

Association of Retired Commissioned Officers



SUBMISSION

TO THE

COMMISSION ON THE DEFENCE FORCES

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Camaraderie Through Service





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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ireland. The island of Ireland has a growing population now close to 7 million.¹ Ireland is a modern wealthy state with an outward perspective. It is ranked in the top 20% of the world's economies. We are a knowledge-based economy, storing global data interests, and benefit hugely from Foreign Direct Investment. Ireland occupies a critical western flank of the European Union, and North Atlantic air corridors are largely centred on Ireland, with the largest airline in Europe being Irish owned. As an island we are wholly dependent on maintaining our Sea Lines of Communications² and control a richly resourced maritime area, ten times larger than the land mass. Being small, Ireland needs to protect and project itself in order to enhance its stability, relevance, and influence in the international arena.

1.2 Ireland retains armed forces to exercise the right of self-defence. It is militarily neutral and non-aligned and does not participate in mutual defence arrangements³. The Defence Forces deploys overseas as part of Ireland's international obligations as a member of the UN, EU, NATO/PfP and OSCE.

1.3 Historical, divisive, and unsettled on-island political questions persist, and peace and security is maintained through a fragile international agreement. With extant on-island security risks and external obligations, Ireland needs to step up to the plate, shed its post-colonial mentality of dependence, and provide responsibly for its needs and obligations in the defence and security environment. Deploying anything but credible military forces, commensurate with our status as a first world state, places our relevance, influence, and security at risk.

1.4 Level of Ambition. Beyond 2030 is the perspective for the Commission's deliberations. This is a unique opportunity to set out a level of ambition in designing and developing a military force to provide for the responsible protection and projection of Ireland's values and interests, nationally and internationally, for the future. The development of many of the defence capabilities set out in this submission, will require significant periods of 'lead-in time' to be brought to the level of Full Operational Capability.

1.5 End State. In this context, ARCO asserts, that Ireland, must possess an adequately resourced conventional military capability, catering for deterrence, limited defence, and international commitments. This military capability must consist of a balanced and sustainable critical mass and integration of land, air, and maritime components, coupled with supportive elements such as Special Forces, Reserve Forces, as well as a joint information, electromagnetic spectrum, space, and cyber capability. In parallel, the optimum force

¹ Central Statistics Office, Population and Migration Estimates Apr 2020, 4.98 Million.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2019 Midyear Population Estimates for June 2020 1.89 Million.

² 90% of Ireland's international trade by volume is by maritime traffic. The Irish Maritime Transport Economist, April 2019. Vol 16, p.5 published by the Irish Maritime Development Office.

³ White Paper on Defence, August 2015. Para 3.3 p 24.



structure should provide for expandable capabilities such as engineering, medical, cyber, space and strategic lift, at appropriate operational readiness, for national and regional emergencies, and natural catastrophes. All future arrangements must facilitate cross governmental co-ordination and understanding, and also provide adequate capability and depth to deliver on the myriad of additional tasks assigned to the Defence Forces as prescribed in Chapter 5 of the White Paper on Defence 2015.



STRUCTURES

2. HIGH-LEVEL COMMAND AND CONTROL (and JOINT STRUCTURES).

2.1 Integration and Jointness. If integration and jointness are to be employed at every level of the Defence Forces, there must also be embedded integration and jointness in the manner in which business is done at the top, within and amongst the civil and military elements of the Department of Defence.

2.2 Civil-Military Interface. It is evident that Ireland's management of its Defence Forces is affected by a unique approach, and aspects of this model are coming under increased criticism. This is the product of the uncertainty of the early days of independent Ireland and is demonstrably civilian focused⁴. Ireland's current model of civil-military interface needs to be fundamentally transformed in a manner that ensures civil control is exercised objectively, and not in the overly subjective and intrusive manner as is currently the case. Military advice is a professional competency. It should stand alone and not be subject to filtration by the civil side of the Department. Civil control of all but the most minor of operational outputs ensues, resulting in institutional distrust and the enfeeblement of the force. A collective, collaborative, and collegiate culture is what is required. In ARCO's view, the achievement of any meaningful progress towards an effective fit for purpose, agile and responsive military force will succeed or fail on reforming the nature of this civil-military relationship. Defence Forces officers and senior NCOs have extensive experience of working within effective civil-military elements of the UN, EU, NATO-PfP and OSCE, where there is mutual respect and regard for the professional expertise of both civil and military elements. There is no reason why a mutually respectful interface relationship cannot be built in the Irish context.

2.3 Accordingly, ARCO advances three concepts:

- **Civilian Component.** The civilian component should have primacy in the development, oversight, and progression of defence policy and audit, supported by a continuous embedded and timely consultative process with the military component for advisory purposes. ARCO wishes to acknowledge the positive role played by the Department of Defence in making policy changes and decisions. Some examples of which are in relation to Overseas Service, participation with EU and NATO/PfP concepts and force development agencies, and major equipment purchases over the past number of years.
- **Military Component.** Policy implementation should be vested in those charged with the military effectiveness, efficiency and organisation of the Defence Forces. They must be trusted and allowed the professional space to respond to emerging threats and requirements, and have a longer-term influence on the destiny of the force,

⁴Clarke. B, An Examination of Civil Governance of the Armed Forces of Ireland, and other EU Neutral States. Defence Forces Review 2020, p 53.



consistent with Government policy. and supported by an embedded civil component for advisory purposes. Establishment and organisational flexibility would be best devolved to those delivering military responses.

