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## ADDRESS TO THE ANNUAL DELGATE CONFERENCE PDFORRA

04 OCTOBER 2006

LT GEN J. SREENAN

CHIEF OF STAFF

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A Uachtaráin PDFORRA, Rúnaí Ginearálta PDFORRA, a Aire Cosanta, Rúnaí Ginearálta na Roinne, baill den Fheidhmeanach Náisiúnta, deiligáidí agus a áionna go léir. Tá mé fíor shásta bheith anseo inniú ar ócáid bhur gcuigiú comhdháil bliantúil déag. Mar is gnáth fáiltim an seans seo labhairt le h-ionadaithe tofa PDFORRA.

President of PDFORRA, General Secretary PDFORRA, Minister for Defence, Secretary General of the Department, members of the National Executive, Delegates, Ombudsman for the Defence Forces and fellow guests. I am delighted to be with you today in Waterford on the occasion of your 15th Annual Delegate Conference As always I welcome the opportunity to address the elected representatives of PDFORRA.

Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to formally congratulate BQMS Simon Deveraux on his re-election as Deputy General Secretary of your association and I also congratulate the members old and new who were elected to the National Executive. Go n-éirí an t-ádh libh go léir.

Since last year when I addressed you at conference in Athlone, the Defence Forces has continued to deliver operations both at home and overseas, while transforming and developing greater operational capability in keeping with the White Paper on Defence 2000, the Department of Defence Strategy Statement 2005-2007, and the Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2005-2007.

### 2. OVERSEAS COMMITMENTS

A key element of Ireland's foreign policy is our participation in overseas operations, I think it's fair to say that the demands on us in this regard have never been greater than to-day. It is an important factor in meeting Ireland's international obligations as a member of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe.

Liberia

During 2006 we have continued to deploy a Battalion to UNMIL with the 94th and 95th Battalions rotating during the year. The integration of a Swedish Coy into the Irish led Quick Reaction Force (QRF) continued to be successful and the mission is now in the consolidation

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phase. The operational focus is now towards aid to the civil power and nation building in support of the Government of Liberia.

Current planning is that the 96th Bn, which will deploy to UNMIL in November this year, will be our final Unit, with our projected exit from Liberia scheduled for May/June 2007.

All the evidence to date indicates that we will be leaving Liberia in very good shape and that is the purpose of peace support operations. The violence has ended, a democratically elected Government is in place and working well and Liberia has natural reserves and people to make it a very stable democracy. Members of your Association have played a vital role in this.

#### Lebanon

For the many thousand of Irish soldiers who have served in UNIFIL down the years it was sad and distressing to see that country once again engulfed in bitter conflict over the Summer. Thankfully the ceasefire has held well since agreed and the Government has now agreed that we should join the very significant European contribution to UNIFIL 2. We will this time join with Finland and provide a Unit of approximately 160 Irish personnel, that will form a Mechanised Company with its necessary operational, administrative and logistical support elements.

Finland will provide a multi role Engineering Company and both countries will contribute to the Headquarters of the Unit and to the Logistics Company that will provide the necessary support to the operational elements. The reconnaissance conducted by the Defence Forces in Lebanon from 18 to 21 Sep 2006 has determined, that the primary role of the Irish Coy will be to provide security and protection for the multi role Finnish Engineering Company, when it is deployed on operations.

The Reconnaissance also determined that the Finnish/Irish unit will be a Force Commanders asset and therefore the Irish Mechanised Company can be deployed on independent security duties such as patrols and escorts, throughout the UNIFIL Area of Operations and within Lebanon as appropriate.

As part of the UNIFIL military tasks, the combined Finnish/Irish unit will also protect and render humanitarian assistance to the local population. These activities will include delivery of humanitarian aid within capabilities and in co-operation with international agencies, conducting operational demining and the provision of practical support for priority reconstruction efforts. We will draw on our vast experience in the provision of humanitarian assistance in Peace Support Operations and the Irish Government's commitment to the people of Lebanon.

No two missions are exactly similar and UNIFIL 2 will be quite different to UNIFIL 1. The Force will be much larger and more capable, more interoperable and with more robust rules of engagement. This time we will join with much better equipment than for UNIFIL 1, with greater experience arising from Liberia and the Balkans and with the same level of commitment that those who served in UNIFIL 1 brought to that mission.

#### Kosovo

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The Defence Forces has contributed to KFOR since August 1999 initially with a Transport Company and more recently with an Infantry Group. This Infantry Group is part of Multinational Task Force (Centre) which comprises personnel from Sweden, Finland, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Latvia. The Czech Republic is the current Framework Nation for Multinational Task Force Centre.

