

# Evening Echo

Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1988

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## Prominent Irish role in a 'Nobel' force.

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THE award to the United Nations peacekeeping forces of the Nobel Peace Prize for 1988, announced last month, struck a chord of irony among many people, not least those who served with the UN and the relatives of those who died while serving with them.

The Irish Army have, of course, played a valuable role within the UN in various World hotspots since their first "active" peace-keeping duties in the Lebanon in June 1958 with UNTSO (the U.N. Truce Supervisory Organisation) when 50 observers served in what was then and indeed still is, one of the most volatile areas in recent history.

When the UN Secretary General, Javier Peres de Quiller, steps up to receive the Nobel award later this year in Stockholm, his act will mean more to many more people than any other peace prize has done, given the scope and breadth of the United Nations' involvement in so wide a variety of situations and 'hot-spots' throughout the globe since the '50s.

For many of the Irish people, who through their association with our army have served or have had family serve with UN forces, much of the irony for them in the actual award of the prize will lie in the fact that friends or relatives lost their lives acting out a peacekeeping role.

The coincidence that this comes some 30 years after our first attachment with UN forces will not be lost on many either, but for one family ; perhaps the announcement of the award of the Nobel Prize came at a time which, for them; still bears many scars.

On September 27, 1982, Comdt. Michael Nestor was an Irish Army observer with UNTSO, based in the South Lebanon town of Naqoura. While travelling east of the Lebanese capital with three colleagues, two American majors and a Finnish captain, at 4.07 p.m. that afternoon their Landrover drove over a landmine and all four men died instantly.

A 36-year-old father of three and son of another Army commandant, Ambrose Nestor, Comdt. Michael Nestor was a career officer who had a particular yen to serve with the UN and this was his second posting within the overall peacekeeping framework.

Having joined the army as a Cadet in 1964, he attended UCD and was commissioned in 1966 and based at the Curragh Command. His first UN posting was with the UN and this was with the Irish 13th Infantry Group in Cyprus, spending from September 1968 to April 1970 there.

At the time of his Comdt. Nestor had spent some eighteen months at the UNIFIL HQ at Naqoura and had just been transferred, along with 40 other UNTSO personnel, to Beirut in the aftermath of the massacres by Israeli backed gunmen at the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in the Lebanese capital. Their task was to bolster the existing corps of men in the strife-torn city and to report to the UN on what exactly was happening there.

When he died, accompanied by Major R. Carlsen and Major H. Warren (USA) and Capt. K. Lasonen, all four men were unarmed. While the UN did undertake a full inquiry into the deaths and a report was made to the Dept. of Defence here, its contents were never made public.

Comdt. Nestor's family lived in Cork for many years at the Silverdale estate in Ballinlough, although his parents later moved to Dublin. One of his brothers, Colum, still lives in Carrigaline.

It was for, in many regards, the sacrifices made by the likes of Comdt. Nestor and his. colleagues on that bleak day in the village of Zua Dukhah that the Nobel, Peace Prize has come to be given to the soldiers' from the many countries which make up the UN peacekeeping forces.

Many people may remember other incidents in which Irish soldiers' died on active U.N. service, particularly perhaps the nine who were killed in the awful Niemba ambush in the Congo in the early sixties, but there have been many other' Irish deaths in the course of the peacekeeping role which has seen the UN intervene in places such as the Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Egypt, Cyprus, the Congo, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.

Upwards of 25,000 soldiers from Ireland have served with the UN forces in these places in the 30 years of our involvement and the coincidence between the anniversary and the awarding of the Nobel Prize will not be lost on them all.

Neither will be the irony of the coincidence in what was the sixth anniversary of his death and the announcement from Sweden be lost on the family of Comdt. Michael Nestor. RIP.



