

ADDRESS TO THE ANNUAL DELGATE CONFERENCE

PDFORRA

At the Brandon Hotel, Tralee

10 OCTOBER 2007

Lt. Gen. DERMOT EARLEY

Chief of Staff

INTRODUCTION

A Uachtaráin PDFORRA, a Aire Cosanta, Rúnaí Ginearálta na Roinne, Rúnaí Ginearálta PDFORRA, baill den Fheidhmeanach Náisiúnta, deiligáidí, Omudsman Na Forsaí Cosanta agus a aíonna go léir. Tá mé fíor shásta bheith anseo inniú ar ócáid bhur séiú (16th) comhdháil bliantúil déag. Mar is gnáh fáiltím an seans seo labhairt le h-ionadaithe tofa PDFORRA agus deiligídh go léir.

President of PDFORRA, Minister for Defence, Secretary General of the Department, General Secretary PDFORRA, members of the National Executive, Delegates, Ombudsman for the Defence Forces and fellow guests. I am delighted to be with you today in Tralee on the occasion of your 16th Annual Delegate Conference and I welcome the opportunity to address the elected representatives and delegates of PDFORRA.

Whilst this is my first opportunity as Chief of Staff to address Conference, I have, since my appointment, met with elected members of your Association as a group and with individual members and discussed matters of interest and concern. I know that a positive and productive working relationship has developed and I am confident that that relationship will continue to develop as we move forward.

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.

Human Resource Management

A wide-ranging number of HR initiatives have been introduced over the past five years particularly in regard to developing positive work relations and a safe and supportive work environment.

In the past five years we have made considerable changes and in this transition have become an increasingly agile and responsive organisation, providing a value for money military capability and services nationally and internationally.

Our investment in equipment and infrastructure has been extremely important but at the core of our successful modernisation to date have been the adaptability, professionalism, and commitment of our personnel, our key strategic resource. With increasing demand on the Defence Forces to provide additional military capability and services, we must strive to lead and manage this important resource in the most efficient and effective way. This has been recognised in the fact that one of the four Defence Forces Strategic Goals, as outlined in the Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2005-2007, relates specifically to Human Resource Management, namely:

“To recruit, develop, motivate and sustain effective human resources to support the delivery of military capability and defence outputs”.

The new Human Resource management Strategy provides the overarching framework to ensure that this Defence Forces Strategic Goal is progressed. This will ensure that the adaptability,

professionalism and commitment of our personnel is continuously developed and contributes to the achievement of overall Defence Forces Strategy in the coming years.

A steering group under the chairmanship of the ACOS and including the DHRMS, DDFT and D Admin will oversee the implementation of this Defence Forces HRM Strategy. Full implementation will take a number of years and will be achieved only with a logically progressive and graduated approach. Elements practically attainable on a year-on-year basis will be systematically progressed in the relevant Defence Forces Annual Plans.

A key challenge facing us will be to maintain the momentum of change required to achieve our vision:

“To be a modern, loyal, highly disciplined, well trained, well resourced, interoperable force, which can deploy and deliver effective and flexible military capabilities at home and abroad”.

Momentum to date has been greatly facilitated through our wholehearted commitment to transforming the way we manage and lead our personnel and through solid relationship development with PDFORRA as part of the partnership process and modernisation mechanisms.

Partnership

The Defence Forces Partnership Steering Group has been functioning successfully and issues that are currently under discussion in this forum include the provision of childcare facilities in the Curragh/Newbridge area, decentralisation of the Defence Forces Headquarters to the Curragh, and the review of the Defence Forces medical services. The progress being achieved under partnership, and more importantly the open manner in which all parties are approaching it, clearly demonstrates the benefits of an inclusive approach to problem solving.

I am aware that demands of military service such as tours overseas, navy patrol duties and security duties make particular demands on Defence Force personnel and their families. I can assure you that I am committed to the health and welfare of the members of the Defence Forces.

I recently chaired discussions with your General Secretary and representatives of the Naval Service and Naval Service leadership regarding the effects of patrol duties on personnel of the Naval Service. I am pleased to say that substantial progress has been made in this area and discussions continue to reach final agreement.

I intend to push ahead to complete the modernisation agenda as laid out in the white paper. To this end discussions are ongoing with your Association on a number of outstanding modernisation issues which are, as agreed, incorporated in the “Towards 2016 “ modernisation action plan.

