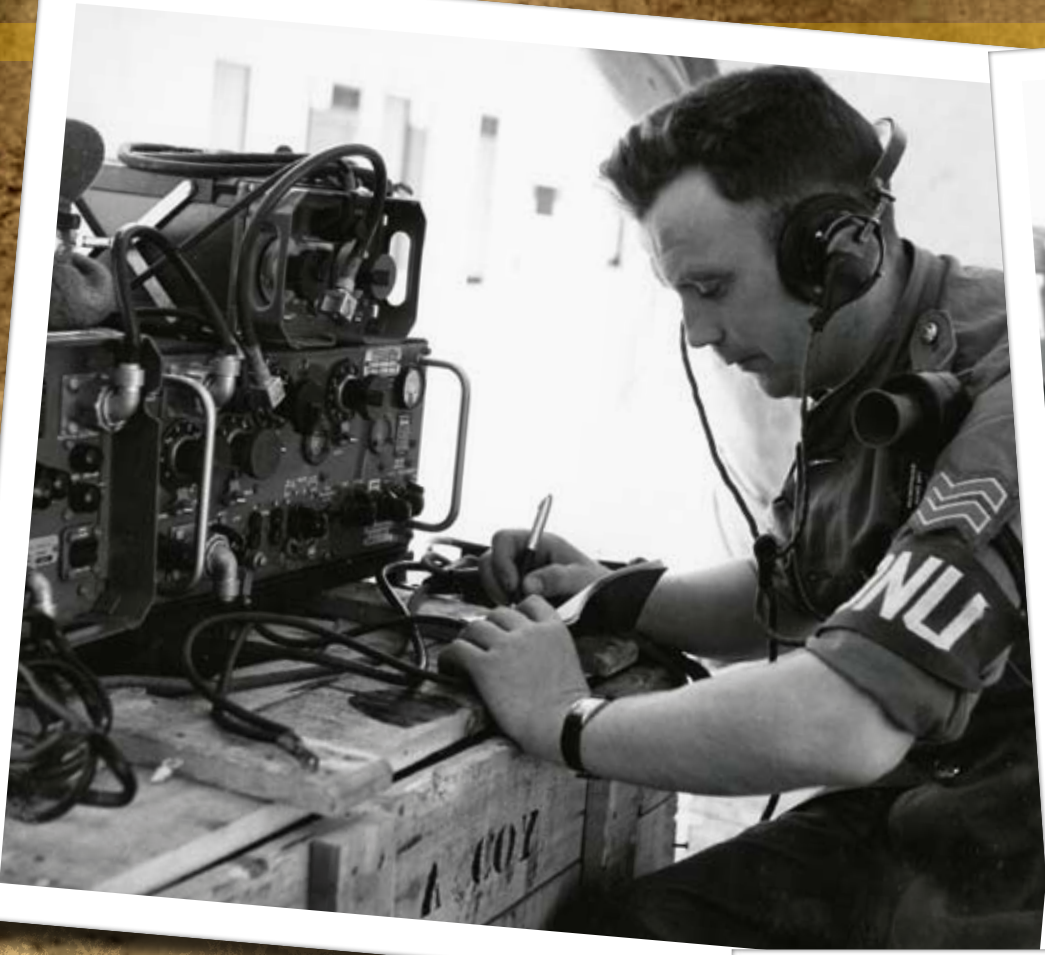


Katangan Gendarmerie were well trained, well armed and were in many cases lead by French and Belgian mercenary officers.

OPERATIONS

If the Irish were in any doubt about the potential dangers of the situation they found themselves in, it was dispelled soon after they arrived when Baluba tribesmen attacked an eleven man patrol at Niemba killing nine. Subsequent confrontations with mercenaries and their allies in the Katangan gendarmerie would see the Irish engaged in fierce fighting, suffering fatalities and injuries. Severely tested, the Irish held their ground and bravely brought recognition to Ireland for their performance.





A major contribution to the success of the United Nations' operation in Elizabethville was made by the Irish and Swedish armoured cars.

Irish troops operated the Ford Mk VI Armoured Car (left) and the Swedish SKPF M/42 Armoured Personnel Carrier (right).