- **Budgetary Allocation**. The requirement to adequately resource the Commission's recommendations is essential. Defence fiscal provision by Government determines the responsiveness and quality of delivery of capabilities. ARCO suggests that the Commission moves the issue of defence from one based on costs alone, to one that also measures the actual and potential value of the Defence Forces to Irish society, and to its standing at home and abroad. Advantages and opportunities that accrue from appropriate defence Investment include:
 - **Leveraging Economic Benefits**. Opportunities arise for the State, and for the business community, in areas such as manufacture, supply, services, and innovation, which would provide a return on defence investment, and enhanced reputational standing internationally. Costs associated with the frequent turnover of personnel in the Defence Forces can be re-cast as a net gain to society, and the economy, and not simply an unproductive cost centre. Turnover of personnel is integral to military forces, and can be leveraged to continue to contribute to military effectiveness through reserve commitments. (See Part 10).
 - **International Benchmark**. In line with international best practice, budgetary provision for Defence must be measured as a % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the timeframe envisaged by the Commission a move towards a more realistic provision is required, commensurate with other nations within our international spheres of interest. The paltry Defence spend in the order of 0.27% of GDP places Ireland alongside some of the most underdeveloped states on the globe. Currently, EU average is 1.2%. ARCO strongly recommends that the Defence spend as a % of GDP should sequentially rise to the order of between 1% and 2% of GDP, in the period out to 2030. Successful defence is achieved by informed foresight, sufficient preparation, flexibility, poise, as well as adequate funding⁵. Substandard solutions result in weak, ineffective, and vulnerable forces, and may ultimately lead to casualties on operations and in training. ARCO is well aware that there are substantial financial implications in any reorganisation and significant future equipment purchases. The Government will be asked to make serious investment and strategic decisions, if they are to pursue some of the changes envisaged in this submission.

2.4 Budgetary Responsibility. Vesting the role of Accounting Officer in the Chief of Staff for the total, or a significant portion, of the Defence Vote would empower the Chief of Staff. This in turn necessitates that the Chief of Staff is not only responsible for these budgets, but is also accountable for the ongoing and future operational efficiency of the Defence Forces. It is self-evident that the Chief of Staff should have the freedom of action to adjust

⁵ White Paper on Defence, Aug 2015, para 10.4.1 p116



Establishments and Organisations as required, and the autonomy to utilise the finance allocated in the Defence Vote, within prescribed controls. Accountability in a public forum would strengthen the image of the Defence Forces, and its position in and to the society it serves. Embedded support from the civil component would enhance transparency and effectiveness.

2.5 Defence Forces Headquarters (DFHQ). DFHQ does not exercise military command. It provides advisory and policy implementation functions, as well as responsibility for operational effectiveness and efficiency, and the overall management of the Defence Forces. Effective jointness is the product of capabilities and activities in the 5 domains of operations (Land, Sea, Air, Cyber and Space). These capabilities and activities include:

- Detection sensors in each domain of operations,
- Building a Common Operational Picture from sensors,
- Providing response capabilities, which are fundamental for deterring a threat,
- Exploiting expertise and experience, informs requirements for adjustments and refinement to doctrine, education, and training needs, as well as developing more responsive, integrated, and harmonised equipment procurement programmes.

2.6 Integrating these products is a joint enterprise and provides for informed advice, more effective decision-making, force protection and operational success. Clearly, as the Defence Forces consists of land, sea and air forces, the requirement for DFHQ to be formally structured and staffed across Joint lines is self-evident. However, the current disparate locations, fly in the face of efficient and effective military command and staff processes.

2.7 Recommendation

- The Civil and Military elements of the Department of Defence establish a collective, collaborative, and collegiate culture.
- DFHQ should be formally structured and staffed along Joint lines.
- Recast Defence provision as a value to society, and not simply as a cost centre.
- Defence provision must be brought in line with international benchmarks as a % of GDP.
- The Chief of Staff should be designated as Accounting Officer for those sections of the Defence Vote that are deemed integral to achieving the outputs and outcomes required of the Defence Forces in an efficient and effective manner.



3. OPERATIONAL COMMAND AND CONTROL.

3.1. Current Situation. Existing civil-military governance structures ensure the effective disempowerment of the Chief of Staff, his deputies, and senior commanders in the exercise of their responsibilities, and lead to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness across the Defence Forces. Those charged with the military effectiveness and efficiency of the Defence Forces (COS, GOCs and FOCNS) do not have the professional space to respond when, where, and how required, to existing and emerging threats and requirements, and have limited real influence on the future design and destiny of the Defence Forces.

3.2 Command. To date, military and territorial command has been exercised through the Minister of Defence, independently by the General Officers Commanding (GOC) of the Brigades, Air Corps, Defence Forces Training Centre and Flag Officer Commanding the Naval Service, although traditionally the interface is exercised through the Chief of Staff to the Minister. From a pure militarily doctrinal perspective, this command structure is inherently unsound. It contravenes the principle of unity of command, a fundamental of military effectiveness. The construct, similar to the manner in which civil control is exercised, is now a historical anomaly, is unique to Ireland, and is not recognised in modern militaries worldwide.

3.3 International Norms. These vary, with some nations vesting military command through a Chief of Defence (CHOD) to the responsible Minister, and others discretely through component command e.g. Land, Sea, Air. All nations have their own particular circumstances in adopting a command model appropriate to themselves. They all, however, have a military command structure that is empowered to effectively lead and manage the military force for which they are responsible.

3.4 Ireland. Today's all-Ireland economy may, in due course, lead to an agreed all-island unitary state. In the meantime, two jurisdictions exist, and the management of the border issue has been achieved through a somewhat fragile international agreement. The border issue remains divisive and is a threat to national security. This question, together with the unforeseen consequences of Brexit, means that a focus on the border cannot be dispensed with. Any lack of a contingent capability and depth of military assets is a weakness that will be exposed, should any deterioration of the security situation occur, or indeed any other reason why a surge response to seal the border area might be necessary⁶. Should a unitary political entity emerge at some stage in the future, military force design, command structures and dispositions, will require reconsideration.

