

Army spent €3million on wrong helicopters

BY COLM KELPIE

A TOP civil servant yesterday rejected claims the Defence Forces was a Dad's Army after military chiefs ordered the wrong helicopters for peacekeeping in Chad.

The Department of Defence accepted the embarrassing blunder but claimed senior soldiers were under pressure and signed-off on the €3million deal in a rush.

It was three months before inspectors discovered the aircraft could not carry troops, only cargo.

Tommy Broughan, Labour's transport spokesman, said: 'We seem to have had a number of issues like that... Would it be fair to say that there is a general problem, that the equipment that we give our troops and our naval personal and air personnel, it tends to be very antique?'

'It's almost like a Dad's Army situation in terms of 30-year-old vessels, allegedly with holes in the hulls of a number of them, this problem we've had about choppers.'

'We always seem to be chasing the ball game,' he added.

But Michael Howard, secretary general at the Department of Defence, hit back and told the Dáil Public Accounts Committee other countries taking part in peacekeeping missions were envious of some of the equipment used by the Defence Forces.

ON YER BIKE



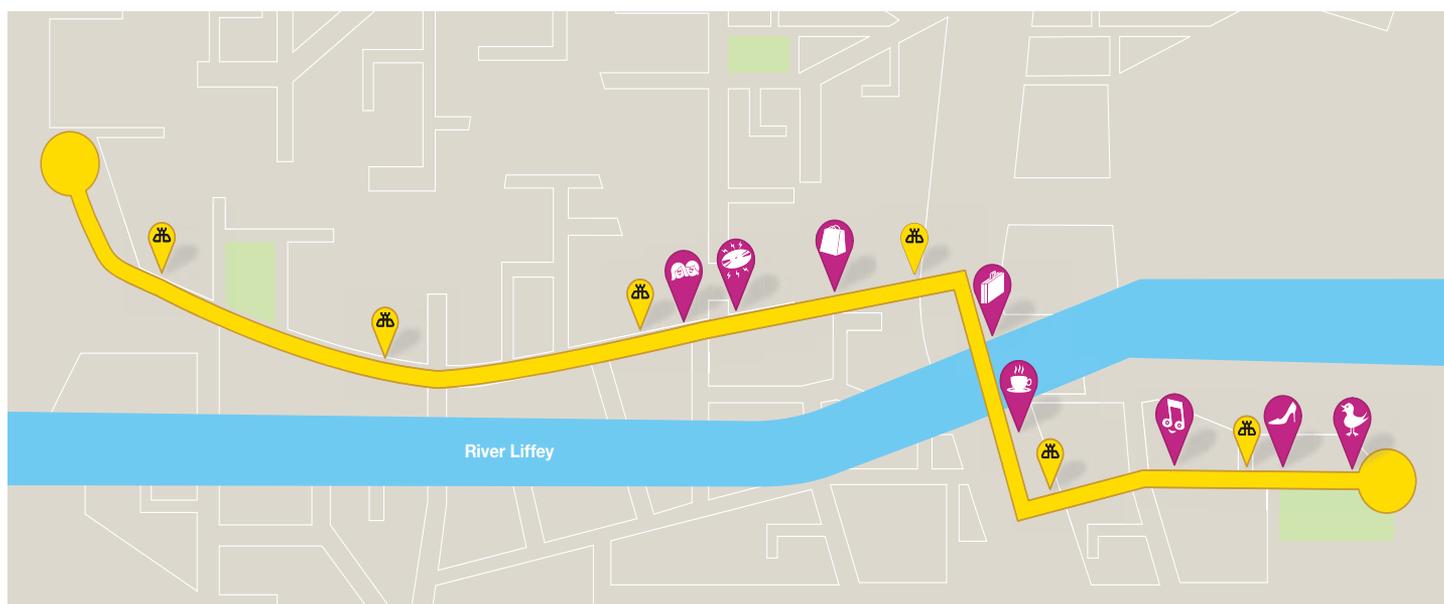
Students from Our Lady of Victories National School in Ballymun at DCU's Fusion Expo, a mobile exhibition designed to promote awareness in fusion and sustainable energy technology Picture: Marc O'Sullivan

Bookies to create 250 new jobs

BOOKMAKER Paddy Power is to create 250 jobs as it expands further into the international betting market, it announced yesterday. Some 50 new positions will open up at its Tallaght operation next summer after the company secured a five-year deal with French state-controlled horseracing betting system PMU. PMU is the largest betting organisation in Europe, with a €9.3billion turnover last year. Paddy Power bosses also pledged another 200 high-end jobs at the south Dublin headquarters by 2013. Taoiseach Brian Cowen paid tribute to Paddy Power, claiming the PMU partnership revealed the Irish bookmaker's world-class expertise.

Ice sheet 'melting at increased rate'

A NEW study of the Greenland ice sheet suggests it is melting at an accelerating rate. British scientists used two different techniques to measure the ice cap's loss. Both indicated that shrinkage of the ice sheet had been speeding up since the 1990s. The new research showed it lost 1,500 gigatonnes of mass between 2000 and 2008. However, between 2006 and 2008 the rate of loss had increased dramatically. The vast Greenland ice sheet contains enough water to raise global sea levels by up to seven metres.



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