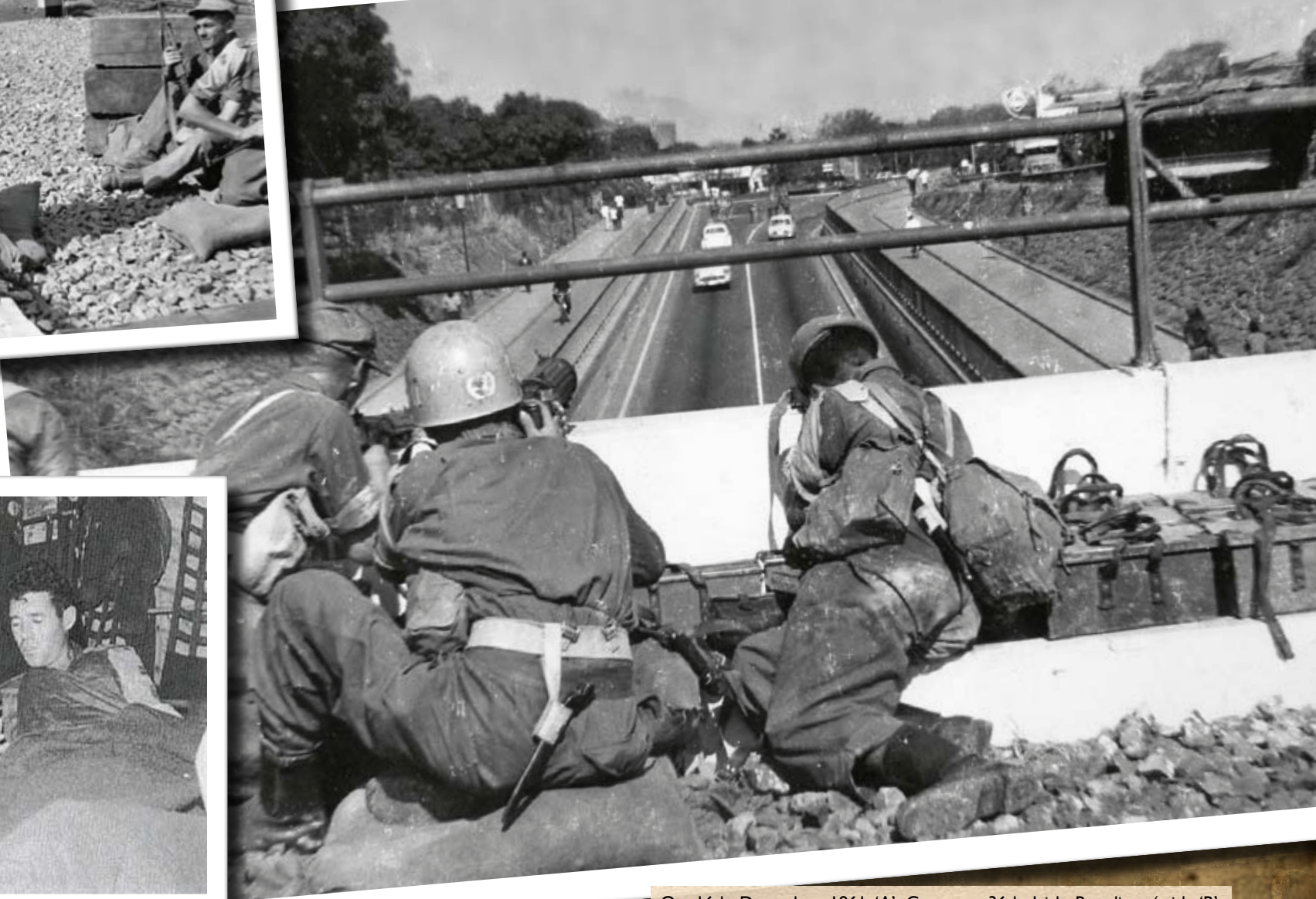
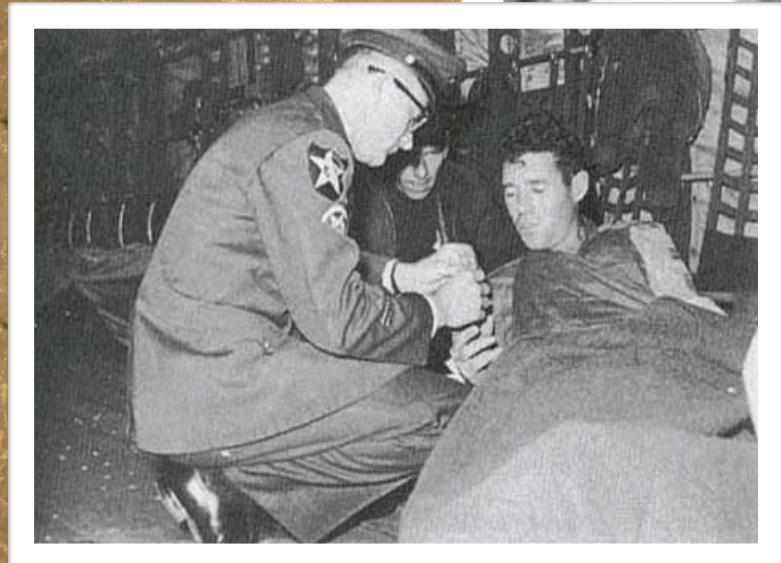