⁶ Human and animal pandemics are cases in point.



3.5 Requirements. In addition to modernising Ireland's civil-military interface and relationships (See Part 2), a number of other viable options are available to empower the Chief of Staff to deliver military effectiveness.

- **Defence Forces Command.** Military Command of the Defence Forces should be vested in the Chief of Staff, reporting directly to the responsible Minister on all matters concerning the Defence Forces. Allied with significant discretionary budgetary authority and accountability, would be an optimal position, where effectiveness and accountability are clearly prescribed. The title Chief of Staff for the senior military officer in the State is not in conformity with terminology used amongst most of the EU Member States. Rather Chiefs of Staff are appointments held at various levels of senior Headquarters, and refer to a staff function in directing and coordinating the work of the various staff officers within the Headquarters. The title Chief of Defence (CHOD) would be more appropriate, and in keeping with the principal roles of Command, Advice, Oversight and Accountability.
- **Army Command.** This could be also called Land Component Command and enables the land-based elements of the Defence Forces coming under a central command, rather than the prevailing discrete model. Such a command has significant merit providing central command and control over all Army elements. Territorial command could be replaced by Areas of Responsibility assigned by the Land Component Commander, thereby easily adjustable, and not by Defence Forces Regulations, which is more problematic.
- **Joint Forces HQ (JFHQ).** Within the Defence Forces, there is an increasing reliance on joint capabilities, and the integration of assets from all domains (land, air and maritime) on and in support of operations. To date, Joint Forces operations, encompassing two or more Defence Forces components, have been cobbled together in an ad hoc, unsatisfactory manner, because there is no provision for a superior command level. Whereas attaching operational elements to a Joint Forces Headquarters is relatively straightforward, there are significant anomalies with regard to command and control. For example, the question of superior domestic command of units and individuals serving overseas is not clearly articulated. The superior command function for Joint Task Force operations lacks clarity. Joint Task Force are temporarily assembled from time to time, to meet specific mission objectives, and accordingly are limited in duration. An appropriate military commander is appointed depending on the nature of the mission. Currently, the question as to who the Joint Task Forces Commander answers to, is unclear. Similar to Joint Task Forces, the precise superior command relationships overseeing the Army Ranger Wing operations are unclear.
- The EU and NATO/PfP utilise standing HQs for joint operations, and contingency planning, to which forces, and augmented staffs are assigned when operations are anticipated. In our context, overseas operations and the Army Ranger Wing are



permanent operational entities, which should be under the superior command and control of a Joint Task Force Headquarters. When Joint Task Forces are assembled for any reason they too should be placed under the command of the Joint Task Force Headquarters.

3.6 Naval Service and Air Corps Nomenclature. Given the level of ambition set out in this submission and the range of roles assigned to the Naval Service and Air Corps, their current nomenclature is erroneous. Both the Naval Service and the Air Corps perform roles more relevant to a Navy and an Air Force, and if suitably equipped for their assigned roles in the future, internationally recognised nomenclature should be accorded. In addition, this would be more in conformity with the concepts of jointness.

3.7 Recommendations. On balance, empowering military leadership with the essential tools to achieve operational effectiveness and efficiency is the overriding criteria. Therefore:

- Military command of the Defence Forces should be vested in the senior military officer of the State and his title changed to Chief of Defence.
- Ensure an effective military contingency capability and depth.
- All army elements should be brought under the central command of a Land Forces Component Command.
- Territorial areas of command should be dispensed with, and replaced with Areas of Responsibility assigned as necessary by the Land Component Commander.
- A Joint Forces HQ should be established to provide permanent superior command of forces overseas, Army Ranger Wing, and appropriate Joint Task Forces when assembled.
- More appropriate nomenclatures should be considered for the Naval Service and Air Corps.



CAPABILITIES

4. LAND

4.1 Current Situation

- **Outcome of Reviews.** In the last 30 years, the Army component of the Defence Forces has been subjected to a significant number of reviews. All have sought to achieve cost savings and ostensibly improve the efficiency of the Army, and make it more fit for purpose. The sequential outcomes, albeit acknowledging the achievement of some temporary efficiencies, has been at the cost of the Army that is structurally weak and unbalanced, as well as personnel levels that are inadequate to carry out all assigned roles effectively and safely. Reviews intended to attain a world class, flexible and responsive Army have failed.
- **Review Implementation.** Those charged with ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the Defence Forces have had little or no say in the decisions taken and have been assigned a subservient role in the implementation of review recommendations.
- **Critical Mass.** The reorganisation of the Army in 2012, resulting in the disbandment of a Brigade, has been the most damaging of all reorganisations. It effectively reduced the Army by 3 major operational units, specialist cohorts by 33%, disbanded a critically located Formation HQ. In addition, it resulted in an unbalanced command and control system, and a challenging garrison disposition. Units in Ireland's main cities, Dublin, and Cork are now incapable of meeting any more than minor level responses and require reinforcement to implement even routine duties. Heretofore, the Defence Forces has regularly assembled a variety of Joint Task Forces for operations at home⁷. The Army has lost its contingent capability, and the critical mass and depth of personnel to assemble a force of any consequence, with a capability to operate effectively on a regional or nationwide basis, and for any appreciable length of time. Assembling units for overseas has become increasingly problematic, with an increasing reliance on mandatory selection of personnel, with adverse effects on family life.
- **Brigades.** The Brigade is the lowest military entity that contains the necessary all-arms elements, with a self-sustaining operational capability for an extended period of time. As such, Brigades organically contain the full range of capabilities, competences, and resources to respond to any requirement in the military and civil support domains. The current Brigades are not of themselves deployable as fully operational capable entities, but elements of their all-arms units are assigned to Task

⁷ JTF support to HSE for COVID-19 Pandemic Responses is the latest iteration.



