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# NEWSLETTER

## INDEPENDENT SENATOR GERARD CRAUGHWELL



**1. THE BLUE LIGHT AWARDS, Honouring Heroes Across the UK & Ireland** at the Crowne Plaza Belfast is bringing together frontline professionals, community leaders, and distinguished guests for an evening dedicated to honouring exceptional service.

Throughout the evening, Senator Craughwell engaged with award nominees, listened to stories of extraordinary dedication, and expressed their admiration for the individuals and teams who continue to safeguard communities across Northern Ireland and the Republic. Everyone's participation highlighted a shared commitment to strengthening support for frontline workers and ensuring their contributions receive the recognition they deserve.

Thursday 26th February 2026

25th February 2026

**2. Senator Craughwell Attends Maritime Security Strategy Launch.** The Minister for Defence Helen McEntee TD cordially invites Senator Gerard Craughwell to the launch of the National Maritime Security Strategy At 09:00 on board LÉ Samuel Beckett, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin.

The strategy sets out a unified national approach to protecting Ireland's maritime domain - from physical risks to emerging cyber threats.

It marks a significant shift: Ireland is now formally coordinating how government, defence, and industry safeguard critical maritime infrastructure, trade routes, and coastal assets. The senator welcomed the move as a necessary step in strengthening national resilience at a time of growing geopolitical and security pressures.



WINTER ED. 2026

### 3. Senator Highlights UCD Ukraine **Trauma Project** in Commencement Matters.

Senator Craughwell pressed the case for the UCD Ukraine Trauma Project, highlighting its frontline work training Ukrainian providers in the advanced management of severe bleeding - including the early use of tranexamic acid (TXA), a treatment that can reduce mortality by 10–25% but remains largely unavailable in Ukraine.

Following the debate, Professor Gerard Bury, Emeritus Professor at the UCD School of Medicine, thanked the senator for “outstanding work on our behalf in Seanad Éireann,” praising the “impressive passion and clarity” brought to the case and noting that Minister McEntee’s positive response reflected the strength of the argument made. He expressed hope that this will lead to direct engagement from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

UTP plans two missions in 2026, delivering training and equipment to 300 more providers across six two-day courses. The projected cost is €558,000, with a detailed submission already lodged with DFA. Professor Bury also acknowledged the support of the Irish public, the HSE, and the Irish Red Cross, whose contributions through UCD Foundation have enabled the project’s work so far.



### 4. A Moment of Momentum at Hack the Isles, Saturday 21 February 2026 at Campbell College, Belfast.

This year’s Hack the Isles summit - the flagship event of the CyberSpark programme - marked a clear step forward for the island’s cybersecurity ambitions. CyberSpark has always aimed to build world-class capability across Northern Ireland, the UK, and the Republic of Ireland, and this week showed exactly why that vision is gaining momentum.



Senator Craughwell’s participation highlighted a growing political recognition that cyber security is now a strategic priority, central to economic resilience and cross-border cooperation. Speaking to engineers, founders, researchers, and students, the senator stressed the need for long-term investment in innovation ecosystems and noted how initiatives like Hack the Isles turn shared challenges into shared opportunities.

Their presence underscored a broader shift: cyber capability is becoming a cornerstone of modern prosperity. As the region positions itself as a global hub for secure digital innovation, collaboration between policymakers, industry, and academia will be essential - and Hack the Isles is emerging as a rare space where those groups come together with purpose.

With each passing year, the event grows in influence, and the momentum behind CyberSpark’s mission feels stronger than ever.

### 5. The Joint Committee on Defence and National Security conducted an official visit to the Air Corps Headquarters @ Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell Co. Dublin on Thursday 19 February 2026.

The delegation met senior Defence Forces personnel for briefings on current operational capabilities, recruitment challenges, and ongoing modernisation programmes within the Air Corps.

Committee representatives said the visit provided valuable insight into the strategic importance of the Air Corps and the investment required to sustain Ireland’s aviation-based defence capabilities. This type of visit typically underscores the Oireachtas’ role in ensuring the Defence Forces are adequately resourced and strategically aligned with Ireland’s security needs.







6. On Behalf of the Minister for Defence Ms. Helen McEntee, T.D., The Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, Lieutenant General Rossa Mulcahy requested the pleasure of Independent Senator Gerard Craughwell at **the Presentation of Distinguished Service Medals** to Private Dylan Geraghty, Corporal Daniel Padden, Father Paul Murphy, and Private Ciara Shanahan in Renmore, Barracks, Galway, On Thursday 12 February 2026 at 1000hrs.

This formal occasion recognised exceptional commitment, professionalism, and service to the State. The Senator was honoured to have been invited to witness the presentation of these awards and to join in acknowledging the exemplary contributions of the recipients.



Photo: Óglaigh na hÉireann / Irish Defence Forces

7. Senator Craughwell attends University of Galway President's Welcome Reception for the **EQUIS PRV**, Tue 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2026.