Ireland for the first time will take on the role of Framework Nation on the 1st of August 2007 for a 12-month period. The Framework Nation assumes responsibility for the co-ordination and control of the Task Force Headquarters, and is obliged to provide assets and capabilities to support the Headquarters. The Defence Forces will provide the commander of the Task Force.

This represents a significant development for us. For the first time an Irish Officer will be in command and control of a Multinational Brigade sized force in a NATO/PfP led Peace Support Operation. In addition it will provide opportunities for our NCO's and soldiers to participate in a multinational environment that demands the highest levels of professionalism.

Our leadership of the Task Force comes at a critical time for Kosovo. Very soon decisions will have to be taken on the final status of Kosovo and of course it will hardly be possible to please all concerned. In going forward it will be critical that KFOR provides the stability and reassurance necessary and I am confident that the Irish Leadership of Multi National Task Force (Centre) will contribute significantly.

Elsewhere

We will continue to fulfil our commitments to other missions such as those deployed in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire to name but a few. It is envisaged that the Defence Forces would continue to support EUFOR in Bosnia at current levels for the present but the downsizing of EUFOR has begun and this will see an appropriate reduction in deployment of Defence Forces personnel in due course.

The nature of Peace Support Operations continues to evolve and the demands become greater. All our personnel deploying must be prepared to operate across the spectrum of operations from peacekeeping to peacemaking. This preparation involves having the right equipment, having the right training and having the best leaders. Indeed this applies not just to overseas operations but to all operations be they Army, Air Corps or Naval Service.

However it is important that the burden of overseas service is spread as evenly as possible. To achieve this our volunteer pool must be high. For many years we prided ourselves in our ability to secure sufficient volunteers to partake in peace support operations.

There is a fall off of volunteers in some areas at present that necessitates mandatory selection, but our overseas commitments are at the heart of our business and must be met.

3. EQUIPMENT

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We have addressed the Air Corps needs with the acquisition of the fixed wing Pilatus aircraft and the new Light Utility Helicopters are already making their mark. Later this year we will see the arrival of the Utility Helicopters which will allow us to greatly develop our co-operation on operations between the Army and the Air Corps.

We have already commenced work on a very significant project for the Naval Service - their ship replacement programme.

For the Army, Phase 3 of the MOWAG procurement plan has commenced with a contract for the procurement of 15 state of the art armoured vehicles specifically for Cavalry Corps operations with delivery due next year. The programme of funding for the purchase of stocks of Integrated Personal Load Carrying Systems is also being continued together with procurement of Body Armour, Helmets, GPMG's, Pistols and Field Deployable HQ's.

## LEADERSHIP

I have a duty of care to personnel on operations and in this regard nothing is more important than the quality of leadership. Last year I directed that the Defence Forces Leadership Centre of Excellence (DFLCE) be established in the Military College. It is now based in UNTSI and the School Commandant is the Head of the Leadership Training Department.

The Mission Statement for the Centre reads as follows:

"The Defence Forces Leadership Centre, recognising the primacy of the role of leadership in the Defence Forces, will provide opportunities for Officers and NCO's to improve their leadership skills throughout their careers, thereby enhancing the quality of leadership displayed throughout the organisation."

Leadership training is delivered in a seminar format that combines lectures, case studies and most importantly an interactive process between facilitators and students and amongst students themselves. Great emphasis is placed on the inter action between students as it facilitates contrasting approaches between Units, Brigades and Services as to the methodology adopted in tackling problems that arise across the full spectrum of command activities.

The duration of the standard seminar is two days (residential). These seminars are rank structured and each one is specifically designed to reflect the rank of those attending. In every case a member of the General Staff has addressed the seminars and there is always a presentation by a civilian speaker on an aspect of leadership.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2005 I also designated UNTSI as the Defence Forces Centre of Human Rights in Peace Support Operations. Reflecting the increasingly common inclusion of Human Rights in the mandates of peace operations, the UN, the EU and the Member States of both organisations have been placing increased emphasis on the provision of Human Rights training to peace support operations personnel.

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The objective of this Centre of Excellence is to ensure that Defence Forces personnel have an understanding of the legal and operational human rights issues relevant to peace support operations and the roles and functions of military personnel in promoting and protecting human rights in mission areas.

All career courses now include modules under the aegis of the UN School on Human Rights as appropriate to the level of the course, in addition to the specialised courses on Human Rights for national and international personnel. Indeed I see this Centre of Excellence not just for our own personnel but also for our European partners and we will be conducting a second international course in November under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at which our own Minister for Defence Mr. Willie O' Dea TD has kindly agreed to participate.