Forces when required. The Brigades are engaged with the requirements for recruitment, induction and basic training, ongoing continuation training, and providing fully trained elements for overseas service and Task Forces as required. Brigades further provide static military guards at prisons and vital installations, support for ATCP and ATCA operations, barrack security and services, and support to forces deployed on operations. As such, our Brigades are essentially 'force providers', to military forces assembled for specific operations, as well as providing an appropriate level of command and control capability within their areas of responsibility. Units formed for overseas deployments are assembled in this manner. Bringing overseas units to Full Operational Capability and Mission Ready validation is a 4 - month process. In this regard, it should be noted that forming, deploying, and recovering an overseas unit is a 12-month cycle.

4.2 Requirements

- **Force Level.** The capability required is to assemble and deploy a self-sustaining force at Full Operational Capability to conduct and sustain large scale and extended operations at home and overseas. Any meaningful national contingent capability should be at the level of a fully operational capable brigade, at a minimum.
- **Regional Level.** Appropriate command and control levels, suitably located, capable of assimilating and supporting externally assembled Task Forces such as those outlined above, (joint, combined or otherwise) for specific medium or major operational tasks. Brigade level is the minimum appropriate level.
- **Barracks Level.** A sufficiency of troop and unit dispositions capable of protecting and running the garrison, and rapidly responding to on-demand requests for local ATCP and ATCA support at detachment (5/10 soldiers), or platoon (30 soldiers), or Company (120 soldiers) levels. In addition, the assembling and provision of troops to assemble, train and prepare for overseas deployments, and the provision of personal for numerous career, education and training courses are permanent demands on resources.
- **Border.** The unsettled all-island question, together with unforeseen consequences of Brexit, means that a military focus on the border cannot be dispensed with. In the current environment, this can be carried out at a Formation Level, where situational awareness, contingency planning and response capabilities can be addressed.
- **All-Arms Capability.** An all-arms capability ensures that a military force has the ability to survive and function effectively in environments where the normal supports and services, as well as infrastructure have collapsed, or been destroyed. The



question whether some of these capabilities could be held at Defence Forces level is worthy of consideration, but there are many other criteria to be considered in deciding such a move.

4.3 Recommendations

- To rebuild the Army's critical mass of all-arms capabilities, in order to provide a deterrence and to meet its on-island and overseas commitments, and, thereby, a contingency capability of assembling and sustaining a force on operations, with the full range of all-arms capabilities for regional and national level responses, to foreseen and unforeseen events.
- To provide for appropriate Regional HQ levels with the inherent capacity to provide effective command and control as well as supports.



5. SEA

5.1 Current Situation

- **1998 Review & White Paper on Defence 2020**. The formal recognition that the Naval Service is the “State’s principal seagoing agency⁸” dates from the Efficiency Audit Group / Price Waterhouse review of 1998, and was endorsed in the White Paper on Defence 2000. This single agency approach was for the NS to contribute to the maximum, to all of the State’s requirements in the maritime domain.
- **White Paper on Defence 2015**. The White Paper on Defence 2015 concluded that the maintenance of a modern eight ship Naval Flotilla is a minimum requirement (para 6.5).
- **International Trade**. More than 90% of Ireland’s international trade in volume is by maritime transport.⁹ These volumes continue to grow.
- **Brexit**. Ireland (and the EU) now has a new maritime Exclusive Economic Zone border with a non-EU state to our North, East, and South. The UK is a member of NATO, whereas we are not. The UK is no longer party to Common Security and Defence Policy and has to date indicated a reluctance to engage with the EU on any Foreign Policy or Defence issues, preferring bilateral arrangements. It cannot be predicted what changes or frictions, or need for new cooperation in the maritime domain, this may bring to EU/UK relations, or bilaterally IRL/UK, or even EU/NATO, but change is certain.
 - Brexit has highlighted Ireland’s dependence on Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC), particularly the short sea routes to the UK and continental ports. The fishing industry is also impacted with likely frictions between EU/UK, IRL/UK, and possibly IRL/other coastal Member States.
- **Naval Service Structure and Modus Operandi (MO)**. Current Naval Service criteria and practice was largely established by the EAG/PW Review. This involved a lengthy and detailed review with international military and maritime advisors. The MO is based on meeting a set of defined operational criteria and a recommended planned schedule of days at sea by each ship and a crew sea/shore rotation based on a two-year cycle. On this basis, EAG/PW recommended an Establishment/Organisation of 1144 personnel for the then Naval Service of seven ships,
- **Establishment**. The increase of the fleet to 9 ships, caused no revision of this Establishment, and the Naval Service was also the subject to personnel reductions for financial reasons. The Naval Service finds itself now with an Establishment and

⁸ Report of the Efficiency Audit Group on the Review of the Naval Service and Air Corps, Feb 1998, published by Price Waterhouse.

⁹ The Irish Maritime Transport Economist, April 2019. Vol 16, p.5 published by the Irish Maritime Development Office.



Organisation that is no longer based on the logical foundation established by EAG/PW. The difficulties with retention and recruiting, means the current already inadequate, Establishment is continually below strength, directly affecting the ability to deploy ships to sea.

- **Manpower.** The Naval Service for a variety of policy, lifestyle and remuneration failures, is no longer capable of crewing its current complement of ships. Its operational effectiveness rests on a sufficiency of personnel. Where this fails, as it has, is when recruitment policies do not recognise shortfalls or fleet additions. Lifestyle consequences result in the failure to retain personnel which in turn exacerbates the issues for those who remain.