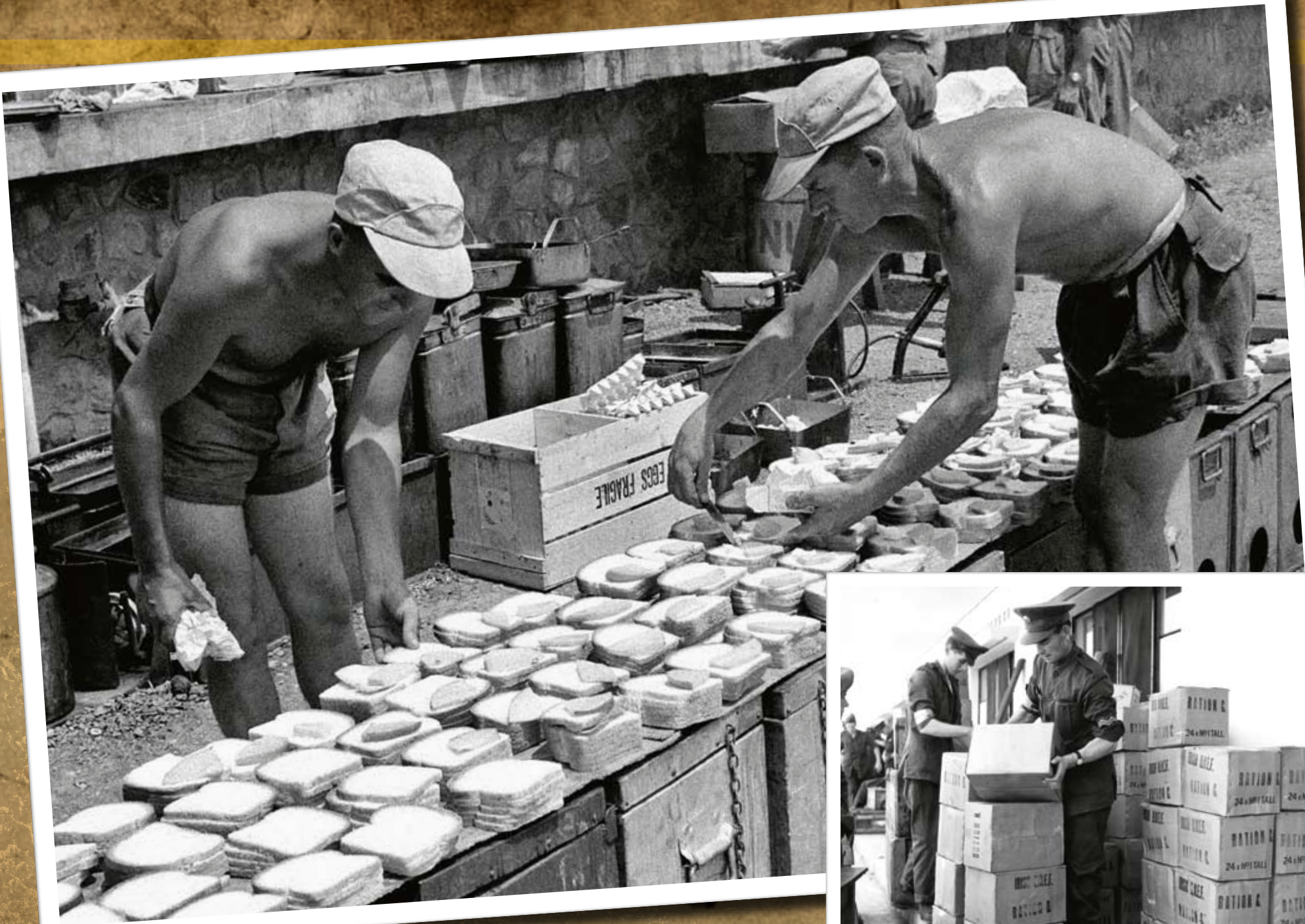


The Battle of Jadotville, a mining town in the province of Katanga, was fought over five days (13-17 September 1961) when 156 soldiers of 'A' Company 35th Battalion were attacked by more than 3,000 heavily armed mercenaries and Katangan gendarmerie. A heroic and remarkable defence saw 'A' Company inflict heavy casualties without suffering a single loss of life. Only severe shortages of ammunition, food and water brought about capture.

'THE TUNNEL'