Change must be embraced by all parties. The representative processes consisting of the Council, Forum, Subcommittees and the Partnership function have a vital role to play in the implementation of change. Council has been used over the past year to make substantial progress on a range of issues of interest to your members. Our Minister has already stated that since the last ADC, 15 significant reports have been signed, the significant majority recording agreement.

I am very happy that the DFHQ Forum plays an important role in solving problems of mutual concern. We can use this forum to make progress in many ways and I encourage you to work within this mechanism as much as possible. Our side will not be found wanting.

Our Minister has outlined the progress made in commissioning from the ranks. All I will add is that we welcome very much this development.

Finance

The programme of substantial investment in the Defence Forces continues consistent with the White Paper on Defence at a level of 0.6% of GNP. Defence Estimates for 2007 is €797 million of which over €168 million is devolved to the Defence Forces. This represents devolved authority for the expenditure of 21.06% of the Defence Vote in 2007. Emphasis on expenditure will continue towards improving our infrastructure and on the purchase of new modern equipment to enable the Defence Forces meet operational commitments both at home and overseas.

The priority at home continues to be the upgrading of accommodation and DF facilities. A total of €25.6 million will be expended on construction works and €14.6 million on maintenance works by the end of this year.

Investment in Defensive Equipment will continue under the Defence Forces Defensive Procurement Plan. Significant programmes include

- MOWAG APC Phase 3 complete with 30mm cannon
- 2 AW 139 Helicopters in 2008
- Arty Fire Control System
- MOWAG and AML Intercom systems
- NBC Filters MOWAG
- Integrated Personal Protection and Load Carrying System
- Body/Armour/Battle Vests
- GPMG's – Helicopters
- Light Tactical Armoured Vehicle (LTAV's)
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV's)

Particular emphasis in 2007 was placed on the acquisition and maintenance of a Strategic Stock of spare parts for MOWAGS and the projected spend on this is €5m. Once this stock is established it is expected to cost between €2 -€3m annually to replenish. This will allow the Defence Forces to ensure that adequate and timely repairs are carried out on our MOWAG fleet both at home and overseas.

In respect of Units serving on Peace Support Operations, priority of spending continues to be directed towards equipping and sustaining these units with an emphasis placed on Force Protection.

Overseas

A key element of Ireland's foreign policy is our participation in overseas operations, I think its 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.

As of today the DF have 414 NCOs and Men serving overseas as follows:

- 143 serving with United Nations led peacekeeping operations, UNIFIL and UNMIK.
- 36 serving with European Union led crisis management operations, EUFOR, DITF and EUMS.
- 235 serving with NATO/PfP led peace support operations, KFOR and ISAF.

Chad

Just two weeks ago, within 24 hours of a unanimous adoption of UN Resolution 1778, the Government and our Minister acted decisively. Mr. O'Dea instructed me to dispatch a reconnaissance team to Chad with a view to deploying up to 350 Irish soldiers to the region as part of the proposed EU Force. This team are to depart for Chad this week. This force will form part of a multi-dimensional UN mission in Chad and the Central African Republic in the coming weeks and months. The military are but one part of the jigsaw. Humanitarian organisations, police and the goodwill and professionalism of all participants will also alleviate the severe hardship of these

peoples. But as the UN Secretary General's predecessor said 'there can be no development without security'.

It is likely we will play a significant part in this mission. However, let me assure you, that foremost in my mind is the safety of any troops we may deploy there in the coming weeks and months. Militarily, it is a difficult operational, environmental and logistical situation for any army to deploy into. We are a very well equipped, interoperable, modern, motivated and capable force. As you know it is these attributes, and most importantly – our training - allied to the Irish approach to peacekeeping that will greatly reduce any risk to troops in the mission area. Moreover, previous experience of over 70,000 tours of duty in close to 50 years peacekeeping service stands us in very good stead. The most recent experience of our seven battalions in Liberia makes, I believe, the organisation, the planners within it and you – the soldiers and leaders, our most important resource – ready for any challenge.

Similar to the initial deployment to Liberia, I have issued a Warning Order to the Army Ranger Wing for potential deployment to this mission. They are in detailed preparations and should the Government and Dail Eireann authorise a troop contribution, it is possible they will be the first troops from Ireland on the ground. I will not pre-empt the reconnaissance mission or my recommendations to our Minister on the outcome of that important task. Speaking in the Dail last year, our Minister described the deployment of troops on overseas service as “a concrete expression of Ireland's foreign policy objectives”. I can state Minister that the forces are ready to make that expression on behalf of the Government and the Irish people.

