



2022 Annual General Meeting

ARCO held its first in person AGM since 2019 on 14 Oct 2022 in McKee Bks. The meeting was very well attended, and the Chief of Staff Lt Gen Sean Clancy addressed the attendees on current DF issues prior to the meeting.

The President reported that following a 65% changeover of personnel during the period of the pandemic, the EXCOM is now well established comprising a diversity of generational groups, gender, as well as an expert cohort of long serving members. Pensions, and pension related issues, remain a major focus of the EXCOM's endeavours, and focuses on: -

- Maintaining the value of military pensions into the future,
- Retaining Pension Parity,
- Accreditation, and
- Implications of the Single Pensions Act 2012 on the DF in terms of retention and consequently on the longer-term future of ARCO in terms of relevance to future membership.

Maintaining the value of military pensions.

Under the provisions of the 'Building Momentum' Public Sector Pay Agreements 2021 – 2023, which provided for parity over the period of the agreement, provides for pension increases in the region of 9.5% with 3% due on 01 Oct 2022 backdated to 01 Feb 2022.

Parity. Prior to ratification by the Unions, ICTU on behalf of the ARPS (Association of Retired Public Servants) secured the Ministers approval, for the maintenance of parity for the foreseeable future. ARCO members will be pleased that Parity, which is a key component of ARCO's Pension Strategy, will be retained to at least the end of 2023. Nevertheless, we remain concerned that with the projected growth in inflation, these increases may not ensure the relative value of pensions. The Agreement contains a review clause to address worsening inflationary conditions.

Accreditation. Beyond the reassurance on Parity for the duration of this agreement, the correspondence between the ICTU and the Minister for PER, and the references contained in both, to the Alliance of Retired Public Servants (of which ARCO is a founding member and sits on its Council), demonstrates the evolving status and perhaps de facto recognition of public service pensioners within the industrial relations machinery of the State.

Disability Pensions. ARCO's submission, dated 22 March 21, recommended an independent review of the Disability Pensions Process. This

was rejected by the Department of Defence on the basis that some positive and unique aspects of the current system could be jeopardised. However, the Sec Gen did commit to keeping the legislative provisions and administrative arrangements under regular internal review. In a subsequent reply ARCO welcomed the commitment to an ongoing internal review process to identify weaknesses in the current process and strengthen them. An indication of progress is awaited.

Retirement Preparation. ARCO is involved in these activities on two fronts. Firstly, is our briefing to the



Transition to Civilian Life (Pre-Retirement) Courses for officers approaching or contemplating early retirement. We participated in one course during 2022. Sadly, a return on our membership is not accruing as we would like and indeed need. Secondly, as part of its outreach programme and as a consequence of seeking to attract officers retiring without direct pension benefits, ARCO continues to explore the concept of Military Transition Programmes, and its utility as a possible component of a Public Service and Military HR Strategy. Reframing new approaches to retention and exit strategies in the DF, especially in the context of the post 2012 retirees and the implications of the Single Pensions Act 2012, is overdue

Communications. ARCO availed of opportunities to brief retired officers on ARCO on the significant developments that had taken place since 2019 when the last briefings were conducted. Briefings were conducted in Collins Bks Cork on 26 Feb 2022, Cathal Brugha Bks on 25 Aug 2022 and Casement Aerodrome on 01 Sep 2022. ARCO's Website, with the associated text-a-service, and Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Linked-in) provides cost effective and efficient communications support for our membership. These platforms all show a steady growth in activity and interest and include some followers of significance in the Military, Political, Civil Service and Academic arenas. ARCO's EXCOM is continually conscious of the importance of timely and accurate internal communication, as this is how the vast majority of our members retain contact with the Association.



Interface with the Defence Community. Of the 30 associations catering for retired public servants, ARCO is the only association with formal access to a member of Government. ARCO values this unique position, and formally engages with the Minister of Defence annually. On the 10th July 22, the Sec Gen DOD, in advance of the formal announcement of the Government Decision on the recommendations of the CODF Report directly briefed the Veteran Associations. This was new and welcome move by the DOD in communicating new developments to Veterans Organisations. An ARCO Team met with a Capability Review Group last Nov into the functioning of DOD in terms of delivering on its mandate as part of the Civil Service Renewal Plan. This review was conducted in the same timeframe as the CODF and a comprehensive report and DOD Implementation Plan is in operation. At the invitation of the IRG-DF an ARCO team met with the group on 01 Jul 2022 on this most fractious of issues. ARCO presented with 4 independent perspectives that reflected diverse experiences based on long/short service experience, service component, and gender. ARCO did not present with a predetermined position. In person quarterly meetings with the Department of Defence and DFHQ and the Veterans' Associations have been resumed post Covid-19.

