**Scott Medal Ceremony**

**Dublin Castle**

**Friday, September 24th 2021**

Minister, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

Today we come here to honour 15 members of An Garda Síochána who demonstrated their great courage and bravery.

And it is my proud privilege to award the Scott Medal to each of these Gardaí.

I am especially glad to see those of you who could join us to recognise you in person, and there are those we honour today, who are sadly departed but we must never forget. And I am very pleased to also welcome the family of Private Patrick Kelly and Mr. Don Tidey.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of the families who are here with us – for they share a special part of these awards.

It is you who has been there to support them on the most demanding days in their career in An Garda Síochána.

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Historically, policing is known to be a challenging profession.

Our most basic duties and responsibilities allow society to live in safety, and free from violence and crime.

This work can often be silent and go by unheralded.

Then occasionally it requires Gardaí to make difficult life or death decisions in a split second, and put themselves directly in harm’s way to protect others.

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Our organsiation is made up of exceptionally motivated and competent individuals at all ranks.

And that is why you could be counted on in December 1983.

When each of you were called upon at a time of danger, you stepped up and responded.

It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear but action in the face of it.

And I am strongly convinced that this is intrinsically linked to a person’s sense of duty.

It is likely that this resilience is one of the things that motivated you to join An Garda Síochána all those years ago.

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The obvious danger and complexities involved in the operation at Dromcroman Wood in mid-December 1983 cannot be overstated.

You were involved in a heavy exchange of gunfire and were directly shot at.

Exposed to terrifying situations involving very dangerous armed suspects.

And faced enormous personal risk to life in the execution of your duties to rescue Mr. Don Tidey who had been kidnapped some 23 days previously.

We sadly know of the real extent of this risk through the tragic death of Garda Gary Sheehan.

Garda Sheehan made the ultimate sacrifice of giving his life in the line of duty to ensure that Mr. Tidey was brought to safety from captivity that day.

So while one family were given the safe return of their loved one, another was torn apart.

A very young, new recruit who followed both his father and grandfather in their service to the State through An Garda Síochána.

Garda Sheehan had been in his career just three months before he was needlessly killed.

And that is very hard to comprehend.

We remember too, Private Patrick Kelly who also lost his life during this An Garda Síochána and Defence Forces joint operation.

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In all of your actions during this search operation you strove to protect the life of Mr. Don Tidey and the lives of your fellow Gardaí.

Each one of you demonstrated outstanding bravery and physical courage.

And both bravery and courage involve so much more than we can know.

Yes, it is knowingly facing danger, but it is also knowing when and how to act to deliver a positive policing and societal outcome.

And the dedication to duty and bravery you demonstrated on 16 December 1983 remains an example to all of us who continue to serve.

And that kind of skill is required in our work today more than ever.

And on behalf of An Garda Síochána, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to you all for your service.

Thank you.