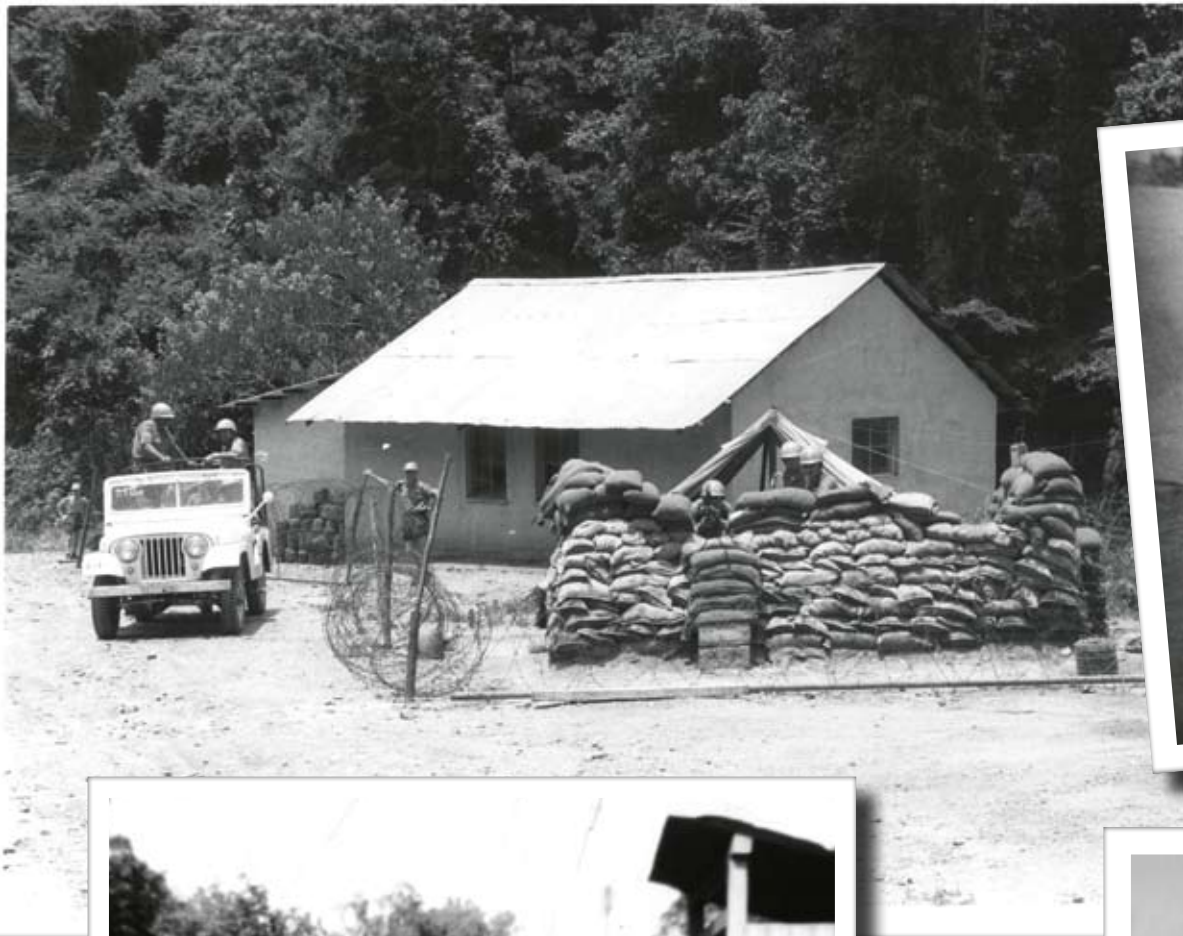


On 16th December 1961 'A' Company 36th Irish Battalion (with 'B' Company in support and 'C' Company in reserve) attacked the railway tunnel, a vital approach to Elizabethville, held by mercenaries and Katangan gendarmerie in well prepared positions. The Irish assault was successfully driven home against heavy fire with the loss of three killed.



Operational security duties also included camp guards, train guards and check points.



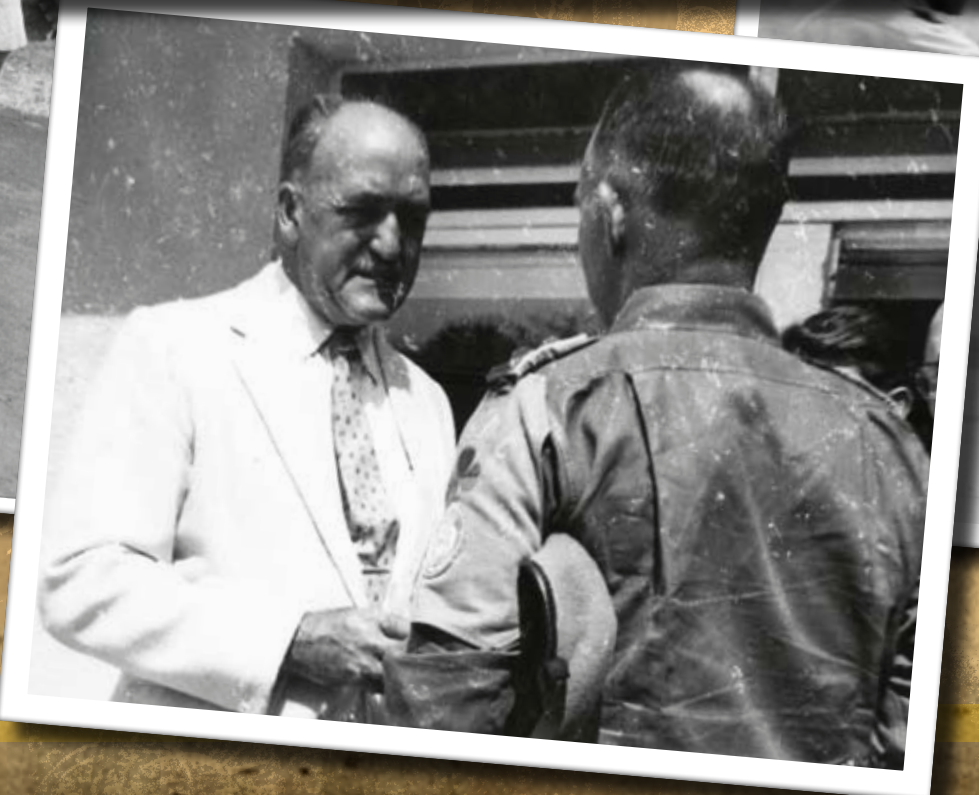


Armoured support on-call





The hosting of VIPs was another task in addition to operational demands.