The atmosphere is positive and business-like. These meetings provide a valuable forum to explore in detail issues of importance to the Veterans Associations. ARCO remains actively engaged with ONE and IUNVA, in advancing the interests of Defence Forces Veterans.

ARCO's submissions and lobbying frequently champion the interests of veterans of all ranks. Joint approaches by the 3 Veteran Associations and considerable lobbying by all three ensured the inclusion of an Office for Veteran Affairs in the CODF Report. This has been accepted by Government and is reflected in the follow-on High Level Action Plan.

Networking. Networking is a new direction for ARCO, providing communications and opportunities, for both our members and the wider Defence Community. ARCO's first event took place in the Keadeen Hotel Newbridge on 22 Sep 2022. Attendees included defence analysts, researchers and academia, politicians, members of the diplomatic corps, the Department of Defence, RACO, serving and retired personnel of the Defence Forces including ARCO members. It is clear that ARCO is being noticed and there is increasing interest in our Association as being one of substance and import, with a significant repository of expertise and experience.

Keeping Defence at the Forefront of Irish Politics

By Comdt Cathal Berry (Retd) TD.

Keeping Defence at the Forefront of Irish Politics
Defence is not a political priority in Ireland. It took 80 years before the state published its first formal Defence policy. We are still awaiting our first National Security Strategy. By any metric our home island is defenceless. The country has more in common with a de-militarized zone or a British protectorate, than the proud, independent republic we profess it to be.

The origins of this political and strategic blind spot can be traced back to the Civil War. Both sides of the conflict evolved into two dominant political parties. These formed every government and parliamentary opposition since the foundation of the state. The war may have officially ended a century ago, but its bitter legacy endured. Atrocities perpetrated by both sides lingered in living memory. Early parliaments were populated extensively by former combatants, and this resulted in military matters being so contentious that they couldn't even be discussed. The pattern persisted and over generations we lost the language to even verbalise military affairs. The state may have been born in battle, but any institutional memory or military acumen that once existed has long been suppressed or forgotten.

Our Defence Force culture is also not entirely blameless either. While political control of a military is a well-established principle of a democratic country, it has been taken to extreme levels in Ireland. A culture of undue deference and blind obedience has taken hold. Fear of raising even legitimate Defence concerns to political masters emerged as the dominant military philosophy. There is an anecdote told of a former Chief of Staff who attended an official state function shortly after his retirement. While attempting to challenge the then Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, on his lack of investment in our armed forces, the Taoiseach interrupted him mid-sentence saying, "that's not my fault, that's your fault- you failed to convince me." There is some merit to this response. Having personally attended numerous conferences frequented by military professionals, I am constantly struck by their uniformed presence in the audience, but complete lack of any contribution whatsoever during the unfolding discussion. This would be highly unusual in any modern European democracy, where



the thought leadership provided by military professionals is highly valued. Throughout its history a code of silence on matters of public interest has rarely served this country well. The Defence sector is but another example of this phenomenon.

The vacuum created by this political and professional silence has been ably filled by the loud rather than the informed. Until recently political "debate" was dominated by those who debased the discourse on military matters to mere sloganeering. The so-called EU Army, alleged American imperialism, the apparently imminent threat of national conscription and the ever-present military industrial complex featured prominently and displaced rational and enlightened discussion. Those who quite rightly raised legitimate concerns about Ireland's lack of defence capability were demonised as warmongers. Heretofore, moderate politicians did not have the language to counter this erroneous narrative, but slowly the dial is turning.