5.2 **Requirements**

- **Increased Operational Commitments.** There is heightened awareness of our national reliance on our SLOCs, fisheries, sub-sea interconnectors, natural resource potential, and the inevitable growth in offshore renewable energy infrastructure to meet climate change priorities. Enhanced maritime capabilities to respond to these ever-emerging defence and security requirements will need to be progressed. Furthermore, extant, and emerging vulnerabilities require surveillance capabilities with Air and Space sensors, and the ability to counter cyber threats.
- **Sea Lines of Communications.** The White Paper on Defence 2015 acknowledged Ireland's reliance on seaborne trade as a potential vulnerability (para 2.2.3). The recommended development of a maritime counter mine and counter Improvised Explosive Device capability needs to be advanced. Maintenance of freedom of navigation on the High Seas and Territorial Waters is a vital national interest, and consideration should be given to including that as a stated role of the Naval Service and Defence Forces to contribute to protecting that interest.
- **EU Maritime Security Strategy.** Ireland as an EU Member State has endorsed the Common Security and Defence Policy and committed to all EU Security Strategies including the EU Maritime Security Strategy. Post Brexit, a review of these strategies and plans, particularly in relation to EU maritime security arrangements, for the protection of our and of EU interests, should be undertaken.
- **Naval Service Modus Operandi (MO).** The MO concept is sound, but an agile responsive and empowered command and control element is required to address the inevitable variations and operational requirements that arise. Any fundamental change to MO can only be effective and sustainable if it is comprehensive.
- **Naval Service HQ.** The current Naval Service Operations/Support structure is not optimal, and NSHQ in particular would benefit from review and restructure along more conventional military HQ lines.



- **Fleet.** Whereas the maintenance of a modern eight ship Naval Flotilla is considered a minimum requirement, the consistent view of maritime competency, is that a twelve ship Flotilla is required to enable the NS to effectively meet its assigned roles and taskings. A fleet mix of ships to operate in littoral areas and the ocean environment of the Atlantic, and multi-role design to enable overseas mission replenishment and humanitarian relief. Fundamentally, naval ships must have the ability to 'see over the horizon', protect themselves from attack, contribute to collective force protection, operate as part of a force if necessary, and demonstrate power and resolve with the necessary military means.
- **Overseas Missions - Multi Role Capability.** The deployment of naval ships on the EU Common Security and Defence Policy mission to the Mediterranean in response to the migrant crisis, and on diplomatic and trade support visits abroad, demonstrates the capability and utility of the Naval Service to deploy using some of the unique capabilities of maritime forces. Future capability decisions for the Naval Service should facilitate this and should embrace EU and NATO/PfP interoperability. Future deployments under the EU Co-ordinated Maritime Presence concept would act in support of Irish and EU Foreign Policy.
- **Establishment – Organisation - Crewing.** A logical foundation based on the relationship and reliance between capability, operational criteria/targets, staffing and lifestyle to deliver operational effectiveness and a reasonably acceptable lifestyle to its personnel is required.

5.3 Recommendations. The requirements outlined above would represent major investment by the state and may require many years to attain. Nevertheless, ARCO considers such investment to be commensurate with being a modern wealthy state.

- **Roles.** Contribution to the maintenance of freedom of navigation on the High Seas and Territorial Waters should be considered to be added to the roles of the Defence Forces and Naval Service
- **Flotilla.** ARCO recommends a policy decision to bring Naval Service fleet capacity to 12 multi-role capable ships to meet both current and future needs.
- **Establishment - Organisation.** The Commission must take the opportunity to return the Naval Service to a solid foundation. This means a process to deliver an Establishment and Organisation based on a logical framework. It needs to consider how staffing levels can be made stable and sustained that way. The recruiting and retention policies needed to then maintain that foundation would be best advised by those currently dealing with these issues. It may be appropriate to examine changes to current modus operandi with an aim to balance operational outputs and efficiency with lifestyle and retention. Any such proposal would only be effective if it is comprehensive and would likely require changes to organisational structures, staffing levels, personnel supports and Conditions of Service.
- **NSHQ.** To restructure NSHQ along traditional military lines.



- There is scope within the Naval Service competencies for alliances with other state agencies in the maritime environment as well as considerable opportunities for reserve support.



6. AIR

6.1 Current Situation

- The airspace of the State is currently 'free' to use by intruders, military or civil, to penetrate and disrupt (or worse). Ongoing Russian air activity is undoubtedly engaged in traditional military intelligence gathering activities most likely focussed on our larger neighbouring states, but nevertheless in Ireland's area of responsibility. Without a long-range primary radar system in the State, undetected civil aircraft are also free to engage in smuggling drugs, people, and arms and explosives into or around the State.
- Ireland simply does not know and has not the means to know what is going on in our portion of the airspace on the exposed Western flank of Europe. Secondary radar, as used by civil Air Traffic Control requires the cooperation of the target aircraft. It will not, however detect an uncooperative illegal or hostile aircraft determined to operate covertly. Every non-compliant intrusion flight is a serious threat to national security.
- Ireland does not have any capability to detect and respond to non-compliant intrusions.
- Airborne Surveillance over the State's sovereign sea space, as awarded to the State by International Convention for the Exploitation of the Seas recently, is a National obligation.
- The two aircraft fleet of Maritime Patrol capability currently employed, results in gaps in serviceability, and therefore operational availability.
- The Defence Forces has an extremely limited independent capability to provide emergency and/or logistic support to overseas missions. Equally, the State lacks a rapid response air capability for humanitarian catastrophes.
- The Government lacks a long-range aircraft having at least trans-Atlantic type capability by which to communicate and establish trade relationships with nations at such distances, as well as providing a secure VIP transport service. The current medium-range maritime patrol aircraft, the Learjet45, recently transported Irish COVID test samples to Munich for analysis and on a regular basis renders support to the HSE in transporting patients to specialist hospitals in the UK. All Air Corps multi-engine aircraft deployed and supported the National Extraction Operations from LIBYA in 2011.
- The Air Corps staffing issues stem from different pressures than the other Defence Forces components. Aero competencies are highly sought after in the civilian workplaces, leading to retention issues. Indeed, the Air Corps has been subject to poaching from other state agencies, offering better remuneration for the same skill and better conditions of service. Although civilian demands are cyclical in nature, the



retention of Pilot Officers, Air Traffic Control Officers and Technicians is crucial to operational responsiveness and effectiveness.