#### CULTURAL AWARENESS

As a natural follow on from Human Rights I recently initiated the Defence Forces Cultural Awareness Centre of Excellence. Again based in UNTSI its mission is to develop a knowledge base on all current and potential areas of operations for the Defence Forces throughout the world focusing on the cultural, ethnic, religious and societal aspects. The aim is to ensure that the Defence Forces personnel when deployed abroad are aware and equipped to recognise, understand and effectively operate in diverse societies, thus increasing operational effectiveness.

As you can see from what I have been saying overseas operations are at the heart of the Army's role to-day. Everything must be benchmarked against our participation in these operations – our medical standards our fitness standards, our education and training our career advancement procedures, our equipment and our leadership standards.

Overseas operations are no longer an optional extra, they are our core business for officers and enlisted personnel, men and women right throughout their careers. To-day our Army must be based on equality and that means everyone sharing the challenge of overseas operations in accordance with the terms of their enlistment.

#### HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

As I have said on many previous occasions the personnel who serve in the Defence Forces continue to be our most important asset. Accordingly, it is appropriate that we continue to modernize our approach towards Human Resource Management. I want to ensure that the Defence Forces is at the leading edge in this area and I feel that already we compare more than favourably with other organizations in this country.

HR Strategy Statement

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I published the Defence Forces HR Strategy Statement in August of this year and it provides the new framework for going forward and in particular how we deal with our primary resource - the personnel who serve in the organisation. The Strategy Statement obliges the Defence Forces to prioritise recruitment, training and development, career and performance management, encouraging mobility and flexibility, terms of employment, improving communications, and promoting equality of opportunity as key organisational goals. Some of these issues are already at C&A and I urge you to join with us in expediting their passage.

#### Ombudsman

The appointment by the Minister for Defence almost a year ago of Ms Paulyn Marrinan-Quinn as Ombudsman for the Defence Forces was welcomed by us all at last years conference and I think it is fair to say, she is already making her mark.

Arising from her work we have already revised our procedures for selection of personnel for courses and are engaged with you at C&A on promotion arrangements. I see the role of the Ombudsman as a further important step in modernising our management systems, and I thank her for her most valuable work in the modernisation of our Human Resource Management.

#### Designated Contact Persons (DCP) Process

The DCP process which was formally launched in September last year and aims to provide a voluntary informal resource for personnel of any rank who may wish to discuss any incident of alleged bullying or harassment or sexual harassment is now up and running very well and is being progressed under the Director of Human Resources. We now have 184 DCP's in place, which includes 16 DCP trainers and we conducted refresher training last month. The training course for DCP's is being formalised as an annual course in the Defence Forces Annual Training Directive.

#### Confidential Helpline

The Helpline continues to operate and this link offers a totally independent and confidential support to anyone who feels unable to use our internal systems.

#### MODERNISATION

Negotiations have concluded on the new social partnership agreement "Towards 2016". The Modernisation Agreement prepared by Management has been forwarded to your Association and negotiations will begin shortly on the finalisation of the Modernisation Agenda and the Action Plan.

The Defence Forces will continue to embrace public sector modernisation, strive to provide and demonstrate value for money and develop our capacity to deliver customer focused services.

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## CONCLUSION

2006 proved an exceptional year on the Ceremonial front for the Defence Forces. The 1916 Anniversary Parade, the Battle of the Somme Commemoration and the funeral of the former Taoiseach Charles J. Haughey put us very much in the public eye. Despite a reduction in ceremonial duties over the years due to operational commitments, I was always confident that we would execute these tasks with confidence and precision. As Chief of Staff I was extremely pleased and proud of the Defence Forces contribution and the many letters of congratulations and thanks received bore testament to the esteem in which the public holds us. But nothing can be taken for granted and we must continue to aspire to the highest standards not just in ceremonial but in everything we do.

Before I conclude I would like with your permission to avail of this public forum to congratulate one of our colleagues Company Quartermaster Sergeant Brian Crowe on his selection as referee for this years All Ireland Football Final. As a West of Ireland man let me be the first to admit the final was not a great spectacle but Brian fulfilled his mission in the thoroughly professional fashion with which he attends to his Military duties. And while I'm at it might I mention the Task Force on Active Citizenship being chaired by Mary Davis. Mary who is no stranger to us from her work on the Special Olympics is leading a Task Force aimed at generating greater community involvement.

I know that in the past Defence Forces personnel were always to the fore particularly in encouraging and supporting young people to participate in games and sports.

Defence Forces personnel with our training and background are ideally suited to give leadership and I would encourage you to support the Task Force workshops and play a role in developing our local communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of PDFORRA for their support and dedication throughout the year and pay tribute to those who have served abroad on our many overseas missions.

Once again thank you for providing me with this opportunity to address you and I wish you well in your deliberations for the remainder of the Conference and for the coming year.