Recent global events have jolted Irish public opinion. Brexit, the Covid pandemic and the cyber-attack on our Health Service have shattered the old certainties. Recent Russian naval manoeuvres in our Exclusive Economic Zone, nefarious activities of the Russian embassy in Dublin and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have also exposed Ireland's geo-political naivety and worldly innocence. Indeed, the increased frequency and severity of Black Swan events have not gone unnoticed. The public are now rightly asking fundamental questions about Ireland's defence provision, or lack thereof. Defence is finally beginning to emerge as a



politically acceptable, if yet still peripheral, topic of discussion.

Consequently, Ireland's inability to perform even basic, routine military functions has come under the spotlight both at home and abroad. Of note, the lack of an air policing service has been heavily criticised. The state's inability to even monitor its own airspace, let alone intercept or escort rogue aircraft, has left many members of the public bewildered. Particularly so when the state was actually capable of scrambling sub-sonic, jet aircraft in the past when this country was much poorer than it is today.

Our ability to uphold Ireland's sovereign rights in our territorial waters is scarcely much better. The decommissioning of three ships earlier this year has reduced the number of Irish naval vessels by a third. Moreover, many of the remaining six vessels are unable to put to sea due to lack of crew. This is an incredible situation for an island nation responsible for patrolling over 15% of European Union waters.

Our depleted army is over-extended and exhausted from multiple, simultaneous, back-to-back, overseas deployments. The Reserve Defence Force has been decimated to such an extent that it is no longer a viable entity. In any other modern country heads would roll, but nobody has yet been held accountable for the demise of Ireland's already meagre defence and deterrent capability. In summary, Ireland's armed forces are at their lowest ebb in over 50 years, just when they are needed most. So how was this allowed to happen? The absence of a full-time defence minister at the cabinet table is further evidence, if any more were needed, of the general indifference with which the defence of the nation is regarded. The Defence portfolio was downgraded to a part-time role in 2011 with the creation of the Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform. One could argue that this was understandable in light of the constitutional cap of 15

senior ministers, the fact that this country was under financial attack at the time and that control of the public finances was of paramount importance. Now that the financial crisis has passed and has been replaced by geopolitical one, surely it is time to re-orientate the cabinet to face the current threats and re-establish Defence as a full-time cabinet position at the expense of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform?

Furthermore, Ireland's supposed neutrality has been a convenient fig leaf for successive governments to justify lack of defence investment. Some politicians even regard being defenceless as a morally superior posture. Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Irish military history knows that we are not a neutral state. Rather we have constructed a uniquely Irish "traditional policy of neutrality". This is characterised by not joining any military alliance with a common defence clause, but still co-operating extensively with neighbouring countries and partners on a case-by-case basis. Consequently, Ireland has no automatic obligation to come to the military assistance of another state. But the reverse is also true. No other state has an obligation to come to Ireland's assistance should we find ourselves in difficulty. In effect we have opted to stand alone and fight alone, yet we have not provided the necessary resources to make this strategy feasible. We don't even maintain a minimum credible deterrent to discourage such an attack in the first instance. Without the insurance policy of an effective Defence Force, Ireland is playing Russian Roulette with its future.

So how do we normalise the defence debate in Ireland without provoking the traditional visceral, polarised reaction to which we have become accustomed? Education is key. For instance, it is completely normal for two spouses to discuss who locks the doors and windows in a family home at night. Furthermore, should they get an intruder alarm installed or should they join a neighbourhood watch scheme? It is also completely normal for a business to discuss whether they should install CCTV, employ a security guard or how best to ensure their cyber security is up to date. These types of prudent, risk management discussions are also completely normal at the level of a nation state. In all other nation states with the notable exception of Ireland of course.

Thankfully there has been some moderate progress in normalising the discussion on defence in the last 12 months. The publication of the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces was a significant milestone. Its damning findings in relation to defence provision in this country came as no surprise to anyone with knowledge of our Defence sector. The fact that there was a need to



establish a governmental commission in the first instance was a tacit admission of failure. Its necessity speaks volumes for the level of dysfunction at the heart of the Defence apparatus in Ireland. The vast majority of the Commission's findings should easily have been identified and addressed through the General Staff, Department of Defence and the Minister decades ago as part of the routine governance of any public service organisation.

While the report has been broadly welcomed as a candid assessment of lack of defence capability, a report is not a result. It remains to be seen whether the Commission's findings will be implemented in full or even in part. While a modest increase in funding has been announced, the poor track record of implementation by Irish Defence officials will necessitate sustained external pressure and scrutiny to ensure compliance. While at a political level there is cross-party support for better pay and conditions of employment for military personnel, the consensus stops there. The recent alternative budgets for 2023 published by the current opposition parties increased the Defence budget by only €15m - €20m. The threat to de-fund the military has not receded. Sustained advocacy on opposition parties is therefore also required.

So how do we keep Defence at the forefront of Irish politics? Firstly, foreign governments must continue to outline their valid concerns at Ireland's inability to protect itself and by extension how this country can be used as a base to attack other European countries. Secondly, the multinational business sector must persist in raising legitimate concerns about Ireland's physical, cyber and

energy security. When large American corporations in particular highlight issues with the government of the day they are listened to carefully. Thirdly and finally, our military veteran community need to become more vocal and active in advocating for change.

Having greater representation in the Oireachtas by former members of the Defence Forces would be a good start. As members of the Opposition, they could hold seats on the influential Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee in order to forensically scrutinise the performance of the Department of Defence and hold to account the Minister of the day. If in government, they could wield executive authority as office holders to ensure that Defence becomes a priority rather than the afterthought it currently is. Mobilising the more than 140,000 Defence Force veterans and their families will be necessary to achieve this aim. Encouraging suitable military veterans to run for public office where they could keep both their colleagues and the public informed on defence matters would be hugely beneficial.

To conclude, a century ago our founding fathers rightly believed that Ireland should become self-sufficient. Self-sufficient in terms of food, in terms of energy and in terms of commerce. It is not unreasonable to insist that Ireland is also self-sufficient in terms of defence. Military veterans, particularly those who have served overseas, know that Ireland is a great country. Let us never again stand accused of failing to convince our people that it is also worth protecting.

Upcoming Ceremonial Events 2023

Date	Event
17 Mar 2023	DF involvement in selected St Patrick's Day Parades.
13 - 17 Mar 2023	Ministerial Review UNDOF, Finner Camp. Date TBC.
09 Apr 2023	Easter Sunday Commemoration, GPO, Dublin @ 1200hrs
Early Apr,	Commissioning 98th Cadet Class. Date TBC.
Mid - Apr,	Ministerial Review UNIFIL, Sarsfield Bks, Limerick. Date: TBC.
03 May 2023	1916 Leaders Commemoration Ceremony, Arbour Hill, Dublin @ 1030hrs,
11 - 16 May 2023	Annual International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Bookings through Joe Walsh Tours.
20/21 May 2023	National Famine Commemoration. Exact Date/Location: TBC.
09 Jul 2023	National Day of Commemoration, Collins Bks, Dublin @ 1100hrs
01 Oct 2023	DF Veterans Day, McKee Bks.

Cadet Class Reunions 2022



45th Cadet Class: 1970– 1972

Front Row (L to R). Gerard Treacy, Michael Finn, Sean McCann, Jimmy O'Neill, Conor O'Boyle, Traolach Sweeney, Philip Smyth

Back Row (L to R). Derek Gaynor, Kieran O'Loughlin, Peter O'Grady, Larry DeClair, Eamonn Lynch, Michael O'Brien, Desmond Page, Declan Carbery, Denis Reidy, Brendan Farrelly, Robert Nugent, John Cremin, Hugh Sheerin, Christopher Droney, Tom Behan.



47th Cadet Class: 1972 - 2022

Front Row (L to R). Pat Healy, Tom Rigney, Noel Duffy, Mick Kennedy, Derry Fitzgerald, Paschal McCann (Cadet Company Commander), Pat Phelan, Con McNamara (Cadet Instructor and Platoon Commander), Dick Faulkner, George Kerton, Eamonn Smyth, Maxie McGrath.

Back Row (L to R). John Curley, Liam O'Sullivan, Brendan Rohan, Eamonn Colclough, Sean Hynes, Steve Cloonan, Fergus Hannon, Matt Murray, Noel Joyce, Martin Molloy, Ultan Edge, Donal Bracken, Ulick McEvaddy, Brian O'Keeffe, Jim Cox, Tommy Doyle, Frank Yorke, Paddy Moran, Peter Cooney, Gerry O'Gorman, John Courtney.



48th Cadet Class: 1972 – 1974

Front Row (L to R). Ian Folan, Kieran Kavanagh, John Hamill, Gerry Freyne, Col Jim Goulding Class Officer), Col Des Travers (Coy Comd 48th Cadet Class), Paul Lindsay, Les Kilgrew, John Flanagan (AC), Joe Scanlon,
2nd Row (L to R). Andrew Kilfeather, Tony O'Sullivan, Niall Cremin, Declan Breen, Frank Daly, John McMahon, Kevin O'Dwyer, Liam Gillespie, Gene Ryan (NS) Tom Cox, Sean O'Fiachan, Larry Devaney, Noel Minogue, Kevin Hendrick, Michael O'Connor.
Back Row (L to R). Michael Hanrahan, Barry O'Brien, Tony Wheatley, Michael Quinlan (NS), Frank Condon (AC), John Sheehan, Michael Duffy, Denis Cronin.



3rd Inf Bn Retired Officers Association

The 3rd Inf Bn Retired Officers Association held its annual lunch on the 5th of November last in Stephens Bks Kilkenny. The Association has met annually since 1951, when it's first gathering took place in Custume Bks Athlone.

Pictured (Left) is the current Association President, Col Tom Aherne (Retd) (Centre) with Bn OC Lt Col Gareth Prendergast (R) and 2IC Stephen Mac Eoin (L). Below are the membership who attended on the day.





The President and Executive Committee of ARCO wish all of their members a

Happy and Healthy Christmas

and hope that your Holiday Season is full of Peace and Joy



62nd Anniversary of the Niamba Ambush

The Annual Mass and Wreath Laying Ceremony in memory of those who lost their lives in Niamba was held in Cathal Brugha Barracks on 05 November 2022.

ARCO President, Brig Gen Séamus Ó'Giolláin (Retd), laid a wreath on behalf of the Association.



IMPORTANT NOTICE: Mobile Phone Number

ARCO's Texting Service is part of our aim at improving communications with our members. Thanks to all members who responded to this notice in previous Newsletters. Your details have been updated on our database, so you should now be receiving messages through the Texting Service. Any Members of ARCO who are still NOT receiving messages through the ARCO Texting Service should ensure that their **NOT** receiving messages through the ARCO Texting Service should ensure that their **current mobile phone number** is recorded on our database. Please forward your mobile number to your Regional Representative or to declancarbery@hotmail.com

Welcome to ARCO's New Members:

Lt Col Trevor Kingston	Comdt Martin Nolan
Lt Col Gavin Bourke	Comdt Cormac Spain
Lt Col Mary Carroll	Lt Col Michael O'Connor
Col Paul Whelan	Col Paul Carey

Deceased Officers

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-Anamacha

Our condolences to the families and friends of those comrades who passed away since our last newsletter.

Lt Col Ned Cusack	16 Aug '22
Comdt John Byrne	16 Aug '22
Maj Gen Vincent Savino	28 Aug '22
Lt Col Frank O'Donovan	31 Aug '22
Comdt Diarmuid O'Donoghue	06 Sept '22
Lt (NS) Gordon Thompson	13 Oct '22
Col Michael (Mick) Moriarty	03 Nov '22
Capt Gerard Anthony (Gerry) Wright	18 Nov '22
Brig Gen James Connolly	24 Nov '22

Defence Forces Remembrance Ceremony 2022

The Defence Forces Remembrance Ceremony was held in Merrion Square on 16 Nov 22. This Ceremony commemorates serving members that have died in the last 12 months.



Pictured above. ARCO President, Brig Gen Séamus Ó'Giolláin (Retd), who along with representatives from ONE and IUNVA laid wreaths on behalf of the three Veteran Organisations

EDITOR'S NOTE

This Newsletter is issued in Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter. The editor welcomes articles or items of interest, or suggestions as to what should be included. If you have any contribution or suggestion please send them to the Editor, Declan Carbery at declancarbery@hotmail.com

For further information, please visit ARCO's Website: <https://iarco.info/> and follow us on LinkedIn under Association of Retired Commissioned Officers, or on Facebook and Twitter, via @ARCOIreland