6.2 Requirements

- **Detection Systems.** A system of long-range primary radars, having interlocking arcs, is the only method of seeing into and beyond the national airspace and detecting such threats in advance.
- **Response Capability.** Once a primary radar system is in place, the State must invest in a means to intercept unidentified aircraft. The emphasis in such cases must be on speed to engagement, hence a supersonic fighter capability is a vital/key aspect of this equation. A rapid interception will provide the maximum time for government and command systems to decide on the level of and use of force.
- **Maritime Surveillance.** A third aircraft would address the gap limitation, and further would provide additional capability in terms of limited logistic support to deployed DF troop overseas missions. The Maritime aircraft also support Special Operations with the Army Ranger Wing. In the national support context CASAs remain available to the Irish Coast Guard for search and rescue as On Scene Commander duties as well as allowing the rapid transport of specialist mountain rescue teams around the country.
- **Multi-Role Jet Transport Aircraft.** A large long-range and rapidly convertible aircraft is required to provide the Defence Forces with an independent means of effecting regular troop rotations and resupply to overseas missions. Such an aircraft would in addition, provide the State with a means of responding rapidly to any need arising including providing humanitarian relief throughout the world in support of foreign policy objectives.
- **Ministerial Air Transport Service.** This role could be doubled up on the multi-role jet transport aircraft (see above) reinforcing the business case for such an aircraft and capability.
- **National Search and Rescue.** This is a capability previously provided by the Air Corps. The contract cost, with a civilian provider for ten years, was M€530 and at the end of which no skills or assets accrued to the State. It is a capability that should be sequentially re-assigned to the Air-Arm of the State. It can readily absorb and build upon the current aeromedical service as a joint capability benefitting both the community and Defence Forces Medevac/Casevac capability requirement. It would be cost effective, provide the State with a nationally owned skills capability as well as aircraft, and provide for critical mass considerations for air crew and for harmonisation of procurement and maintenance policies.

6.3 **Recommendations.** The requirements outlined above would represent major investment by the State and would require many years to attain. Nevertheless, ARCO



considers such investment to be commensurate with being a modern wealthy state and could be readily accommodated within a multi-annual budgeting plan.

- State investment in the procurement, installation and maintenance of a modern air defence system comprising primary radars, ground to air defence systems, and interceptor aircraft is a radical and expensive proposal, but ARCO contends that this level of ambition should now be enshrined in Government policy as a priority with an immediate perspective for delivery. A force of at least eight fighters would be required to provide for training and readiness requirements in peacetime and provide a foundation of skills in times of a heightened national security threat. An active and available Air Corps Reserve would be a critical and expandable capability in this complex skills requirement.
- Similarly, rebuilding a state-owned Search and Rescue capability is also considered to be commensurate with the international standing we wish to project, and would have the added benefit of establishing a state-owned critical mass of rotary wing aircraft types harmonised with military utility helicopters. In the longer term, it would also be more cost effective than contracting the service from abroad. In addition, investment in aircraft particularly, permits economies of scale in terms of procurement, spare parts, and maintenance as well as competence development of personnel.
- Procure a long-range jet transport aircraft with which to self-sustain its troop missions abroad and provide long range Ministerial communications with major trading nations.
- Maintaining an appropriate fleet of multi-role, agile and responsive aircraft capable of responding to the wide range of demands placed upon the Air Corps. These aircraft should have the capability to provide a range of interoperable support roles to the wider Defence Forces and the State.
- There is considerable scope within the Air Corps competencies to leverage alliances with other state agencies in the air environment and considerable opportunities for reserve support (See Part 10).



7 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

7.1 Current Situation.

- The Defence Forces' education and training infrastructure and institutions are the critical component in the identification, development, delivery and validation of the skills and capabilities required. Strategic alliances with 3rd level institutions, up to PhD level, and adoption of National Qualification Authority of Ireland recognition for all learning outcomes, have positively challenged DF perspectives with exposure to broader worldviews.
- It is a dynamic learning organisation which coupled with strong leadership and decision-making competencies, continuous professional development, and extensive overseas experiences, provide the State with an agile and responsive capability to react and respond to emerging threats. Further alliances and additional areas of study need to be incorporated to meet emerging demands not least in Joint and Combined operational planning, policy development and advocacy.
- ARCO recognises the advances that were achieved in the past 20 years, and the significant reduction in accidents and casualties on overseas operations bears testament to this. A factor in this was the availability of a critical mass of troops, a sufficiency of core instructor staff with a manageable reliance on temporary staff, and the necessary capacity and space in which to conduct and validate training and education more professionally. ARCO, however, notes with regret, the stresses and strains on the Defence Forces education and training regime, that have been inexorably accruing since that last re-organisation in 2012 and the hollowing-out of the critical mass of personnel across the land, air, and sea education and training installations.
- The Defence Forces Training Centre provides for the bulk of career and specialist training across all components and corps for the DF except for recruit training and for courses in the Naval College and Flying Training School and Technician Training School appropriate to the particular operating environments of these components.

7.2 Requirement. The Defence Forces, like many other military forces worldwide, has a high turnover of personnel. This naturally requires constant replenishment of personnel and a robust training and education regime. It may be viewed as an inefficient cost centre on one level certainly, but it should be recast as a state investment, as former military personnel enter civilian life equipped with values and skills which are increasingly valued in the civilian workplace and enhance society.