EQUIS (EFMD Quality Improvement System) is a globally recognised accreditation system for business schools, managed by the EFMD.

It is one of the world's most prestigious international accreditations for business and management education. EQUIS assesses institutions across a wide range of areas, including Governance, strategy, and resources; degree programmes and student experience; research and thought leadership; internationalisation; ethics, responsibility and sustainability; engagement with practice.

A defining feature of EQUIS is its strong focus on how effectively a business school connects with business, public sector, and community partners regionally, nationally and internationally.



8. Strengthening Ireland's Offshore Innovation: Senator Meets **Subsea Micropiles** Leadership

A recent meeting between Senator Craughwell and the leadership team at Subsea Micropiles marked an important step toward deepening political engagement with Ireland's growing offshore engineering and marine-technology sector. On 3 of February 2026, Senator Craughwell met with the company's CEO Derek Robertson and business partner Andrew Parish to discuss how policymakers can play a more active role in supporting emerging subsea infrastructure solutions and the wider blue-economy ecosystem.



Subsea Micropiles outlined the significant potential their technology holds for Ireland - from enabling more resilient offshore renewable projects to supporting coastal protection and marine research initiatives. The conversation focused on how political representatives can help accelerate innovation by championing strategic funding, fostering collaboration across industry and government, and ensuring Ireland remains competitive in a rapidly evolving global market.

Both sides expressed enthusiasm for continued dialogue. The meeting highlighted a shared commitment to advancing Ireland's offshore capabilities and unlocking new opportunities for sustainable growth.



9. Senator Craughwell attends "**Irish National Security in a Changing World**" Forum on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2026, prepared by Barry Andrews MEP and researched by Cathal Berry, Renew Europe.

The Senator's participation in Irish National Security in a Changing World brought political leadership directly into one of the country's most important strategic conversations. The event gathered defence specialists, cybersecurity leaders, academics, and policymakers to examine how Ireland can safeguard its national interests amid rapidly shifting global

Discussions highlighted the reality that Ireland's security challenges now extend far beyond traditional defence concerns. Cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, vulnerabilities in subsea communications cables, geopolitical instability in Europe, and the accelerating pace of technological change all demand a more coordinated national response. Senator Craughwell engaged with experts on how Ireland can strengthen resilience across government, industry, and civil society - recognising that modern security is as much about protecting data, energy systems, and public trust as it is about physical defence.

The Senator's presence underscored a growing political recognition that Ireland must evolve its security posture. By participating in these conversations, Senator Craughwell signalled support for evidence-based policy development, deeper collaboration with technical experts, and a long-term approach to national preparedness. The event served as a reminder that safeguarding Ireland's future will require not only investment and innovation, but also sustained political attention and cross-sector partnership.



10. Between 7<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> of January, Senator Craughwell visit to the Stripe Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition, gained even more significance this year, 2026, thanks to the remarkable achievement of overall winner Aoibheann Daly, a 15-year-old student from Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk in Tralee. Her project, GlioScope - an AI-driven tool designed to help doctors predict genetic mutations in brain tumours using MRI scans - earned the top honour for its potential to reduce reliance on invasive biopsies.

The senator spent time engaging with students across the floor, but Aoibheann's work drew particular attention, symbolising the exhibition's power to elevate youth-led innovation into the national spotlight. Their presence underscored how events like this connect policy, education, and scientific ambition, creating a space where young researchers can influence the country's future direction in technology and healthcare. It felt like a moment where emerging scientific talent and public leadership met with purpose.



11. Senator Craughwell attends Interparliamentary Committee Meeting with the European Parliament's Committee on Security and Defence (**SEDE**) on the future of European Defence in Brussels, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2025.

This was the first-ever Inter-Parliamentary Committee Meeting on European Defence, marking a milestone in parliamentary dialogue across the Union. Delegations included EU national parliaments and Ukraine's Committee on National Security, Defence and Intelligence, underscoring solidarity with Ukraine during a critical moment. Discussions centred on Europe's defence readiness, joint procurement, military training initiatives, and resilience against hybrid threats. Contributions came from Commissioner Andrius Kubilius (Defence and Space) and Admiral Pierre Vandier, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander. Strategic reports have SEDE presented its European Defence Readiness 2030 assessment, outlining capability gaps and cooperative pathways.



12. On 2/12/2025, the President of Ukraine, H.E. Volodymyr Oleksandrovych Zelenskyy addressed a Joint Sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas in Historic Visit. The sitting commenced with opening remarks by the Ceann Comhairle, Verona Murphy, TD and concluded with remarks by the Senator Mark Daly, Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann.

President Zelenskyy's words were met with standing ovations, symbolizing Ireland's continued support for Ukraine and its people. The occasion underscored Ireland's solidarity with Ukraine amid ongoing conflict and highlighted the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening international ties.

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