



11<sup>th</sup> October, 2019

Brigadier-General Paul Pakenham (Retd)  
President  
Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

**Association of Retired Commissioned Officers 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception**

Dear Paul,

As Minister with Responsibility for Defence, I wish to heartily congratulate the Association of Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO) on your 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Unfortunately, I must apologise that I am unable to be with you at the reception tonight. I am presently in Lebanon visiting our troops serving with UNIFIL where many of you have served with distinction in the past.

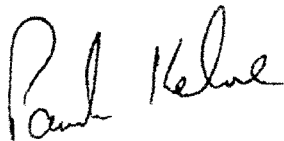
I think that it is fitting that this evening's reception to mark this auspicious event takes place just a few hundred yards from where ARCO was formally launched on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1994 in the Constitution Room of the Shelbourne Hotel, less than a year after its inaugural meeting in the Ashling Hotel.

By any measure, your organisation has realised, and continues to realise, its core objectives on behalf of retired officer members of the Defence Forces through promoting, safeguarding and protecting their interests and those of the spouses of deceased comrades. This, coupled with the continuation of the fellowship established during service in the Permanent Defence Force and the ongoing development of strategies to contribute to keeping your Association relevant to its members are a testament to your success.

When talking of fellowship, it is important to acknowledge that retirement from the Defence Forces does not break the bonds that have been forged over many years. In this light it is worth mentioning the presentation of An Cláíomh Gaisíochta by ARCO at the commissioning ceremony for each Army or Air Corps cadet class, or the telescope at a Naval Service commissioning. These prestigious awards are highly valued by the recipients and manifest the link between serving and retired members of the Defence Forces. I wish to thank you for your continuing support of these ceremonies.

I can assure you the members of ARCO that your representatives who have dealt directly with me and my officials are held in the highest regard and have represented your Association diligently and professionally. I would like to thank the current officers and previous office holders with whom my officials and I have met over the course of the years. I mention in particular President Brigadier General (Ret'd) Paul Pakenham, Vice-President Col (Ret'd) George Kerton, Honorary Secretary Lt Col (Ret'd) Joe Ahern and all the other serving and previous office holders. I understand that at your recent AGM a new Executive Committee was elected and I would like to take this opportunity to wish them every good wish for the year ahead. My officials and I look forward to working closely with them.

Let me conclude by congratulating you again on your 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Twenty-five years is a long time for any organisation to be in existence. It is fitting that you should celebrate your 'silver' anniversary, reflect on the achievements during this past twenty-five years, meet with former colleagues, share memories from your times together in the Defence Forces and take time out to plan for the future. I look forward to continuing to build on our relationship in the period ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Kehoe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "K".

---

Paul Kehoe, T.D.,  
Minister with Responsibility for Defence