I must not leave the subject of overseas service without mentioning the imminent withdrawal of the 36 Infantry Group from the mission in Lebanon. I am speaking to a lot of experienced campaigners in this room who know what it takes to serve there. The link will not be entirely broken however, as some Defence Forces staff will remain in UNIFIL HQ. UNIFIL goes on with over 12,000 troops continuing the mission. Peacekeeping and peace enforcement grows ever-dynamic. New challenges arise and they must be embraced. Lebanon and the people of the south, in particular, will always have a place in the hearts of those in the Defence Forces who served there. And of course we are mindful of those that made the ultimate sacrifice, our 46 members of the Defence Forces who gave their lives in the cause of peace there. Ar Dheis Dhé go raibh a h-anamacha.

Kosovo

Ireland for the first time took 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 provides the commander of the Task Force.

This represents a significant development for us. For the first time an Irish Officer is 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.

This new experience will contribute to the development of the Defence Forces and enhance our capabilities and our profile within the international peacekeeping community.

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.

Nordic Battle Group (NBG)

Up to 100 DF personnel (all ranks) will be involved with the NBG both as members of the staffs at the Operational HQ and at the Force HQ in UK and Sweden as well as providing the IEDD tactical component. The core capability of the IEDD Tactical Component is IEDD and ESSC. The DF's Tactical Component has conducted training at home, which culminated in the declaration of full operational capability (FOC) at a certification exercise in late July. After FOC, the tactical component will be ready to participate in multinational training, which culminates during Exercise 'Nordic Resolution' in Sweden in October/November 2007. The exercise will be used to declare NBG FOC and will certify the NBG prior to its standby period (01 Jan 2008 to 30 Jun 2008). It will

include the deployment of the DF IEDD Tactical Component and its equipment to Sweden where it will participate in a tactical level separation of parties by force exercise and a strategic lift deployment to an exercise area inside the Arctic Circle.

Training

2007 has seen continued modernisation and development across the training and education sphere. The Response to the Challenge in the Workplace repeatedly emphasised that the existing best practice within the DF successfully combines a robust and effective training regime with a culture of respect for the individual. In recent years there has been considerable developments in this area in order to ensure best practice becomes the norm, that the dignity of all personnel undergoing training is valued, and supporting the instructor in the exercise of his or her function in a robust and demanding training environment. In 2007 a new Policy of DF instructors has been issued and a Handbook for Military Instructors is in the final stages of production. This is a comprehensive work, which has been externally validated and is a credit to the development team made up largely of senior NCOs from our principal training installations.

An Army when not engaged in conflict trains for it. In this I am mindful of the rapidly evolving nature of our operational focus especially on overseas service. New demands are made of us, and skills requirements and procedures are constantly evolving. To that end we must constantly evaluate what we train for and how we do it. This year we have evaluated various aspects of our Initial Entry training courses especially in relation to physical training and the future development of a Minimum Load Carrying Test. We are in the process of developing a new Annual Personnel Weapons Training Test. In the coming years, a major investment is planned for our training infrastructure. This will manifest itself particularly in development of our ranges as we reflect best International Practice. This will serve to mirror the higher intensity and increasing complex training requirements to match the challenges of our multifaceted overseas commitments. The investment will also encompass an upgrade of our Simulation systems, tactical training equipment and personal kit as we modernise and keep pace with ever changing threats. This year we will for the first time participate in a major training exercise abroad as part of the Nordic Battle Group. I would like to acknowledge the personal contribution that each member of this unit has made and their commitment to meet the NBG requirements from 01 January.

In the DF our main asset, our people, will see increasing acknowledgement of their investment within the academic and vocational sphere. This is a necessary part of their development and it is our intention to have their intellectual investment accredited using benchmarks available to their civilian counterparts, this will reflect our commitment to Life Long Learning. It is my intention to develop a strategy by which all learning achievements attained whilst in service will be accredited externally to facilitate recognition, transfer and progression.

On the sporting front DF teams and individuals have achieved very high standards. Our shooting teams have acquitted themselves with distinction at international competitions in Bisley and in Canada. A large contingent has departed for India to the World CISM Games with a golf team competing in South Africa.

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.

I want to thank your full-time officials and all of you who are actively participating as representatives at other levels for your positive and worthwhile contribution to the representative process in the Defence Forces.

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.

Ends