



Comradherie Through Service

Cumann na nIAR-Oifigeach Coimisiúnca

Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

15 January, 2020

Mr Paul Kehoe T.D.,

Minister with Responsibility for Defence

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION

APPLICATION OF MILITARY SERVICE ALLOWANCE INCREASE

DEFENCE FORCES PENSIONS IN PAYMENT

Dear Minister,

In recognition of steadfast service to the State, both at home and overseas, there is a requirement for the Government, the Minister for Defence, and the Minister with Responsibility for Defence to protect, support and respect, the aspirations, entitlements, needs, and interests of Defence Forces Veterans.

This responsibility is of particular relevance in the area of military pensions, since no independent third-party mechanism exists to address pension related issues, such as the application of the recent Military Service Allowance (MSA) increase to military pensions in payment.

The last time Defence Forces Veterans, eligible spouses or partners and children, received a military pension increase was over eleven years ago - on 01 September, 2008.

ARCO notes the Department of Defence's decision to index-link the recent increase in MSA to retirement benefits, for eligible military personnel retiring on or after 04 July, 2019.

Nevertheless, ARCO's Officers, Executive Committee and Membership are alarmed with the possibility that the MSA increase may not apply to pensions in payment on 03 July, 2019. ARCO has not identified any determination from the Public Service Pay Commission to give rise to this particular course of action.

As conveyed in its letter dated 16 December, ARCO strongly maintains that absolutely no grounds exist, for not applying the MSA increase to military pensions which are "in payment" on 03 July, 2019. In fact, long standing precedent exists to apply MSA increases, (and other pension reckonable allowances), to military pensions in payment.

Not to apply the 04 July MSA increase to military pensions in payment would represent a substantial change in the Government's military pension policy, which would have significant repercussions within the wider Veteran Community.



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Spouses eligible for military pensions include those whose husbands died on Border Duty, on Fishery Protection Operations, on Search and Rescue Operations, overseas in locations such as the Congo, Syria, Cyprus, Lebanon, East Timor, Liberia and Belgium, and in Ireland during air and land training, and live firing exercises in Glen Imaal.

A decision not to reflect the recent MSA increase in military pensions in payment for Defence Forces Veterans and eligible dependents, has the potential to adversely impact on the wider military community, which will rekindle the disquiet that has been felt over recent years, at a very sensitive time in both the national and political environments.

At a time when overseas service, recruitment and retention is being encouraged, a refusal to reflect the recent MSA increase in military pensions in payment could be seen as casting doubt on the Government's commitment to supporting the Defence Forces. The memory of the FEMPI regulations, whereby the Government reduced military pay and military pensions is still very fresh. To have waited twelve years for this modest increase in military pensions in payment demonstrates the loyalty and patience of those affected.

The attached supplementary submission reiterates and substantiates ARCO's strongly held conviction that the MSA increase should retrospectively apply to all military pensions in payment, including pensions of dependents of deceased personnel who died in service, or when in retirement.

A decision not to apply the MSA increase in military pensions in payment would be inconsistent with the Government's stated policy to "*Support our veterans for the public service and outstanding contribution they have made to the State*".

In conclusion, within its competencies, ARCO actively promotes and safeguards the interests and needs of its members, and eligible spouses or civil partners. Accordingly, as an allowance in the nature of pay, ARCO strongly recommends to the Government that the recent increase in MSA be retrospectively applied to military pensions in payment of Óglaigh na hÉireann Veterans, up to and including the rank of Colonel and Captain (NS), and in the pensions of all eligible spouses, civil partners and dependent children.

ARCO remains readily available to discuss this significant issue of grave concern to its membership, and to provide clarification on any matter relating to this supplementary submission.

Beir Bua

Col A. Pakenham

Brigadier-General Paul Pakenham (Retd)

President

The Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

Annex A. ARCO's Supplementary Submission – Military Pensions in Payment

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