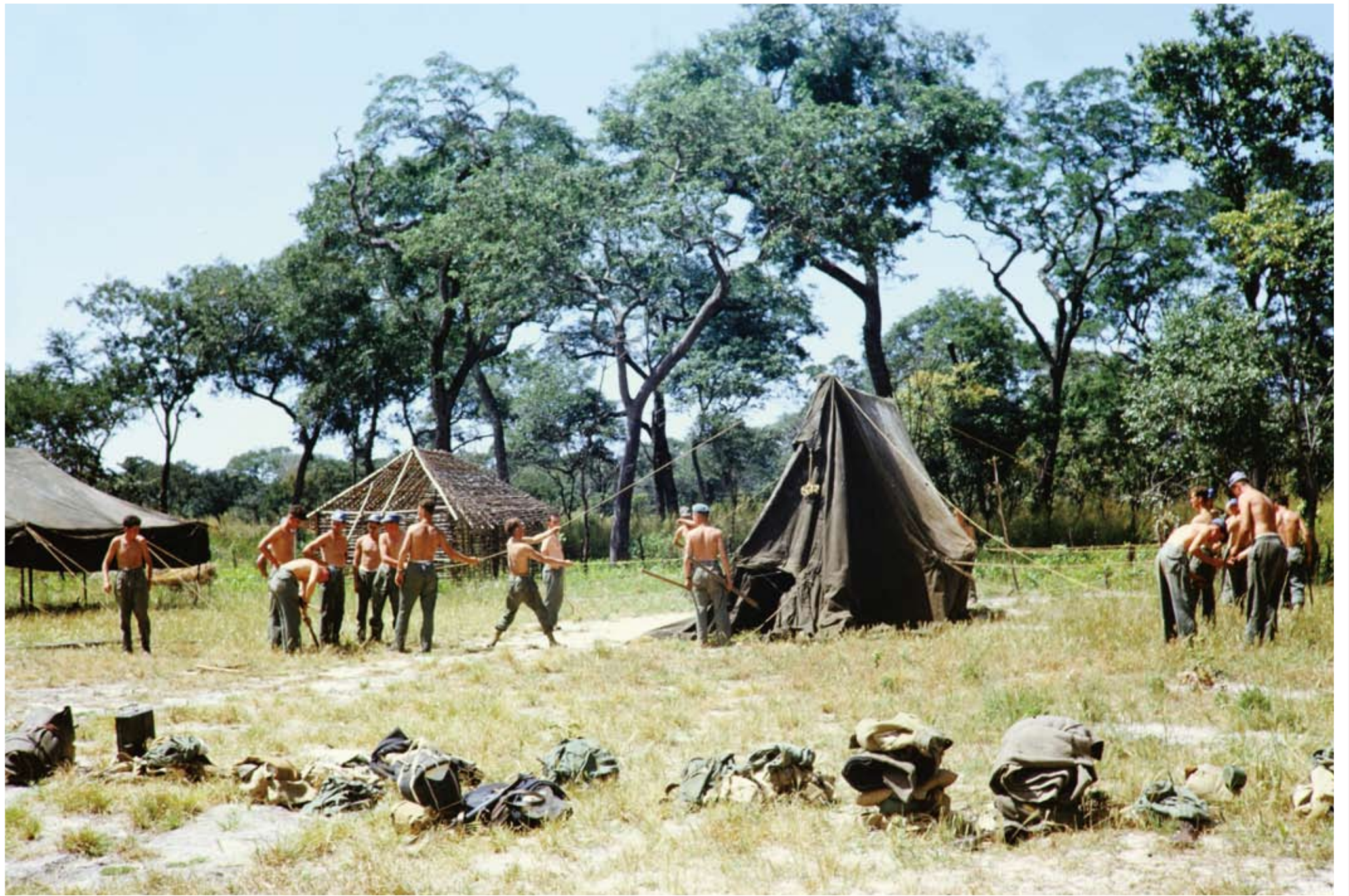




Cooks preparing 'choppy-chop' in the bush.



Luxury ablutions in a leech infested pool.



RECREATION

Opportunities for recreation were limited, but availed of whenever possible and greeted with great enthusiasm.





SACRIFICE

A total of 6,000 Irishmen served in the Congo from 1960 to 1964 and the involvement was of great benefit to the Defence Forces in terms of experience and morale. This involvement however was to see Irish soldiers engaged in fighting, suffering fatalities and injuries. 26 Irish soldiers lost their lives in all, nine died on the 8th November 1960 in one action alone, the Niamba ambush.





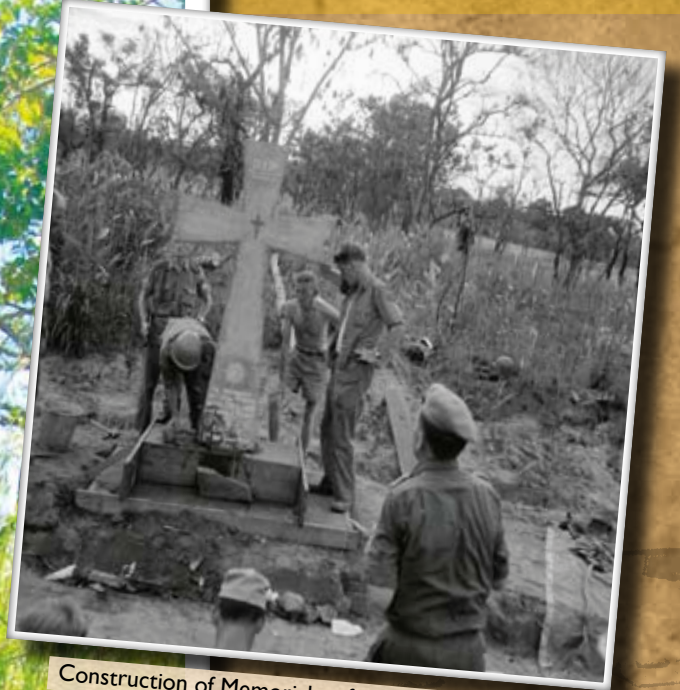
Congo casualties



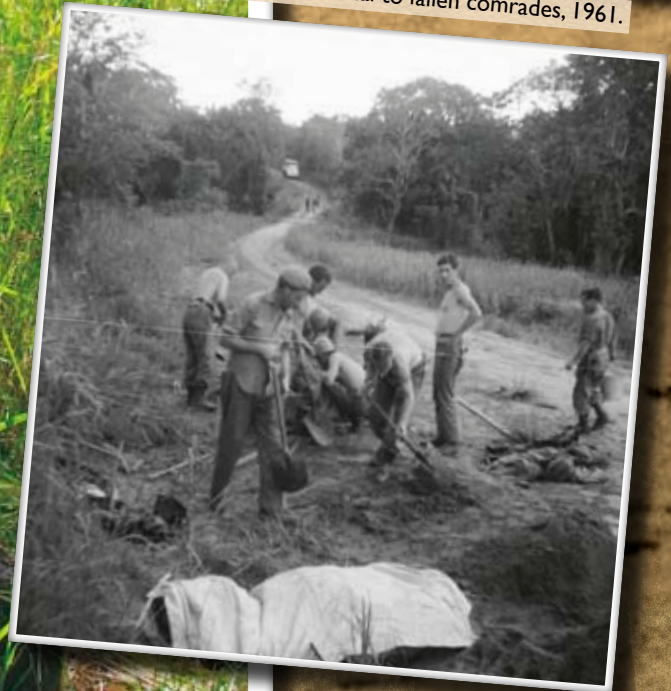
Bridge over the river Luwegege.



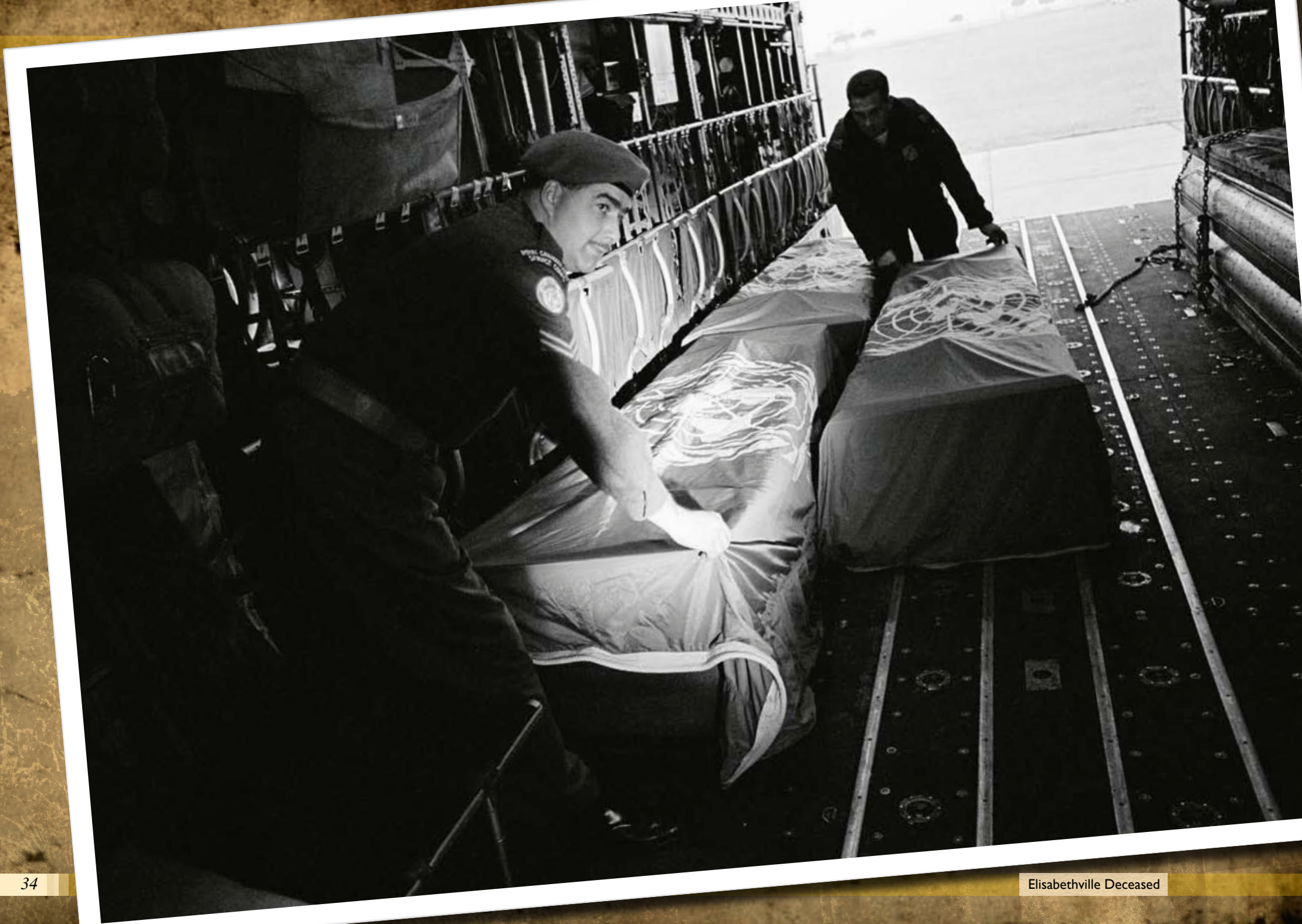
Memorial to fallen comrades
Photograph taken in 2008



Construction of Memorial to fallen comrades, 1961.









ROLL OF HONOUR

NO	RANK	NAME	O/SEAS UNIT	DATE	HOME UNIT
80322	Coy Sgt	GRANT, FELIX	33 INF BN	03 OCT 60	12 INF BN
O.4350	COL	McCARTHY, JUSTIN	HQ ONUC	27 OCT 60	HQ 4 BDE
O.7500	LT	GLEESON, KEVIN	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	2 FD COE
804359	SGT	GAYNOR, HUGH	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	2 MOT SQN
809839	CPL	KELLY, PETER	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	5 INF BN
808234	CPL	DOUGAN, LIAM	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	5 INF BN
804536	PTE	FARRELL, MATTHEW	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	2 HOSP
804548	TPR	FENNELL, THOMAS	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	2 MOT SQN
806115	TPR	BROWNE, ANTHONY BMC	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	2 MOT SQN
802900	PTE	McGUINN, MICHAEL	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	2 FD COE
810242	PTE	KILLEEN, GERARD	33 INF BN	08 NOV 60	CTD (E)
806785	PTE	DAVIS, PATRICK	33 INF BN	10 NOV 60	2 FD COE
806855	CPL	KELLY, LIAM	33 INF BN	24 DEC 60	3 INF BN
422602	CPL	KELLY, LUKE	HQ ONUC	30 AUG 61	DEP MPC
808594	TPR	GAFFNEY, EDWARD	35 INF BN	13 SEP 61	1 ACS
810552	TPR	MULLINS, PATRICK	35 INF BN	15 SEP 61	1 MOT SQN
806566	CPL	NOLAN, MICHAEL	35 INF BN	15 SEP 61	1 TNK SQN
810568	CPL	FALLON, MICHAEL	36 INF BN	08 DEC 61	5 INF BN
87410	SGT	MULCAHY, PATRICK	36 INF BN	16 DEC 61	6 FAR
812054	PTE	WICKHAM, ANDREW	36 INF BN	16 DEC 61	2 INF BN
O.7776	LT	RIORDAN, PATRICK BSD	36 INF BN	16 DEC 61	5 INF BN
87602	CPL	GEOGHEGAN, JOHN	36 INF BN	28 DEC 61	15 INF BN
811849	CPL	POWER, JOHN	36 INF BN	07 MAR 62	CTD (E)
O.6769	CAPT	McCANN, RONALD	HQ ONUC	09 MAY 62	CTD (W)
80453	CPL	McGRATH, JOHN	38 INF BN	21 MAR 63	4 HOSP COY
O.6536	COMDT	McMAHON, THOMAS	HQ ONUC	28 SEP 63	HQ W



LEGACY

“In the 40 years in which the world has been working together on peacekeeping, the only country in the world which has never taken a single, solitary day off from the cause of world peace to the United Nations peacekeeping operations is Ireland”
President Bill Clinton 1998



**CYPRUS
(UNFICYP)**



**SINAI
(UNEF II)**



**LEBANON
(UNIFIL)**



**SOMALIA
(UNOSOM II)**



**LIBERIA
(UNMIL)**



**ERITREA
(UNMEE)**



**EAST TIMOR
(UNAMET)**



KFOR



NORDIC BATTLE GROUP



**CHAD
(EUFOR Chad/CAR)**



MEDALS AWARDED



AN BONN MÍLEATA CALMACHTA LE DEARSCNACHT THE MILITARY MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY WITH DISTINCTION

806115 Trooper Anthony Browne



AN BONN SEIRBHÍSE DEARSCNA LE HOHÓIR THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL WITH HONOUR

O.4427 Lieutenant-General John McKeown
O.5165 Commandant Kevin Nunan
O.6510 Captain Arthur Magennis
81244 Corporal Charles Connolly



AN BONN SEIRBHÍSE DEARSCNA LE DEARSCNACHT THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL WITH DISTINCTION

O.4530 Colonel Justin McCarthy
O.4938 Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Barry
O.4484 Lieutenant Colonel Michael Hogan
O.6580 Commandant Gníomhach Columba Browne
O.6378 Commandant Joseph Fitzpatrick
O.7107 Commandant James Flynn
O.7275 Captain Thomas Boyle
O.7168 Captain James Lavery
O.7422 Captain Roger McCorley
O.7806 Captain John Norton
O.7280 Captain Michael Purfield
O.7668 Captain Thomas Quinlan
O.7887 Lieutenant Peter Feely
O.7857 Lieutenant Anthony Murphy
O.7776 Lieutenant Patrick Riordan
87182 Sergeant-Major Patrick Norris
415646 Company Sergeant Daniel Carroll
801545 Company Sergeant Walter Hegarty
82684 Company Sergeant William McLoughlin
802236 Company Quartermaster Sergeant James Cotter
804718 Sergeant Alfred Johnston
76595 Sergeant John Quirke
801232 Sergeant Michael Rowland
92754 Sergeant George Shaughnessy
81154 Corporal William Allen
810957 Corporal Gerald Francis
805463 Corporal John Kavanagh
808720 Corporal Patrick Gregan
807531 Corporal Michael O'Sullivan
801763 Private Anthony Connolly

MEDALS AWARDED



ÓGLAIGH NA HÉIREANN



AN BONN SEIRBHÍSE DEARSCNA LE TUILLTEAHAS

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL WITH MERIT

- 80322 Company Sergeant Felix Grant
- 113797 Company Sergeant Christopher Walsh
- 805446 Sergeant William Whelan
- 809456 Sergeant John Ryan
- 94557 Sergeant William O'Sullivan
- 804643 Sergeant James McCafferty
- 87410 Sergeant Patrick Mulcahy
- 809418 Sergeant Daniel Mannix
- 415968 Sergeant Patrick Hayes
- 75746 Sergeant William Hartley
- 75481 Sergeant John Daly
- 92680 Sergeant Richard Connolly
- 86572 Sergeant Joseph Cashman
- 86649 Sergeant Daniel Ahern
- 86692 Sergeant John O'Reilly
- 424442 Sergeant Thomas McGuire
- 93854 Sergeant Patrick McCormack
- 806492 Corporal Aiden Doyle
- 803838 Corporal John Keenan
- 806540 Corporal Anthony Woodcock
- 78324 Corporal Francis O'Neill
- 804396 Corporal Edward Nolan
- 808612 Corporal John Kealy
- 809084 Corporal James Feery
- 808427 Corporal James Fallon
- 96057 Private Patrick Wall
- 806014 Private James Murray
- 78854 Private Peter Madigan
- 78361 Private Christopher Doolan
- 90811 Private John Clarke
- 811638 Signalmán John Murray

UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN THE CONGO

(The acronym derives from the French, Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo)



ONUC 1960-1963

The First Medal awarded to personnel serving in the Belgian Congo was the same as the UNTSO Medal with a Clasp pinned in the centre of the Ribbon with the inscription 'CONGO'.



ONUC 1963-1964

In 1963 it was decided that a distinctive ribbon should be issued. The ribbon subsequently awarded carries a broad centre band of green, symbolic of hope that was thought to be appropriate for a young nation, and also to represent the Congo Basin. The centre band is flanked by two narrow white bands, representing the UN Mission and at either end are two bars of UN blue.

CONTRIBUTORS

The editors wish to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals and organisations:

Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin.
(Official photographs and private collections)

United Nations - www.unmultimedia.org

National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks - Mr Lar Joye

Tallaght Library - www.southdublinimages.ie

An Cosantoir photograph collection.

Defence Forces Public Relations Section

Defence Forces Library and Information Centre, Curragh

Flt Sgt Matt McNamara - www.curragh.info

Dr. D'Lynn Waldron, FRGS - www.dlwaldron.com

Airman Archie Rayside collection

Paddy Walshe - Photo Processing www.phopro.ie

Ms Barbara Geraghty private collection

Comdt Pat Power

Lt Col Harrington (retd)

Capt Noel Carey (retd)

John Gorman

DEFENCE FORCES OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS 1958 - 2010