7.3 Recommendations. ARCO therefore contends that a key defence requirement is the enablement of the education and training institutions to deliver outcomes commensurate



with the standards demanded by our overseas partner nations, including greater partnerships with foreign military education and training institutions as well as a wider exposure to academia. This includes the freedom of action to engage with and establish alliances with appropriate external institutions when and as required. Furthermore, the force as a whole, requires the structures and depth of strength to be able to avail of and deliver professional and responsible training and education.



8. SPACE

8.1 Once a domain only accessible by the very wealthy states, space has evolved into an unlimited domain for research, development, communications, surveillance, and science. Access to space has never been easier, and with the advent of reusable launch and recovery systems, the cost of a satellite launch has never been lower. Ireland should advocate for the peaceful use of space, thus contributing to international peace and stability. Likewise, Ireland must ensure that space assets supporting the nation's communications (including military), financial and economic networks are secure. Ireland should remain a proactive member of the European Space Agency, maintain close cooperation with EU Member States in accordance with international law. SpaceX's latest launch of 25 January 2021 brought a record 143 small satellites into orbit as part of its Small Sat Rideshare Program mission.

8.2 The Defence Forces along with government departments, and State agencies, must embrace the implications and potential deriving from the space domain. When utilised, data deriving from the space domain has the capacity to guard against tactical and strategic surprise on land air and sea, support Defence Forces weapon systems, radar and navigational aids, and enhance force protection.

8.3 The Defence Forces future overseas deployments will require ever more secure, reliable, and rapid means of communication and surveillance. An Irish owned satellite could be positioned to give surveillance over any current or future mission area, which would be a valuable planning and assessment tool at the pre-deployment stages, and a force multiplier for the force deployed.

8.4 Surveillance is perhaps the oldest form of space utilisation. Ireland, with its extensive ocean area, could leverage persistent long-range radar, visual and infra-red surveillance in the space domain. Of particular relevance in future years, will be the survey of domestic housing development, agriculture, forestry, and bog areas for carbon-sink monitoring purposes.



NEW CONCEPTS

9 CYBER

9.1 Ireland's critical national infrastructure, public and security IT systems are vulnerable in the cyber realm. Our reliance on Foreign Direct Investment particularly in the information economy, presents threats to our security resilience and obligations to 'harden' our defences and response capabilities. The Defence Forces defends its own networks at home and overseas. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), a branch of the Department of Communications, is the responsible agency for the protection of other national systems. It has close ties with the Defence Forces, and engages with international partners, business, and academia in fulfilling its objectives of protection and development.

9.2 The Defence Forces concern and engagement with cyber defence long preceded the establishment of the NCSC. The Defence Forces has acquired considerable expertise in developing hardened protections for its systems and in leading and managing projects to that end. Naturally, military protection systems are not always suitable in the provision of public services. Nevertheless, the mutual benefits of formal embedded integration of expertise and collaboration between the NCSC (including business and academia), and the Defence Forces is self-evident.

9.3 ARCO believes that the cross pollination of expertise should be a joint enterprise to strengthen cyber security and national resilience. It is proposed that the concept for the Reserve proposed in this submission would be most clearly expressed in the creation of a Defence Forces Cyber Unit, composed of both PDF and Reserve personnel drawn from the IT environment. This unit can be utilised to create an effective cyber eco-system. It can be utilised to assist in strengthening Ireland's resilience, responding to cyber events, and deployment of cyber peacekeepers, if required, on overseas missions.



10. RESERVES

10.1 General ARCO recommends a transformative re-imagining of a reserve military component available to the State. A proper harnessing of specialist civilians (former PDF and RDF) can contribute to national defence and resilience in its broadest contexts as well as supporting Defence Forces operations at home and overseas. Strategic alliances between the DF and Government Departments, Agencies, Academia and Business across the range of specialities which would be mutually beneficial as well as being advantageous to the individual, are envisaged. Cross-pollination of knowledge, expertise and skills would add to State resilience in responding to a range of eventualities requiring surge responses. In return, the Defence Forces can offer access to many professional courses in a range of areas such as leadership, management, planning and decision-making processes for example. This would be welcomed by industry leaders who would see such a relationship as a positive contribution to their own brand and attractiveness. It would differentiate them in a highly competitive environment.

10.2 Specialists. Specialist areas of high value to the Defence Forces which would enhance Defence Forces capability and capacity as well as adding depth to national resilience include the following:

- CIS including cyber as well as virtual and augmented reality situation capabilities. The Reserve cyber concept (mentioned above) is applicable to the entire range of specialist skill competencies within the DF and is illustrative of how a transformative Reserve concept can be applied.
- Maintenance and operation of all equipment types, vehicle types including aircraft and marine craft.
- Medical and paramedical personnel including aeromedical crew.
- Engineering competencies including mobility (roads, bridges) Firefighting and field construction.
- Pilots, ATCOs including full airfield service competencies.
- Logistics specialists including procurement, storage distribution etc.
- Leadership and management competencies including planning and delivery as well as structured decision making.
- Chemical, Biological, radiological, and Nuclear detection, Render Safe Procedures, and decontamination.
- Legal



10.3 Buy-in. The concept envisages both step-down (former PDF to a 1st Line Reserve) and step-up approaches (civilian 2nd Line Reservists undertaking periods of full-time service). To be effective and reliable it would require many inputs through cross government buy-in and commitment, buy-in by business and academia as well as legislation, employment security, remuneration and other inducement considerations. The cornerstone of the concept is that Investment in defence is not lost to the State.