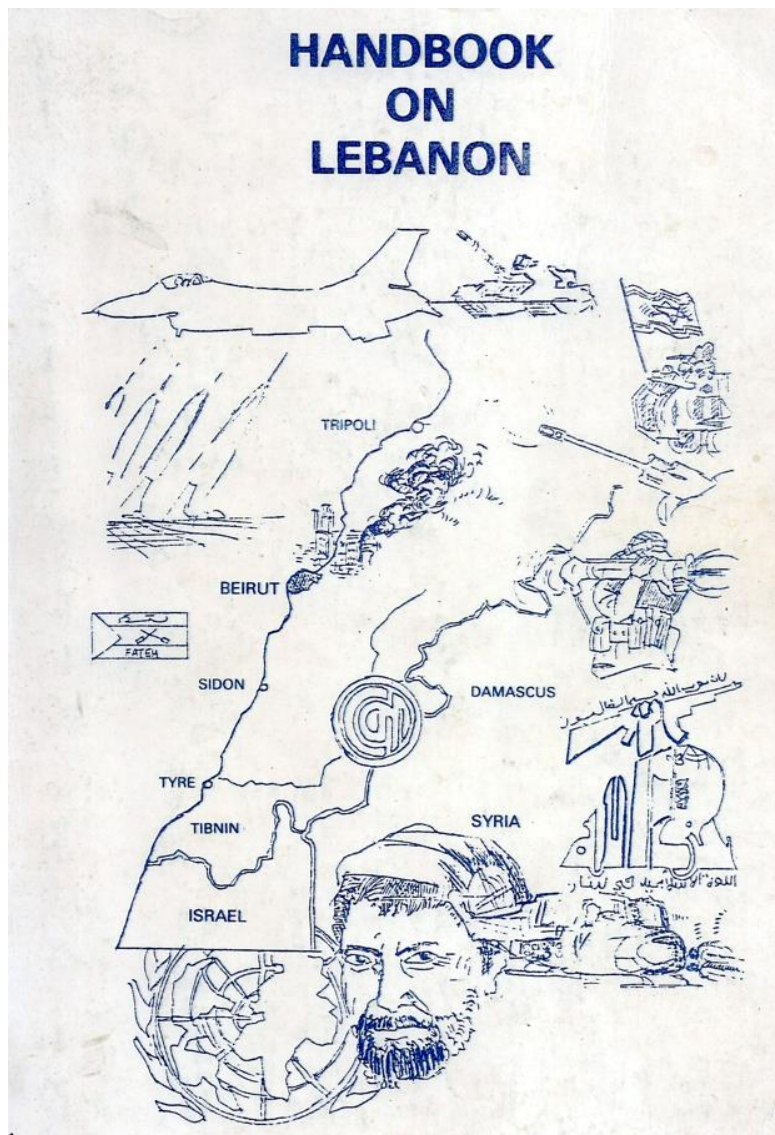
## Irish Defence Forces Roll Of HONOUR



O.8181 Comdt Nestor Michael UNTSO 25 September 1982 Mil Col



**Comdt. Michael Nestor  
(RIP)**



**Defence Forces Publication  
September 1987**

**Irish Independent, Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1989**

IRISH troops who have served with the UN peacekeeping forces are to be honoured by the Government for their work abroad over the last 30 years, writes Anne O'Loughlin.

At a ceremony in Collins' Barracks, Dublin, yesterday, Defence Minister, Tanaiste Brian Lenihan awarded a special service medal to 70 soldiers from all sections of the Defence Forces. In the coming year, the medal is to be presented to more than 30,000 members of the forces who have volunteered for duty abroad since the first observers were sent to the Lebanon in 1958.

Mr. Lenihan said the Government had decided to record its appreciation of "the courage, diplomacy, dedication and professionalism displayed by the many thousands of Irish troops who had served with UN peacekeeping forces."

The UN Peacekeepers Medal displays the traditional figure of Eire standing on a shoreline and releasing a dove of peace into the sky.

**AN BONN CHOSANTÓIRÍ SÍOCHÁNA NA NÁISIÚN AONTAITHE**  
**The United Nations Peacekeepers Medal**



**Medal Award:**

In 1989, a medal to be known as "An Bonn Chosantóirí Síochána na Náisiún Aontaithe" or, in English, "The UN Peacekeepers Medal", was introduced. It may be awarded to a member or former member of the Permanent Defence Force or to a member or former member of the Chaplaincy Service who qualifies or has qualified for the award of a medal in respect of service with a United Nations mission or a United Nations mandated mission and who is otherwise eligible for the award of the UN Peacekeepers Medal.