10.4 Line Reservists

- The recreation of an effective and reliable 1st Line Reserve will require detailed cross government consideration and buy-in, as well as a commitment by the reservists themselves. The process requires co-ordination with the Defence Forces retention and exits strategies. At a minimum, reservist service obligations must be respected, protected, and supported by their employers. For the reservists, the satisfactory completion of service obligations will require attractive inducements to ensure retention and commitment.
- 2nd Line Reserve elements of PDF units have merit, but their deployment on overseas operations is potentially high risk given the part-time nature of their education and training. Full-time induction, continuation and career education and training builds endurance for hardship through the physical conditioning and mental resilience inherent in such courses, in addition to the acquisition of military skillsets and competencies. Nevertheless, particular skills and competences enrich the PDF unit, and some can be of direct benefit in certain roles. It is furthermore a multiplier in attracting inductees into the PDF. It is not a panacea for cost-saving.
- The utility of the 2nd Line Reserve in providing local military organisation and leadership, a modicum of military expertise, facilitates a defence posture of local resistance in the event of occupation. A defence posture of deterrence and resistance would merit reconsideration of this territorial-type force.



11. Human Resources

11.1 Scope. During this particular consultation process, ARCO does not intend to comment in detail on Human Resource issues. As advanced in its submissions on the composition and terms of reference of the Commission, ARCO strongly contended that the Permanent Pay Review Body should be established without delay, and should work in parallel with the Commission's work. ARCO also contends that the current crises in the Defence Forces are not solely problems associated with low pay and poor conditions. These are very real issues but are symptomatic of a deeper malaise.

11.2 Respect. The most important criteria to attract and retain quality people is a force that is recognised and respected as the ultimate guarantor of stability in the State and resourced accordingly. Service and mission accomplishment, together with unlimited liability in service, are the enduring and overriding ethos of military personnel. Recognition, respect, and FAIR consideration by Government is sufficient reward. ARCO suggests that the Commission should confine itself to defining the value of the unique nature of military service. Such an output would provide a guide to inform the Permanent Pay Review Body in its work.

11.3 Military Pension Provisions

- **Obligations.** ARCO contends that there is an obligation on the Government to protect, support and respect, the aspirations, entitlements, and interests of Defence Forces Veterans. This obligation is of particular relevance in the area of military pensions, since no negotiation framework, or independent third-party mechanism, exists to address pension related issues. ARCO regards the continued application of parity as fundamentally important, and would view a departure from it as a threat to the living standards of Defence Forces Veterans and dependent spouses.
- **Former Provisions.** In the past, early pension provision around the 20-year service range was an incentive for recruitment, attracting an effective period of retention, and a powerful exit strategy, at an appropriate age range with a return to society and the workplace in general availing of valuable skills obtained while in service. It was a farsighted strategy.
- **Current Provisions.** Military pensions fall into four schemes: Pre 05 April 1995 (majority of current recipients), 05 April 1995 to 31 March 2004, 01 April March 2004 to 31 December 2012, and from 01 January 2013 onwards. In the past two decades, pension provisions for military personnel have seen greatly eroded benefits due to later accrual and mandatory earlier retirement ages. These provisions are singularly unattractive, and are a considerable disincentive to retention of critical personnel, whose competencies and skills are far better remunerated in the civilian workplace.
- **Single Pensions Act 2012.** In accordance with the Single Pensions Act 2012, the application of CPI applies to new entrants from 01 January 2013. ARCO remains concerned that this particular cohort of Defence Forces personnel, with mandatory



retirement ages, will be further disadvantaged on retirement, as they will not receive the State contributory pension until reaching the age of 66, (perhaps extending to 68 in future years). These personnel remain at a significant disadvantage relative to public service counterparts, as their integrated pension benefit is not realised until some 10 years after they are forced to retire by law from the Defence Forces.

- **A Way Forward.** Physical capacity (age becomes implicit) is a crucial parameter for service in many of the ‘fighting arms’ of the Defence Forces, whereas specialised skills in many other roles rely less on physical capacity. Likewise, experience for senior leadership, management, and staff roles¹⁰ fall into a similar category. The bulk of roles are in the former category, and clearly the issue of retention will, of necessity, require short- and medium-term consideration, and as a matter of course also require exit strategy. Career progression strategies will therefore be pertinent for the remainder and require longer term considerations. Perhaps some farsighted strategies, in conjunction with a Reserve strategy could emerge to address the issue. It is worthy of a separate study.

¹⁰ Commissioned and Non-commissioned ranks



12. VETERANS

12.1 Competencies and Needs. The camaraderie established during military service is readily identifiable, and rather unique in Irish society. Veterans form a community within broader society. Transition from military to civilian life is both complicated and a challenge for many veterans. The officially recognised veteran organisations (ARCO, ONE, IUNVA) provide significant support, not only to members in difficulty, but generally to the full cohort of veterans and their families, across a range of activities. The input of the various veteran associations contributes effectively to the work of the Defence Forces Benevolent Fund, which has the financial resources to provide for veterans found to be in need. The mentoring of serving personnel is an evolving ARCO project aimed at enhancing the expertise of serving personnel through the sharing of experience by retired commissioned officers. The presence and participation by veterans in National and Military events are powerful testimony to the pride they have from their service and the pride of wider society in their contribution. There is a constituency in society with unique competencies and problems directly attributable to their service in the Defence Forces.

12.2 Combined Veterans Strategy. A Veterans' Strategy drafted by the three recognised associations (ARCO, IUNVA and ONE) was submitted to the Minister for Defence and the Department of Defence in December 2018. Seven Strategic Goals were identified to advance the combined Veterans' Strategy: Interface with the Department of Defence and Defence Forces, Transition from Military to Civilian Life, Accreditation of Unique Military Skills, Pensions and Ancillary Support, Medical Treatment, Social Housing, and Recognition of Military Service. Limited progress has been made in advancing the Combined Veterans' Strategy.

12.3 Veterans Affairs. ARCO strongly recommends the elaboration of a formal Veterans' Policy, the appointment of a Commissioner for Veterans, and the immediate establishment of a joint Office for Veterans' Affairs, consisting of personnel from the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces.