



An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence



Óglaigh
na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

Department of Defence
and Defence Forces

Annual Report 2023

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Foreword

BY SECRETARY GENERAL
AND CHIEF OF STAFF



Minister,

We are pleased to submit this Annual Report of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces for 2023. The Report provides extensive details of the wide range of work undertaken and outputs delivered throughout 2023. In addition, it outlines the progress made during the year on achieving the goals and objectives as set out in the Department of Defence and Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2023 to 2026.

In 2023 the Defence Forces in conjunction with the Department of Defence took significant steps towards making positive changes for all our staff and Defence Forces members that will benefit them now, and in the future. The Organisational Capability Review and the publication of the Strategic Framework encompassing the key actions highlighted in the Commission on the Defence Forces Report and the report of the Independent Review Group reflect the meaningful transformation that is underway. Collectively this transformation is welcomed in every respect and we recognise the challenging workloads carried by our staffs through this time of positive organisational and cultural change. This change is occurring amidst an evolving global security environment compounded by the continuing impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the events of 07 October in Israel, the subsequent responses in Gaza and Southern Lebanon and the overall regional instability that has ensued in the Middle East where Defence Force personnel are and were deployed with UNIFIL, UNTSO and UNDOF respectively.

We would like to commend the commitment and resilience of our staffs throughout the numerous transformative achievements and operational outputs highlighted in this 2023 annual report. Throughout the year the Defence Forces have contributed Maritime, Air, Land, and Joint capabilities to Aid to the Civil Power and Aid to the Civil Authority. In particular, the joint operational excellence demonstrated in the seizure of the MV Matthew and the operational performance of our units deployed in both UNDOF and UNIFIL are noteworthy.

This report demonstrates the wide range of work undertaken by the Department and the Defence Forces; highlighting the strong sense of collaboration and mutual respect for the work that must be delivered to improve accountability and transparency across all areas of the Defence Forces. We have a plan that sets out an ambitious programme of work to move to 'Level of Ambition 2' (LOA 2) by 2028 and the significant and fundamental change for the Defence Forces that will be delivered across the Commission's recommendations which span: Strategic HR and Cultural Change; New Command and Control and Joint Structures to be established; Services to be reformed and restructured; Reserve Defence Forces and Joint Capability Development.

Following the publication of the Independent Review Group report in March 2023, a number of initiatives have also been significantly progressed, including the establishment of the External Oversight Body and Government approval to establish a Tribunal of Inquiry. All of these and other initiatives are brought together in the reporting process, established by the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, under the Strategic Framework.

During 2023, our Defence Forces continued to represent the people and values of this State in the pursuit of peace across the globe. The Defence Forces commenced its contributions to the EUMAM Ukraine mission further adding to Ireland's reputation as a major contributor to international peace, security and humanitarian efforts. Peace Support Operations remain the most important international action that any nation can provide and the Defence Forces continue to personify our nation's values and commitment to that noble cause. As well as being a very honourable task, our military contributions to peace in an ever-evolving security environment, remain challenging. Accordingly, we recognise the commitment of all Defence Forces members who serve overseas and we remember all of the Defence Forces members who have lost their lives while serving their country. We are also extremely

appreciative of the Defence Force families who support the deployment of our personnel on these missions, because without their support achieving our objectives would not be possible.

In July 2023, a memorial service was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, to pay tribute and to honour the memory of United Nations personnel who gave their lives in the service of peace during the previous year. At this service the memory and distinguished service of Private Seán Rooney was recognised with the posthumous award of the Dag Hammarskjöld medal.

In response to the evolving and increasingly complex security environment and in line with the recommendations in the Organisational Capability Review, the Department has restructured into six distinctive Divisions: Defence and Security Policy; Strategic Change and Capability Development; Emergency Operations and Infrastructure Oversight; Corporate Affairs; IRG Implementation; and Defence Capability People Policy. The establishment of a dedicated Corporate Affairs division, as recommended in the Organisational Capability Review, enables significant efficiencies and a renewed focus on data governance. The Management Board has expanded in tandem, with a 50/50 split in terms of gender, something which is unique in Government Department structures.

In line with the Commission on the Defence Forces a new Defence Forces Board has been established to include two civilian Assistant Secretary level appointments, to lead the newly created Transformation and Strategic Human Resource Divisions. Furthermore, the processes, commenced in 2023, are to deliver Army Force Design, Cyber Defence Planning, Defence Forces Digital Transformation Offices and an enhanced Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Office to advise the Defence Forces Board. The establishment of the Joint Induction Training Centre, staffed by all three services, offers a new induction experience for personnel embarking on a career in the Defence Forces. These new roles and functions provide significant added value to the overall transformation ambitions towards a modern, fit for purpose and agile Defence Forces.

These restructuring efforts have brought renewed focus on the delivery of our Defence objectives and the policy and legislation changes necessary to underpin the transformation agenda of the Defence Forces and the Department. Three successes of note in 2023, in the people policy area, were the extension of private secondary medical care to all Permanent Defence Force members, an enhanced patrol duty allowance for the Naval Service, and the significant progress made in

finalising the civilian-military management position on the implementation of the Working Time Directive. Furthermore, the delivery of two Inshore Patrol Vessels and new Maritime Patrol Aircraft enhance Ireland's military capability for the Maritime and Air Domains. The establishment of a Joint Civil Military Capability Development Unit to develop a Plan to enhance military capabilities and associated materiel acquisition will further underpin the Defence Forces Transformation.

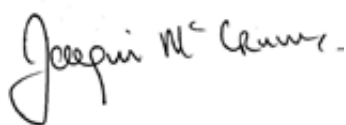
We would also like to commend the continued excellent work undertaken by the Defence and Defence Forces Women's Networks at a time of significant cultural transformation; hosting several successful events around the country. Complementing these initiatives and contributing positively in ensuring the Defence Forces develops as an employer of choice are the 'Defend With Pride Network' and the Defence Forces Organisational Cultural Standing Committee. In all our work, there is a strong public service ethos, pride and sense of service across the Department, the Defence Forces, and Civil Defence, embracing transformation, leveraging partnership opportunities and delivering value for money.

The new Civil Defence Act is a significant milestone in the longstanding commitment to provide a more modern aggregated piece of governing legislation for Civil Defence. We wish to acknowledge all the Civil Defence volunteers who alongside our Defence Forces colleagues continue to provide assistance and contribute to national resilience when called upon. The significant investment made by the Department

in professional training was evident in the State's flood relief response to Storm Babet. The Civil Defence K9 unit also welcomed two new search dogs to their victim recovery unit this year, and also the qualification of the unit's first female dog handler. Civil Defence now have four search dog teams which regularly assist An Garda Síochána in missing person's searches. We thank the volunteer search dog handlers who have shown great commitment to this work over the years.

The Office of Emergency Planning completed a comprehensive programme of work throughout 2023. It supported the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning in the development of a number of new Emergency Management guidelines. It hosted the annual All-Island Disaster Risk Reduction Conference which encourages North South linkages relating to disaster risk reduction. It launched the annual 'Be Summer Ready' and 'Be Winter Ready' campaigns, supported the National Emergency Coordination Group and drafted the National Risk Assessment for Ireland 2023.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge and say a sincere thank you to our personnel in both the Defence Forces, at home and abroad, and the Department of Defence for their huge work effort, commitment and operational excellence, in what was a challenging year. We very much look forward to building on the excellent progress achieved in 2023 and developing the opportunities enabled by both the Organisational Capability Review and Detailed Implementation Plan in 2024.



Jacqui McCrum
Secretary General



Lieutenant General Seán Clancy
Chief of Staff

Foreword

BY TÁNAISTE AND
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE



I welcome the Annual Report 2023 for the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces which outlines the significant work undertaken by the civil and military personnel of the Defence Organisation in the past year.

The Strategic Framework for the transformation of the Defence Forces published in September sets out clearly the essential work that is underway for the transformation of the Defence Forces and outlines the necessary actions to be delivered by the end of 2024. It covers the recommendations made in the Report of the Independent Review Group and the Commission on the Defence Forces Report, together with measures to address recruitment and retention challenges, and the legislative changes needed to modernise our Defence Forces.

The report of the Independent Review Group on dignity and equality in the Defence Forces will be a catalyst for change; an opportunity to drive forward the transformation of Óglaigh na hÉireann and an investment in a successful and sustainable future.

In April, an External Oversight Body was established, on a non-statutory basis initially, to drive the necessary culture change throughout the Defence Forces and enhance transparency and accountability. Following its first report in November, Government subsequently approved the drafting of the Defence (Amendment) Bill 2023 which includes provision for the establishment of the External Oversight Body on a statutory basis.

In July, the Government approved the establishment of a Tribunal of Inquiry to examine the effectiveness of the complaints processes in the Defence Forces to address workplace issues relating to discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. The Tribunal of Inquiry will also investigate the response to complaints made regarding the use of hazardous chemicals within Air Corps' headquarters at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell.

The publication of the Detailed Implementation Plan in 2023 provides a roadmap and timeline for the implementation of the recommendations by the Commission on the Defence Forces. Significant progress has been made with 37 of the 38 Early Actions now achieved, including the introduction of private healthcare for all ranks, the increase in Patrol Duty Allowance, the establishment of both the Office of Reserve Affairs and a new Joint Induction Training Centre.

As part of the Defence Forces Infrastructure Development Plan, we witnessed significant infrastructural improvements in Barracks across the country with €55 million assigned to capital projects. This Plan sets out a programme of project delivery for the years 2023 to 2027 and estimates infrastructure requirements to be in the region of some €300m for the coming years. This level of investment further demonstrates this Government's commitment to Defence.

The Defence Forces will participate in a German-led EU Battlegroup in 2024/2025. This will be the eighth occasion on which the Defence Forces have been part of an EU Battlegroup and the first since 2020.

The Defence Forces also commenced training with the EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine. The Government regards the participation of the Defence Forces in this mission as an important signal of Ireland's unwavering support for and solidarity with Ukraine.

A significant contribution was made by the crew of LÉ William Butler Yeats in the Mediterranean during Operation Irini to prevent arms trafficking within its agreed Area of Operation in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions on the arms embargo on Libya. We continue to take great pride in our Defence Forces who carry out their duties with skill, courage and great dedication, showing a commitment to the cause of peace and security across the globe.

The arrival of two Airbus C295 Maritime Patrol Aircraft and two Inshore Patrol Vessels during the year, represented a combined investment of more than a quarter of a billion euro, demonstrating the Government's ongoing commitment to make the investment necessary to modernise every branch of our Military.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment of staff in the Office of Emergency Planning who have responsibility for the co-ordination and oversight of emergency planning and provide a key support role to the Government Task Force.

I would also like to acknowledge the volunteers in Civil Defence for their commitment during the year, in providing support to displaced Ukrainian people as well as supporting the frontline emergency services in dealing with severe weather, flooding, major accidents and searches for missing persons.

As Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, I wish to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Secretary General, the Chief of Staff and all personnel within the Department and the Defence Forces, both at home and overseas, for their continued hard work, professionalism and commitment throughout 2023.



Micheál Martin, TD

Tánaiste and Minister for Defence

2023 Highlights

DURING 2023, THE STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AND THE DEFENCE FORCES DEALT WITH:

240,257
Items of correspondence
by telephone, post or e-mail



1,024
Parliamentary
Questions



643
Representations



41 Memos to
Government

386
Freedom of
Information
requests received

223 by Defence Forces
163 by Department of Defence



6 Government Task
Force on Emergency
Planning meetings



142

Cross Departmental
Groups serviced by
Department officials



49

Department of Defence and Defence Forces
MOUs & SLAs in place with
other Government Departments
and Organisations



781
Submissions
for Minister's
Approval



32

Military and State
ceremonial events



5 Meetings of EU
Defence Ministers

2 Meetings of EU
Chiefs of Defence
(CHOD)

Key achievements in 2023

Some of the high level achievements of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces in 2023 are as follows:

- » An update on the 38 Early Actions from the High Level Action Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces was published in March 2023. Some key early actions completed in 2023 include:
 - » Office of Reserve Affairs established and a Head of the Office of Reserve Affairs appointed.
 - » The Strategic Defence Review commenced with the setting up of an inter-departmental working group to conduct a security environment assessment.
 - » The Head of Transformation appointed.
 - » The Head of Strategic HR appointed.
 - » Infographic on the benefits of joining the Defence Forces communicated.
 - » Prioritised Fitness Standards reviewed and updated.
 - » Extension of private secondary medical care to all Defence Forces ranks.
 - » Final management position on the Working Time Directive provided to the Tánaiste.
- » The report of the Independent Review Group (IRG) established to examine dignity and equality issues in the Defence Forces was published in March, following Government approval. The Government agreed to progress the recommendations in the Report and the following progress on implementation was made during 2023:
 - » Establishment in April of an External Oversight Body (on a non statutory basis)
 - » In July the Government approved the establishment of a Tribunal of Inquiry
 - » A Working Group was established to progress the IRG recommendation on the development of a complaints process for civilians and civil servants.
 - » The Government also approved the text of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023. Part 4 of the Bill amends sections 169 and 192 of the Defence Act 1954 in line with a recommendation in the IRG Report.
- » The Strategic Framework on the transformation of the Defence Forces was published by the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence in September.
- » The Detailed Implementation Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces developed by Civil / Military teams, was published in November.
- » Existing Sea-going Allowances have been replaced with less complex Sea-going Duty Measures through the approval to increase patrol duty allowance. There will be double payment after ten days and the tax credit will also be retained for one more year.



- » A new Technology Strategy and Roadmap for the Department of Defence 2023 – 2027 was launched which will guide the Department in the adoption of new technologies and digital ways of working to support the effective delivery of our policy objectives.
- » In June the Department, in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs, held the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy to build public understanding and generate discussions on Ireland's foreign, security and defence policies. The Chair of the Forum delivered her Report in October.
- » In the area of Legislation the General Scheme for the Defence (Amendment) Bill 2023 was drafted and approved by Government. The Civil Defence Bill was published in January and the Civil Defence Act 2023 was enacted in June 2023 and commenced in July 2023.
- » Following a recommendation made by the Commission on the Defence Forces for the establishment of a capability development planning process, the Capability Development Unit was established in 2023. The Unit will develop an effective investment strategy based on capability priorities, a four year Capability Development Plan and an integrated 12 year Capability Development Programme.
- » Significant equipment projects delivered including 2 Airbus C-295 Maritime Patrol Aircraft delivered, 4 armoured utility vehicles (4x4) delivered to complete the fleet of 54 vehicles, 2 Inshore Patrol Vessels delivered and will be commissioned in 2024 and Advanced field ISTAR surveillance systems contracts put in place for 2024 delivery. A significant contract was also awarded for the next generation Software Defined Radio System for the Defence Forces.

- » A record allocation of €55m assigned towards improving Defence Forces' building projects in 2023. Projects completed include Cadet School HQ at Curragh Camp, Engineers Logistics Office at Curragh Camp, Refurbishment of East Wall Terrace Building at McKee Barracks, Refurbishment of FORST Building at Haulbowline and Upgrade Works to Hangar 3 (roof lights) Casement Aerodrome.
- » The Office of Emergency Planning developed and rolled out a National Emergency Coordination Group Training Programme on Information Management. It also hosted the annual All-Island Disaster Risk Reduction Conference which encourages North South linkages relating to disaster risk reduction.
- » The new Civil Defence Volunteer and Equipment Management System was deployed in July 2023 which has greatly enhanced the information available for management and forecasting across all areas of the Civil Defence organisation.
- » The first defence studies micro accredited diploma for Department staff was introduced in conjunction with Maynooth University. This programme is designed to offer improved sectoral knowledge with an introduction to the field of Defence Studies, with particular emphasis on how current security and defence issues affect Ireland.







Introduction

This Annual Report profiles the performance of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces during 2023. Performance is reviewed against each of the Strategic Goals set out in the Department of Defence and Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2023 – 2026.

The Strategy Statement 2023–2026 was published in August 2023. It provides the strategic direction for the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces over the coming three-year period, as required under the Public Service Management Act. The Strategy Statement also sets out the commitments arising from the Programme for Government (PfG) 2020 which the Department of Defence leads on or where it has a contributory role.

The High Level Goal in the Strategy Statement 2023 - 2026 is:

To provide for the military defence of the State, contribute to national and international peace and security and fulfil all other roles assigned by Government.

There are three distinct but complementary strategic dimensions required to deliver the High Level Goal. These are:

1. Defence Policy
2. Ensuring the Capacity to Deliver
3. Defence Forces Operational Outputs

The three strategic dimensions are then broken down into Strategic Goals, Objectives and Actions.

The strategic dimensions and associated strategic goals form the basis of individual sections in this Report.

This Report fulfils the requirements of Section 4(1)(b) of the Public Service (Management) Act 1997 for an annual report to be provided to the Minister on performance against strategic objectives.

Section 1

Defence Policy

STRATEGIC GOAL

Provision of timely and relevant policy and military advice

Defence policy encompasses all areas of Defence provision and underpins the requirement to ensure that the State retains and develops appropriate defence capabilities having regard to the defence and security environment. In addition, the Department of Defence provides a broad range of supports to the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence to assist him in his role as head of the Department.

There are both civil and military elements, which work collaboratively to ensure that the Minister's and Government's requirements for Defence are delivered. The Secretary General is the Minister's principal policy adviser, while the Chief of Staff is the Minister's principal military adviser.

During 2023, the Chief of Staff provided military advice to the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence across a range of areas. These engagements dealt with subjects ranging from strategic matters and non-routine events to routine matters such as operations updates.

In respect of domestic security and support, the defence policy framework encompasses, among other things, defence policy and defence policy inputs to the State's overarching security framework, the work of the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP), Civil Defence and the development of Memoranda of Understanding and Service Level Agreements with other government departments and state agencies, across a diverse range of roles.

The defence policy framework encompasses, in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs, defence inputs to the maintenance of global and regional peace and security. This includes the ongoing development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); Ireland's support for multilateralism and collective security through participation in United Nations authorised peace support and crisis management operations; our engagement in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP); and support to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Throughout 2023, Ireland continued to participate in the ongoing development of EU military and civilian crisis management capabilities under CSDP, within the framework of the commitment to the primacy of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security.



Ireland was represented at five Ministerial meetings in 2023 - two informal meetings of EU Defence Ministers, two formal meetings of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Defence configuration and one joint EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting involving both Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers.

Ireland was also represented at all four Defence Policy Directors meetings held during the year, a NATO Military Chiefs of Defence meeting in January and two meetings of EU Chiefs of Defence (CHOD) which took place in May and October.

During 2023, both the Department and the Defence Forces participated in bilateral engagements with a range of EU Member States and other countries and organisations in relation to both policy and operational issues. This reflects the Department's commitment to increase its bilateral engagement with other Member States, particularly in the context of the evolution of EU security and defence policy.



Throughout 2023, strategic defence issues were discussed by the Strategic Management Committee (SMC) on a monthly basis. The SMC is a joint civil-military committee comprising the Secretary General of the Department of Defence (Chairperson), the Chief of Staff, the five Assistant Secretary Generals, the two Deputy Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Emergency Operations and Infrastructure Oversight, the Assistant Chief of Staff, the Head of Transformation and the Head of Strategic HR. The General Officer Commanding the Air Corps and the Flag Officer Commanding the Naval Service attend in respect of matters affecting their services. Close co-operation on all matters between civil and military elements is a priority. Appendix A sets out the composition of the Management Board and the General Staff.

HR is a key component of capability development. In 2019, a new high-level civil-military Strategic HR Group (SHRG) was established by the Minister with responsibility for Defence. The Group is comprised of senior civil and military personnel and is co-chaired by the Assistant Secretary, Defence Capability People Policy Division, and the Deputy Chief-of-Staff (Support).



The role of the Group is to identify strategic HR priorities within the policy framework of the White Paper on Defence and, in this context, to coordinate the plans and activities of Defence to ensure delivery. The SHRG met twice in 2023.

The Office of the Minister for Defence provides a link between the Secretary General and the Minister, the Department, the military authorities, and the general public and is responsible for the monitoring and co-ordination of the Department's contribution to parliamentary business. During 2023, the Minister answered a total of 1,024 Parliamentary Questions while a further 643 representations to the Minister were administered during the year, amongst a wide range of other parliamentary and Ministerial business.

During 2023, Military Intelligence provided 253 briefings, of which 156 were verbal briefings and 97 were written briefs. These included specific defence and security assessments, monthly intelligence and security briefings, pre-deployment and post-deployment briefings for personnel on Peace Support Operations and Ministerial briefings. Military Intelligence also conducted multiple internal awareness and security briefings for members of the Defence Forces, including military career courses. On foot of requests from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), personnel from the Branch were also deployed overseas on a number of occasions as part of Emergency Civil Assistance Teams (ECAT). These included the DFA and Defence Forces deployment, which assisted in evacuating Irish citizens from Sudan.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Implement the Strategic Framework for the Transformation of the Defence Forces

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK - TRANSFORMATION OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

Following the publication of the Report of the Independent Review Group on Dignity and Equality issues in the Defence Forces in March 2023, the Tánaiste set out his priority to develop one Strategic Framework to encompass the IRG and Commission on the Defence Forces recommendations, remaining White Paper actions and all other current work strands for the transformation of the Defence Forces. The purpose of the Strategic Framework is to bring together into one overarching document, from the multiplicity of plans developed, the immediate actions to be taken to support the transformation of the Defence Forces into a fit for purpose organisation to defend the State and meet the challenges of today and the future.



The priority within this transformation is cultural change above all else. The end goal of this cultural change is to ensure that the Defence Forces is an equal opportunities employer, reflective of contemporary Irish society and that is providing a safe workplace,

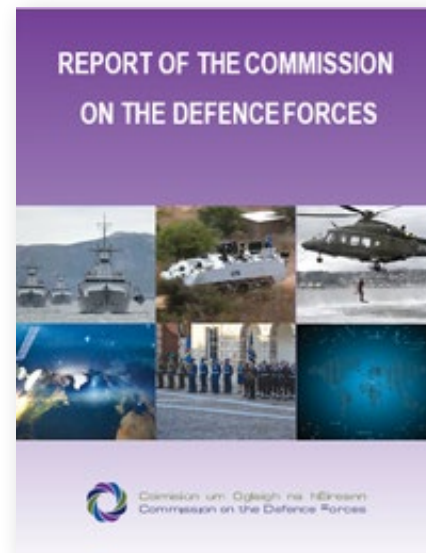
- » where self-worth is actively promoted,
- » where mutual respect becomes a dominant feature,
- » where all members are treated with dignity,
- » in an organisation that continuously evolves to deliver positive change.

The Strategic Framework on the transformation of the Defence Forces was published by the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence in September and it sets out the actions to be delivered before the end of 2024, to:

- » Implement the recommendations of the Commission on the Defence Forces;
- » Implement the recommendations of the IRG Report;
- » Support the recruitment to and retention of personnel to our Defence Forces;
- » Enhance the physical working environment and equipment of our personnel; and
- » Make the legislative changes to underpin the transformation agenda.

The reporting and governance arrangements for the Strategic Framework are set out in Appendix B.

The first update report of the Strategic Framework is due to be published in Q2 2024.



COMMISSION ON THE DEFENCE FORCES

The Commission on the Defence Forces (CoDF) was established in December 2020 on foot of a commitment in the current Programme for Government to undertake a significant body of work on the future of the Defence Forces, having regard to immediate requirements, while also seeking to develop a longer-term vision beyond 2030. The Report of the CoDF was published on 9 February 2022. The CoDF report contains 69 main recommendations and together with sub recommendations, comprises 130 recommendations in total.



HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN AND UPDATE

In July 2022, Government approved a decision to move to Level of Ambition 2 (LOA2) over a six-year period to 2028, when it published the High Level Action Plan (HLAP) for the report of the CoDF. The HLAP also included a decision to increase the Defence budget to €1.5 billion in 2022 prices by 2028 (to be agreed through the annual estimates process), and a commitment for an additional 2,000 personnel above the previous establishment of 9,500. The HLAP included 38 priority early actions to progress a number of key recommendations from the CoDF report, whilst also providing the necessary building blocks to develop a Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP). The HLAP also set out the Government's response to each of a total of 130 individual recommendations that were made in the Commission's report. The list of recommendations and the updated positions on same are set out at Appendix C.

Government published an Update on the 38 Early Actions from the High Level Action Plan for the Report of the CoDF on 23 March 2023, which included the status of each of the 38 early actions and key achievements from the first 12 months of the transformation programme.



DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A key early action, and key output from the opening phase of the Transformation Programme, the development of a Detailed Implementation Plan, is now complete. The Detailed Implementation Plan was brought to Cabinet by the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence on 21 November 2023 and published. This plan sets out an ambitious programme of work to move to 'Level of Ambition 2' (LOA 2) by 2028 and the significant and fundamental change for the Defence Forces that will be delivered across the Commission's recommendations which span:

- » Strategic HR and Cultural Change
- » New Command and Control and Joint Structures to be established;
- » Services to be reformed and restructured;
- » Reserve Defence Force to be revitalised; and
- » Joint Capability Development to be implemented.

The plan also sets out the pathway to implement the CoDF recommendations with specific reference to the Strategic Objectives of the plan, the next steps and immediate priorities to the end of 2024, the programme governance arrangements and DIP timelines. The DIP also highlights some of the key achievements since the publication of the HLAP, including:



- » As part of Budget 2023, a €93m increase or 8% increase over 2022 was agreed by Government.
- » The Independent Chair of the Implementation Oversight Group was appointed by the Minister for Defence. (The Implementation Oversight Group met on seven occasions to the end of 2023).
- » The High Level Steering Board met for the first time in March 2023.
- » All personnel of Private 3 Star/Able Seaman rank are now paid the full rate of Military Service Allowance applicable to the rank, and, the requirement for that cohort to 'mark time' for the first three years at that rank has been removed.
- » The healthcare afforded to officer ranks was extended to enlisted ranks.
- » The Office of Reserve Affairs was established and a Head of the Office of Reserve Affairs was appointed.
- » The Head of Transformation and Head of Strategic HR were appointed.
- » As part of Estimates 2024, a €21m increase over 2023 funding was agreed by Government.
- » Existing Sea-going Allowances were replaced by less complex Sea-going Duty Measures.
- » Final management position on the Working Time Directive provided to the Tánaiste.

The Detailed Implementation Plan forms a core element of the overarching Strategic Framework for the Transformation of the Defence Forces. Much progress has been achieved since the Commission's report was published, with 16 recommendations implemented by the end of December 2023, and significant progress made on many more. An updated DIP is scheduled to be published in Q4 2024.

REVIEW OF HIGH-LEVEL COMMAND AND CONTROL

Arising from a commitment made in the White Paper, a joint civil-military project team undertook a review of high-level Command and Control (C2) pertaining to the Defence Forces. This work will now fold into the recommendations made by the CoDF in relation to Command and Control.

The advice of the Attorney General on potential future C2 arrangements was sought and received. Following this, a Memorandum for Government on C2 arrangements was approved in May 2023 approving further work, which continued throughout 2023.

This ongoing work is significant, complex and sensitive, involving a fundamental review of the current regulatory framework governing the relationship between the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, the Defence Forces and the Department of Defence. The work requires a radical re-design of structures to ensure that the Department of Defence can continue to carry out its role effectively in providing civilian oversight of the Defence Forces on behalf of the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence and Government. The delegation of unitary military command will also give rise to a radical re-design of structures within the Defence Forces to underpin the new arrangements.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW GROUP

The report of the Independent Review Group (IRG), established to examine dignity and equality issues in the Defence Forces, was published on 28 March 2023. The Government agreed to progress the recommendations contained in the Report, which included the establishment of a Statutory Inquiry to identify systemic failures, if any, in the complaints system, in order to ensure accountability and transparency.



Tribunal of Inquiry

In July 2023, the Government formally approved the establishment of a Tribunal of Inquiry, pursuant to the provisions of the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921 (as amended), to examine the effectiveness of the complaints processes in the Defence Forces and to address workplace issues relating to discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct.

A period of consultation followed. Arising from the feedback received and following further discussions with the Attorney General, the initial draft Terms of Reference were amended and expanded.

In January 2024, the Terms of Reference for the Tribunal of Inquiry were approved and Ms Justice Ann Power was appointed to Chair the Tribunal. The Houses of the Oireachtas subsequently approved the resolutions to establish the Tribunal of Inquiry.

The Tribunal of Inquiry will examine the effectiveness of the complaints processes in the Defence Forces concerning workplace issues relating to discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. It will also investigate the response to complaints made regarding the use of hazardous chemicals within Air Corps' headquarters at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel.

External Oversight Body of the Defence Forces

As recommended by the IRG, the Government approved the establishment of an External Oversight Body for the Defence Forces on 5 April, 2023. It has been established on a non-statutory basis initially to drive the necessary culture change throughout the Defence Forces and enhance transparency and accountability. This is an essential part of the transformation of the current workplace to support current serving members.

The External Oversight Body is chaired by Prof. Brian MacCraith; its Terms of Reference (ToR) were published on 12 July and are set out at Appendix D. To support the Body in its work, a dedicated Secretariat was also established. By the end of 2023, the Body had met on 16 occasions and had met with a range of stakeholders in order to assess the impact of the reform measures from diverse perspectives within the Defence Forces.

The ToR for the External Oversight Body require that the Body report to the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence and its first written report was submitted on 22 November 2023 covering the period since its establishment in April 2023 to the end of September 2023. In line with the Body's ToR, the Body reported on the performance and progress of the Defence Forces on the matters within the Body's remit; the activities of the Body; and any obstacle encountered by the Body in performing its role in the period concerned. The full report was published on the Body's website in December 2023 and can be accessed at <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/557ea-external-oversight-body-of-the-defence-forces/>.

Legislation is being brought forward to put the External Oversight Body on a statutory basis. In December 2023, the Government approved the General Scheme of the Defence Amendment Bill 2023 which includes provisions in relation to establishing the Body on that basis. The General Scheme has been published on the Department's website and can be accessed at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d45c9-general-scheme-defence-amendment-bill-2023/>. The Defence (Amendment) Bill 2024 was published on 10 January 2024 and can be accessed at <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/1480a-defence-amendment-bill-2023-published/>.

Further initiatives taken since the publication of the IRG report

Following publication of the IRG Report, the Department undertook extensive policy and legislative analysis during 2023 with a view to identifying options for an independent complaints system for handling complaints of unacceptable behaviour as set out in the recommendations in the IRG Report.

In July, the Government approved the text of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023. Part 4 of the Bill amends sections 169 and 192 of the Defence Act 1954 in line with a recommendation in the IRG Report. These amendments will ensure that An Garda Síochána will have sole jurisdiction within the State to investigate alleged sexual offences committed by persons subject to military law. Any subsequent cases will be dealt with by the civil courts.

Furthermore, in December 2023, the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence also appointed an Independent Chair to the Working Group that has been established, on foot of an IRG recommendation, to develop a complaints process for civilians and civil servants working with the Defence Forces.

WHITE PAPER ON DEFENCE

The White Paper on Defence sets out the defence policy framework out to 2025. Since publication of the White Paper, a total of 95 separate projects were identified for completion over a ten-year period.

Project and Programme Management Governance frameworks were put in place to monitor the ongoing status of individual projects and to review the scope of projects within the programme.

The Joint White Paper Implementation Facilitation Team (Joint Team) is a civil-military team, which operates in an oversight capacity, providing support and monitoring the progress of these White Paper projects. During 2023, the Joint Team continued to



report on the progress of implementation to the SMC as part of the governance framework. These reports provide up-to-date status information to the Minister and to senior civil and military management, while the use of a project management framework to facilitate White Paper implementation has allowed the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces to take a focused and practical approach to implementation.

Throughout 2023, the priority was the finalisation of ongoing WP projects and the evaluation of potential alignment of outstanding WP projects, with work streams approved under the Government's HLAP to implement the recommendations of the CoDF report. In December, the Joint Team began preparing a White Paper Status report with the ambition to publish it in early 2024. The Report, which has now been published, reflects the current position for each of the 95 White Paper Projects, and identifies the WP projects that will now be amalgamated for implementation under the Government approved Detailed Implementation Plan to operationalise the CoDF transformation.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Contribute to national and international security and defence policy



NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

The NSC is chaired by the Secretary General to the Government and comprises representatives at the highest level from the Departments of Defence, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Environment, Climate and Communications and from the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána. The secretariat to the Committee is provided by the National Security Analysis Centre in the Department of the Taoiseach. The committee is charged with ensuring that the Government and the Taoiseach are advised of high-level security issues and the responses to them, but it is not concerned with operational security matters. Both the Secretary General, Department of Defence and the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces attended the NSC meetings in 2023, supported by the Defence Forces Director of Intelligence and the Department's Assistant Secretary for Corporate Affairs.

NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYSIS CENTRE (NSAC)

The NSAC was established in 2019 by the Government. Its primary remit is to provide high-quality, strategic analysis to the Taoiseach and Government of the key threats to Ireland's national security. The strategic analysis of threats is undertaken by personnel seconded from the various Departments and other State bodies with functions in the security area, and through liaison and close co-ordination with those partner Departments and agencies, including with the National Cyber Security Centre. There is also ongoing liaison with EU and international counterparts and others. Two personnel, one from the Department of Defence and one from the Defence Forces, have been assigned as Liaison Officers to the NSAC.

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MINISTERIAL

Ireland and other troop contributing countries register capabilities and contingents available for deployment to UN Peacekeeping Operations overseas on the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS). Together with capabilities already deployed or committed to other operations these provide the UN with a dynamic up-to-date catalogue of actual trained and available forces to draw from when establishing or reinforcing a UN mission. Ireland has pledged personnel and equipment to the UN PCRS and also pledged to deliver training in Ireland and overseas, for troop contributing countries, deployed to UN missions.

The United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial event is held biennially with participation by foreign and defence ministers. The 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial event took place in Accra, Ghana on 5 and 6 December 2023. Ireland was represented at official level at the event.

In addition to continued support for counter-improvised explosive device (CIED) and other UN related training activities, Ireland pledged funding of €432,000 to support three specific UN initiatives and projects:

- i. Building and Maintenance of Digital Mental Health Platforms for UN Uniformed Personnel,
- ii. Strategic Communications - Addressing Mis/Disinformation in UN Peacekeeping settings, and
- iii. Accelerating implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

EU'S STRATEGIC COMPASS FOR SECURITY & DEFENCE

The increasingly deteriorating security environment and, in particular, Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine underlined the need to further strengthen the EU security and defence. Member States engaged in a lengthy strategic dialogue on the EU's role as a security and defence actor, which has allowed Member States to strengthen their common understanding of the threats and challenges we face and how to tackle them. With the adoption of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence in 2022, for the first time, Member States adopted a strategic document with a common vision and detailed objectives on EU security and defence.

The Strategic Compass is intended to provide enhanced political and strategic direction for EU security and defence policy for the next five to ten years and aimed in particular at enabling the EU to better anticipate threats, respond to crises, and deepen cooperation with partners. The implementation of the Strategic Compass began the day after it was adopted.

With regard to developing defence cooperation between Member States, successful CSDP initiatives have included the launch of Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO), the establishment of the Co-ordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), creation of a European Defence Fund, the creation of the European Peace Facility, and enhanced cooperation with NATO.



The Department of Defence remained fully engaged throughout 2023 in the corresponding processes across all of these defence and security initiatives at EU level. This entailed negotiating and promoting Ireland's interests in accordance with the policies set out in the White Paper, incorporating requested Defence Forces' military advice and in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and other relevant government departments and agencies. Work continued during 2023 to build alliances with likeminded Member States in advancing common interests.

Ireland maintained its participation in four¹ PESCO projects and at the end of 2023 had Observer status in twenty PESCO projects. The Programme for Government states Ireland's participation in PESCO projects will be maintained on an "opt-in" basis, with contributions being entirely voluntary. As a matter of Government policy, full participation on any PESCO project requires the approval of the Government and Dáil Éireann.

The CARD is a two-year cycle which aims to create greater transparency by sharing Member State's information on future defence policy, capability development, budgets and investment in order to provide a broad picture of the European defence capability landscape. The process monitors defence plans including national capability development and investment and procurement proposals, as well as the implementation of the EU Capability Development Priorities, assesses data on defence cooperation in Europe, and identifies cooperative opportunities. The third cycle of CARD commenced in October 2023 and Ireland held it's bilateral with the European Defence Agency and the EU Military Staff on 5 October 2023. Ministers for Defence will be asked to note the recommendations of this third CARD cycle in November 2024.

- 1 (1) Maritime (semi) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures
- (2) Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance
- (3) Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform
- (4) Deployable Military Disaster Relief Capability Package

Meetings on the European Defence Fund (EDF) Programme Committee were serviced by the Brussels Permanent Representation and headquarters based staff from the Department of Defence with support from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The 2023 Work Programme was developed by the Programme Committee and negotiations related to the 2024 Work Programme commenced in 2023. Department of Defence officials, acting as National Focal Points (NFPs) for the EDF, work closely with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and lead the Department of Defence's efforts to ensure Irish enterprise and research institutes can avail of the opportunities which the EDF presents. Calls for 2023 proposals opened on 22 June 2023 and closed on 22 November 2023. Four cross-border consortia with Irish entities were successful in the 2021 (first) EDF call and five cross-border consortia with Irish entities were successful in the 2022 (second) call.

The European Peace Facility (EPF), formally established in March 2021, is an off-budget instrument aimed at enhancing the Union's ability to prevent conflicts, build peace and strengthen international security, by enabling the financing of operational actions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that have military or defence implications.

The purpose of the EPF is to provide the EU with a single off-budget fund running alongside the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), to finance all Common Foreign and Security actions with military or defence implications.

As per the Programme for Government commitment in relation to the EPF, Ireland, together with a number of like-minded States, ensured the inclusion of a provision allowing a Member State to exercise constructive abstention from assistance measures involving the provision of lethal force equipment.

The EPF has proven to be a very useful tool in providing the EU with an appropriate legal basis on which to provide support to the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

The EPF had an initial financial ceiling of €5.692 billion in current prices (€5 billion in 2018 prices) for the period 2021-2027, with contributions by member states determined based on a gross national income (GNI) distribution key. The EPF in December 2023 stood at more than €12 billion due to a number of increases in 2022 and 2023, primarily in response to supporting the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

To date, in response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, Member States have agreed approximately €5.6 billion in military assistance to Ukraine under the EPF, comprising approximately €5.22 billion in lethal equipment, and €380 million for non-lethal equipment. Ireland's commitment – exclusively for non-lethal support – is approximately €122 million to date.

EU BATTLEGROUP 2025 (EUBG 2025)

In January of 2023, the Irish Government approved the participation by the Defence Forces in the German-led EU Battlegroup in 2024/2025. This will be the eighth occasion on which the Defence Forces have been part of an EU Battlegroup and the first since 2020. The Battlegroup will be stood-up during 2024 and will be on standby throughout 2025 and Ireland's contribution will be 188 personnel.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY (EDA)

Ireland's interaction and participation in the EDA provides the opportunity to keep track of best practice in relation to modern technology and the development of capabilities that can assist the Defence Forces. It provides access to research and information on developing and maintaining professional capabilities that we cannot self-generate for crisis management and international Peace Support Operations.

In 2023, Ireland participated in a number of meetings and project teams within the EDA. Government and Dáil approval was received in July 2023 for Ireland's participation in four EDA projects:

1. Category B Collaborative Procurement of CBRN (Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear) Equipment;
2. Category B Collaborative Procurement of Soldier Equipment;
3. Category B Collaborative Procurement of Ammunition; and
4. Category A Military Computer Emergency Response Team Operational Network (MICNET).

Ireland continues to engage in projects which focus on such areas as military search training, counter improvised training techniques, cyber, satellite communications, maritime surveillance, naval training and energy.

EU-NATO COOPERATION

In 2023, EU - NATO cooperation was framed against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter and undermines European and international peace and stability.

The third Joint Declaration on EU – NATO cooperation was signed by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO on 10 January 2023. This declaration reaffirmed the two organisations' continued commitment to further strengthening cooperation in existing areas and expanding it to address topics such as the growing geostrategic competition, resilience issues, protection of critical infrastructures, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change, and countering foreign information manipulation and interference.

The eighth progress report on the implementation of the 74 common proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils was published in June.

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE (PfP)

Ireland's relationship with NATO is conducted through the Partnership for Peace (PfP), of which Ireland has been a member since 1999. Participation in PfP is seen as fundamental to Ireland being able to meet its obligations in providing professional peacekeepers for international crisis management and peacekeeping operations mandated by the UN as well as enhancing the Defence Forces' interoperability with other professional armed forces. PfP was founded based on an individual bilateral relationship between NATO and each of the partners and retains its own separate identity. It is a voluntary and cooperative framework between NATO and individual non-members of NATO. In 2023, Ireland agreed its cooperation framework with NATO; this framework is known as the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP). The ITPP framework presents an opportunity to enhance Partners' cooperation in relevant areas of choice, including cyber, enhancing resilience, improved maritime situational awareness and climate change. It will aid Ireland in being able to meet its obligations in providing professional peacekeepers for multinational crisis management and peacekeeping operations mandated by the UN.

In 2023, Ireland continued to engage with the Partnership Interoperability Advocacy Group (PIAG) and continued its participation in the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC) (Evaluation & Feedback Pillar). Ireland held the chairmanship of the PIAG in 2023. This group provides a unique opportunity to maximise interoperability and to foster, develop and enhance cooperation and dialogue with other members of the group who are participants in PfP but not members of NATO. The main benefit to participation in OCC is that Defence Forces training is benchmarked through external evaluation by NATO to the highest interoperable standards and contributes to the professional development of the Defence Forces, its ability to engage in overseas peace support operations and it enhances force protection.

Ireland has been participating in OCC since 2016. A number of Defence Forces' units have participated in the OCC process - Armoured Cavalry Squadron, Army Ranger Wing, The Naval Service, 1 Brigade Artillery Battery and in November 2023, 2nd Field Engineer Company.



CONSULTATIVE FORUM ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs, held a Consultative Forum on International Security Policy in 2023. The Consultative Forum took place over four days at the end of June in three locations, Cork, Galway and Dublin. The aim of the Forum was to build a deeper public and political understanding of the international security environment facing the State, and to generate a fact and evidence-based discussion of the policy options available to the Department.

Over the four days, almost 80 people from different backgrounds and experience contributed as panellists and moderators. The topics touched on what Ireland should prioritise and focus on; how we should engage with partners internationally and on what issues; what our membership of the UN, the EU, the OSCE, and our Partnership for Peace relationship with NATO does, or should, mean. In total over 1,000 people attended, 12,000 people logged in to watch livestreams, and over 800 submissions were received as part of the consultation process.

Over four days, almost

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In total over

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12,000

people logged in to watch livestreams



Over **800** submissions were received as part of the consultation process



Professor Louise Richardson chaired the Forum and provided a Report to the Tánaiste, which was published in October. Having reflected on the very well-informed discussions throughout the Forum, and taking into account the Chair's Report, the Tánaiste instructed his officials in the Department of Defence to prepare legislative proposals that would govern the future overseas deployments of our Defence Forces. In addition, the Tánaiste gave a commitment to deliver a National Security Strategy, and to the development of a Maritime Security Strategy.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Complete the Strategic
Defence Review

STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW (SDR)

The White Paper on Defence published in 2015 sets out the Government's intention to put in place a new fixed cycle of defence reviews. Such reviews are common practice internationally and give reassurance that policy remains up to date and responsive to changing future circumstances.

The White Paper sets out that every three years there will be a White Paper update to consider progress made up to that time and to consider any revisions required, with each alternative three-year review in the cycle being more comprehensive in nature and to be styled a Strategic Defence Review. This new review process also informs Strategy Statement preparation.

The first of these reviews, the White Paper Update, was published in 2019. The second of these reviews, the Strategic Defence Review stage, was due to commence in 2021. With the establishment of the independent CoDF by Government in December 2020, a decision was taken to pause commencing the Strategic Defence Review until the CoDF had completed its report and Government had been given time to consider the report.

Following detailed consideration of the CoDF Report, the Minister for Defence brought to Government a High Level Action Plan and a Memo for Government. Part of the High Level Action Plan was the progression of a number of early actions, one of these being the commencement of the Strategic Defence Review.

The first stage of this review commenced in 2023 with the preparation of a revised Security Environment Assessment (SEA) conducted by an interdepartmental working group to address the significant security environment changes since 2019 which includes the invasion of Ukraine. As a member of the interdepartmental working group the Defence Forces contributed to the development of the Security Environment Assessment and contributed military input to the assessment.

A fresh consideration of the implications of this assessment for overall policy requirements, associated tasks, capability development and resourcing will be carried out as the second stage of the review.

As well as encompassing the Government's agreed recommendations from the CoDF and the Independent Review Group, the Strategic Defence Review will consider the reflections of the Consultative Forum on International Security. The Strategic Defence Review will be published in 2024.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Enhance cross cutting policy collaboration

There are important cross-departmental dimensions to the work of Defence and meeting our goals and objectives is often critically dependent on the inputs and co-operation of other departments and agencies. Throughout 2023, Department officials and Defence Forces personnel were represented on a wide range of inter-departmental groups and committees – see Section 4.11 for a full list.

We have developed the use of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) covering services delivered to a range of other departments and agencies. At the end of 2023, we had 49 MOUs and SLAs in place with other Government Departments and Organisations in support of our high-level goals. A list of all MOUs and SLAs is contained at Section 4.12.

The White Paper on Defence reflects the importance of whole of government approaches to the security of the State. During 2023, we continued to collaborate with a range of departments and agencies that have security responsibilities. Developments in relation to some of these cross-cutting relationships during 2023 are outlined as follows.



GOVERNMENT TASK FORCE ON EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Tánaiste and Minister for Defence chairs the Government Task Force (GTF) on Emergency Planning, which comprises those Ministers and/or senior officials of Government Departments and Agencies which have a lead or support role in strategic emergency management, including senior officers from An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces. The GTF meets on a regular basis to review emergency planning issues and to share information. In 2023, the GTF met on six occasions.

Currently, there are six active GTF subgroups working on the following key issues in support of strategic emergency management: resilience, risk, emergency communications, Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN), international engagement and public information campaigns. These subgroups take their membership from across all Government departments and agencies, as appropriate.

The GTF is supported by the Office of Emergency Planning which is a joint civil-military office within the Department of Defence. The OEP acts as a focal point in matters of strategic emergency planning and strategic risk management. The OEP works with all Government departments and agencies to improve the coordination of emergency management across Government. Progress on this work is the subject of the Annual Report to Government on Emergency Planning, prepared by the Minister for Defence.

The National Emergency Coordination Centre (NECC) is managed by the OEP and is the venue for meetings of the GTF and other emergency management-related activities. It is used for convening NECC meetings and related press conferences.

STRATEGIC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: NATIONAL STRUCTURES AND FRAMEWORK

The OEP, in partnership with the Shared Island unit of the Department of the Taoiseach, hosted the second All Island Disaster Risk Reduction Conference, in Ballymascanlon House Hotel, on 30 November and 1 December 2023. The theme for this year's conference was focused on emergency communications.

The opening address was provided by the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, Micheál Martin TD. Ms. Jayne Brady, the Head of the Civil Service in Northern Ireland, and Ms. Jacqui McCrum, Secretary General of the Department of Defence, spoke on all-island resilience from their different perspectives. The keynote address to the conference was provided by Professor Lucy Easthope.

Also in 2023 the OEP, through the GTF on Emergency Planning, published a new guideline document in support of the Strategic Emergency Management: National Structures and Framework (SEM). This new document provides guidance to lead government departments on information management strategies when coordinating the response to a national level emergency.

The GTF subgroup on risk, commenced work in 2023 on the new National Risk Assessment for Ireland. This work included the identification of 22 key risks, which would require a national level response, the convening of six expert focus groups to examine the reasonable worst-case scenario for these 22 key risks and a public survey to canvass wider opinion on these same risks. This work resulted in the creation and the formal approval of the National Risk Matrix by the GTF on Emergency Planning at its September 2023 meeting.

Resilience and the protection of critical infrastructure has become a higher priority issue both at NATO and in the EU since the pandemic and the Russian War of Aggression on Ukraine. As outlined above NATO Allies agreed the new Individual Tailored Programme Process (ITPP) between NATO and Ireland at the end of 2023, with enhancing resilience being a particular area of focus. The Department of Defence will lead across government on managing the new resilience partnership area and the OEP has been tasked with coordinating this work, which will be facilitated through the GTF subgroup on resilience. It will complement the cross-government work already being undertaken on the Critical Entities Resilience Directive.

EU DIRECTIVE ON THE RESILIENCE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The OEP leads and coordinates across government on the national position on the EU Directive on Critical Entities Resilience. It facilitates this work through the GTF on Emergency Planning's subgroup on resilience.

This Directive aims to enhance the resilience of critical entities that provide services essential for vital societal functions or economic activities in the internal market. The sectors covered in the Directive include the following: energy, transport, banking, financial market infrastructures, health, drinking water, wastewater, digital infrastructure, public administration, space, and food. This Directive also provides for the establishment of an expert group, known as the Critical Entities Resilience Group (CERG), for the exchange of information, including best practice, on issues relating to the Directive. The OEP is the Single Point of Contact for CERG.

The process of transposing the directive into Irish law began in 2023 with a deadline for completion of 17 October 2024. In advance of the enactment of this directive, and because of the increased threat to critical infrastructure due to the current geopolitical situation, EU Member States are stress testing their energy infrastructure. The OEP coordinated these stress tests on critical infrastructure in the energy sector in Ireland in cooperation with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and with key energy operators.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY COORDINATION GROUP

The National Emergency Coordination Group convened in November 2023 ahead of Storm Debi. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, which is the Lead Government Department for storm-related emergencies, chaired the meeting.

The National Emergency Coordination Group also convened twice to test national plans and communications strategies relating to electricity supply constraints and a national level cyber incident.

'BE SUMMER READY' CAMPAIGN

On 10 May, the Government launched its 'Be Summer-Ready' 2023 public information campaign with the message: "Think Water Safety - Plan and Prepare". This launch attracted significant media attention with combined viewer and listenership numbers on the day estimated at approx. 500,000. To support the campaign, the OEP commissioned an accompanying two-page article in the Irish Independent on launch day, together with the distribution of 110,000 leaflets in the newspaper's Saturday edition.

Paid social media advertising for this campaign was limited to the Office of Emergency Planning's YouTube channel. OEP also provided material for unpaid use on the 'X' (formerly Twitter) platform which was amplified across other government 'X' accounts. Public engagement with the campaign across social media included 6.3 million impressions on static tweets, 2.1 million impressions on video tweets and 1.15 million impressions on YouTube.

The campaign was enhanced through the display of 'Be Summer Ready' across all the National Roads Authority's electronic motorway signs, which directed the public to the 'Be Summer Ready' website. Met Éireann also advertised the campaign extensively during their weather forecasts on RTE News.



‘BE WINTER READY’ CAMPAIGN

The launch of the 2023-2024 ‘Be Winter Ready’ campaign took place on 18 October. The Department of Transport provided the focused message on the main theme which was, “Road Safety – Plan, Prepare, Be Aware”. Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Micheál Martin TD, as Chair of the GTF on Emergency Planning, accompanied by Minister of State Jack Chambers, with responsibility for International and Road Transport and Logistics, launched the campaign.

In addition to the focused message on road safety, the overall campaign was designed to enhance societal resilience by providing information to the public of various methods to prepare for and to stay safe during winter, especially during periods of severe weather.

CYBER SECURITY

The response to cyber threats remains a whole-of-government challenge, with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications taking the lead role, through the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), and with inputs in the security domain from An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces and NSAC. The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications provided regular updates to the GTF throughout 2023 on cyber security issues.

The approach to hybrid threats will soon receive scrutiny through a project, due to begin in 2024, under the Strategic Framework for the Transformation of the Defence Forces, which will focus on increased civil-military engagement across Government on the development of appropriate structures and processes to deal with such threats, learning from current international experience.

Officials in the Department of Defence and members of the Defence Forces work closely with Government Departments and Agencies, to support measures to deal with cyber challenges. This includes active participation on the Inter-Departmental Committee overseeing the implementation of the National Cyber Security Strategy, which is chaired by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. In addition, a member of the Defence Forces is seconded to the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia, as recommended in the National Cyber Security Strategy. Having a member of the Defence Forces in the Centre of Excellence provides us with important insight into developing trends in cyber security and strengthens the ability of the State to respond to cyber threats, including by participating in major cyber security exercises organised by the Centre of Excellence.



EU AD-HOC WORKING PARTY ON RESILIENCE

Since the EU Presidency re-established the Ad-Hoc Working Party on Resilience in 2023, the OEP has been responsible for coordinating the Irish contribution to the EU Horizon Scanning Network. This network was established to identify early warning signals which may be indicative of crises under potential development, or which may suggest the nature and shape of future crises which the EU may have to face, and which have the potential to require an activation of the EU Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements. Improved IPCR arrangements are also the subject of discussion in Brussels.

NETWORK OF DIRECTORS OF EU CRISIS MANAGEMENT CENTRES

The OEP represents Irish interests in the Network of Directors of EU Crisis Management Centres. This forum discusses strengthening cooperation and challenges in national and international crisis management. Good practices from countries implemented during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, national-scale floods, the migration crisis and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine have all been topics of interest. More recent discussions have focused on drawing experience from the network on how the EU can build a more effective and coherent policy framework for crisis preparedness and crisis response in order to better serve national crisis response structures.

2023 Review

6 Government Task Force on Emergency Planning meetings



13

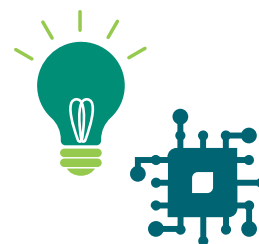


Task Force meetings on Resilience, Risk Management, Emergency Communications and International Engagement.



1 Activation of the National Emergency Coordination Group ahead of Storm Debi

2 Exercises of the National Emergency Coordination Group – Electricity and Cyber

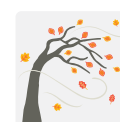
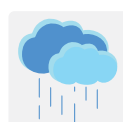
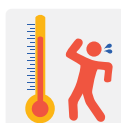


2 Business Continuity Exercises of the National Emergency Coordination Centre

1 New policy document published on Information Management guidance for the National Emergency Coordination Group



2 Public Information Campaigns – 'Be Winter Ready' and 'Be Summer Ready'



EMERGENCY CIVIL ASSISTANCE TEAMS (ECAT)

The Department of Defence have in place a Service Level Agreement with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) which covers requests to deploy overseas Emergency Civil Assistance Teams (ECAT).

In response to a request from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to provide a short term support to the consular response to the evolving situation in Sudan and following the Government approval for the deployment of an ECAT, the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces put in place the necessary arrangement to deploy in support of DFA officials. The deployment was to assist with the process of evacuating Irish citizens and their dependents from the crisis.

Logistical support was provided by the Air Corps and our European partners.

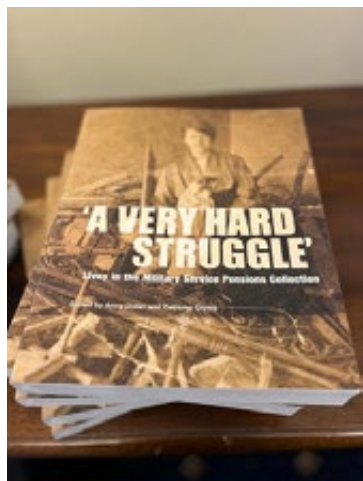
An additional ECAT was undertaken in May 2023 to Beijing, China. The purpose of this ECAT was to provide support to the Department of Foreign Affairs with a security review of the Embassy and temporary official accommodation leased for the Ambassador at that time.

MILITARY ARCHIVES/MILITARY SERVICE PENSIONS COLLECTION

The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC) project is a Government initiative for the Decade of Centenaries, led by the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. The archival material contained in the MSPC was generated following the decision of the Oireachtas of Saorstát Éireann in June 1923 to recognise and compensate wounded members, and the widows, children and dependents of deceased members of Óglaigh na hÉireann, including the National Forces, the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Army and the Irish Citizen Army through the payment of allowances and gratuities. Over time, provision was enhanced and broadened to include members of the Hibernian Rifles, Cumann na mBan, Fianna Éireann and certain members of the Connaught Rangers. Two streams of legislation are relevant to the material in the collection:

- » The Army Pensions Acts from 1923 to 1953
- » The Military Service Pensions Acts, 1924, 1934 and 1949.

The MSPC project is mandated to preserve and make available the files and records of the Department of Defence dealing with the service of qualifying members of these organisations from the period April 1916 to 30 September 1923. This involves cataloguing and digitising in excess of 275,000 files.



Public release of material from the collection is made available online through the Military Archives website www.militaryarchives.ie. To date, there have been fifteen releases of material with two releases from the collection during 2023, one in May and the second in November 2023. Since the first release of material in 2014, more than 121,900 files have been individually catalogued by the MSPC team, with 80,200 scanned files currently fully downloadable online. The Project has now digitised and made available over 2.5 million pages of archival material online.

In 2023, the MSPC Project released its third publication, entitled '*A Very Hard Struggle – Lives in the Military Service Pensions Collection*'. The book is published by the Department of Defence, designed by Ger Garland and printed by the Defence Forces Printing Press.

Through the contributions of sixteen historians, an archivist and a filmmaker, edited by Anne Dolan and Catriona Crowe, the book explores many aspects of the Irish revolution which the Military Service Pensions Collection has made easier to see: social perspectives, financial dependence, collective and individual memory, the 'ordinary life', trauma, language, class, family life, gender, among many other aspects. The publication is testimony of the versatility and uniqueness of this collection and of its tremendous potential for future access and research.

The MSPC Project has accompanied the Decade of Centenaries programme and the commemorations through the last 10 years, by cataloguing as much material as possible, releasing key information on time for governmental use, compiling lists of veterans for local communities, responding to all public requests, generating unique online resources to assist research about the Irish Revolution and the people who took part in it.

The MSPC team has consistently promoted the collection and its use through public lectures, participation in conferences, writing of articles for specialised or general publications, through managing a successful blog and maintaining a positive and informative online presence. This holistic work has enabled the MSPC to establish itself as a critical source for the history of twentieth-century Ireland. The ongoing cataloguing of MSPC files reveals new ways of seeing the aftermath of the conflict and offers new lenses to witness different kinds of personal struggle that men and women experienced after their revolutionary involvement. Significantly, the systematic cataloguing work allows a national genealogical investigation and affords access to familial information which is in itself, a public service.



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media was the lead Department for the coordination of the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2012-2023. Under the Creative Expression programme strand, Military Archives participated as a partner in the Artist-in-Residence scheme which was extended by another year in 2023. The purpose of the programme was to promote creative reactions from artists to collections relating to the War of Independence and Civil War held in the custody of these institutions.

This programme, which was initiated in 2021, saw the Military Archives partner with Joe Coveney and John O'Connell who operate Studio 9 – a stop-motion animation studio. As a result, they have produced *"An Enchanted Exploration of the Military Archives"*, a 6 minute piece of animation aimed at introducing primary school children to both the Military Archives and the Irish revolution in a simple, age-appropriate manner.

The piece is in the final stages of post-production and will be made available online in 2024.

Civil Defence 2023

Civil Defence Activities:

From 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023 Civil Defence volunteers completed **2,672** tasks.

Tasks were undertaken as follows:



Vehicle Fleet Grant Aid:

Grant-Aid totalling **€429,688**

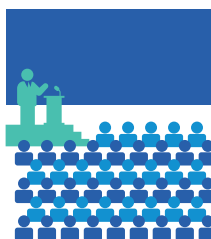
was paid to Local Authorities towards the upgrade of the Civil Defence vehicle fleet.



College Training:

A total of **466** training courses were completed.

2,895 certificates issued.



2,915 volunteer members received training.

Instructor and Responder Training was conducted in the following disciplines:



An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence



CIVIL DEFENCE

The Civil Defence Volunteer base continues to play a key role in emergency response and community support in Ireland. During 2023, these volunteers undertook a total of 2,672 operations. Activities included 2,091 Community Assistance duties (which include 488 sporting events, 262 charitable events, 111 cultural events, 329 Ukrainian supports and 901 local authority events); 134 Missing Person Searches; 157 Emergency Response Services (which include 42 climatic/severe weather related duties); 17 National Events duties (which include 13 duties at National Ploughing Championships) and 273 Medical Response duties (which include 67 COVID-19 related duties).

These volunteers are provided with relevant specialist training and an extensive array of vehicles and equipment, to support the breadth of activities completed under both the Emergency Response and Community Support pillars. A key focus in 2023 has been on the upgrading/addition of vehicles, boats, drones and sonars, and on the procurement of a new provider for modernised workwear for all volunteers, the roll-out of which will commence in mid-2024.

TOWARDS 2030

Government policy on Civil Defence is set out in the White Paper on Defence 2015 (as updated in the White Paper Update 2019) and in the document 'Towards 2030', published in 2020. As part of the implementation of this policy, the Department of Defence met with the Principal Response Agencies, via the Civil Defence Inter-Agency Guidance Team and with local authorities, via the City and County Managers Association. These meetings help ensure that Civil Defence services and capabilities are developed to meet the needs of the Principal Response Agencies. This is a standing engagement, with meetings twice per year with each group.



NEW CIVIL DEFENCE LEGISLATION

The White Paper on Defence 2015 includes a commitment to replace the current suite of legislation relating to Civil Defence, which comprises the Air Raid Precautions Acts 1939 to 1946 and the Civil Defence Act 2012, with a consolidated and updated Civil Defence Act. The Civil Defence Bill was signed by the President on 26 June 2023 and was commenced on 18 July 2023 in the form of the Civil Defence Act 2023. The Act provides a consolidated modern legislative basis for Civil Defence. A Code of Practice, which sets out the standards of practice and integrity expected of Civil Defence Volunteers, was also published in the form of Statutory Instrument number 371/2023 - Civil Defence Act 2023 (Code of Practice) Regulations 2023.

NEW EQUIPMENT

The Department continues to support the upgrading and modernisation of the Civil Defence fleet and equipment. In 2023, the Department of Defence grant-aided new Communications Vehicles in Mayo, Cork City and Cork County. The Department also purchased five new drones that are compliant with new classifications that came into force on 1 January 2024.

Four Portable Sonars were grant-aided and training was delivered, greatly enhancing our sub-surface missing person search capability.

The Department also liaised with the Health Service Executive to facilitate the recycling of eight Ambulances from Health Service Executive to Local Authority Civil Defence Units.

There was also further investment in our Communications infrastructure and Equipment in 2023. A new repeater was installed in Dublin, to increase communications coverage for large public events across Dublin city-centre. 60 radios were purchased, to continue our migration from analogue to digital UHF. Additional TETRA handsets were also procured to give better interoperability with the Principal Response Agencies.







CANINE UNIT (K9)

The Civil Defence K9 Unit introduced its first fully trained female handler in Q1 2023. Meath Volunteer Handler Karen, and her Victim Recovery Dog Rossi, qualified after a year-long training programme which included 150 hours of guided training with the UK-K9 Centre for Excellence.

Civil Defence now have four search dog teams based in Dublin, Meath, and Tipperary. These comprise one Air-Scenting dog used in searching for live persons, and four Victim Recovery Dogs used in searches for deceased persons. These dogs regularly assist An Garda Síochána in missing person searches throughout the State. The volunteer search dog handlers have shown great commitment to this work over the years.

Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence provides support and equipment to Civil Defence K9 Units, which include, specialised K9 vehicles, PPE, training and exercises, to allow them respond to missing person searches in a safe and efficient manner. The Department also provided funding for modern kennels for our search dogs, to maintain the standards of animal welfare.



Our new female handler, together with her canine dog Rossi, recently won an Irish Kennel Club Golden Paws award in the category "Search and Rescue Dogs" and featured on the Today Show on RTE.

VOLUNTEER AND EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (VEMS)

The Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS) system was deployed in July 2023. Following significant investment from the Department of Defence, it was designed in collaboration with a group of Civil Defence Officers, and will provide enhanced valuable information to support the management and training of the volunteer base (using up to the minute information for volunteers who meet the minimum training requirements to inform planning), and the management of equipment and the fleet in a more comprehensive and efficient way.

DORMANT ACCOUNTS FUND

€400,000 was secured from the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2023 and this was allocated towards the ongoing Civil Defence vehicle renewal programme. This programme includes the replacement of older vehicles and the fitting out of vans as communications control vehicles. During 2023, 12 Local Authority Civil Defence Units benefited from this programme.

Further Dormant Accounts funding of €400,000 has been secured for 2024. This funding will be used to upgrade both the vehicle and boat fleets. This will ensure that Civil Defence can continue to fulfil its role of supporting the Principal Response Agencies as outlined in ‘Civil Defence – Towards 2030’.

CIVIL DEFENCE TRAINING

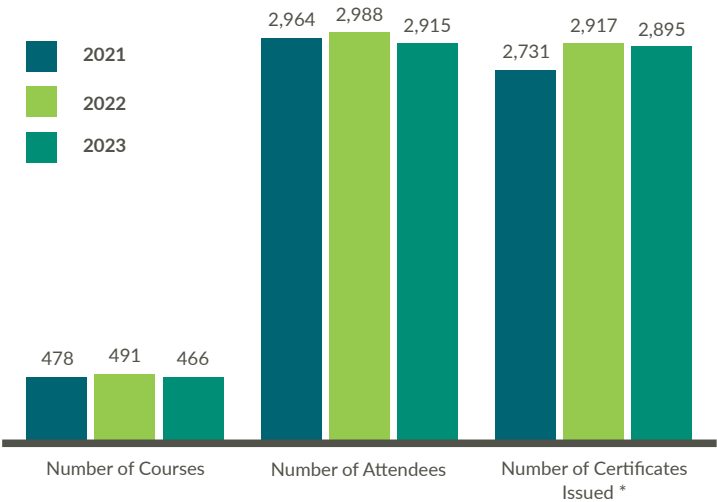
The Civil Defence College, which operates under the ambit of the Department of Defence, is a recognised training institution for the pre-hospital emergency care council (PHECC) and for a significant number of other courses including Missing Person Search Instructors, Manual Handling and People Handling Instructors, Communications, *Boat, *Drone Pilot and *Sonar operations (*outsourced but managed from the College). The College also provides central training for Civil Defence Unit instructors in a “train the trainer” system.

During 2023, the college delivered 466 courses, training 2,915 participants and issuing 2,895 certificates.

Chart 1.1 outlines the number of courses provided, the numbers trained and the number of certificates issued during 2023, and provides a comparison with years 2021 and 2022.

Chart 1.1
Details of Civil Defence courses delivered and Certificates issued 2021-2023

* These figures do not include locally delivered uncertified training.





SAIL TRAINING IRELAND

For many years, the State provided funding, through the Department of Defence, for the national sail training vessel Asgard II. This scheme was terminated following the loss of Asgard II in 2008. Sail Training Ireland was established in 2011 by some of those previously involved with Asgard II, and the Department continues to provide grant-aid to this organisation. In 2023, a total of €150,000 was grant-aided to this organisation.

The primary focus of Sail Training Ireland is to place young people, mainly from disadvantaged backgrounds, on voyages for the purpose of youth development as well as teaching young people to sail. During 2023, 534 young people participated on 36 different voyages. Of the 534 young people that took part, 100 had a disability or additional need, and 22 counties were represented on the voyages.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Climate action

2030 – TARGETS AND PLANS

The Climate Action Mandate sets emission reduction and energy efficiency targets for public bodies as follows:

- » Reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 51% by 2030.
- » Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the previous target of 33% by 2020 to 50% energy consumption reduction by 2030.
- » Climate Action Roadmap for the Department to be updated annually.

EU and Public Sector Targets – 2020/2050			
	2020	2030	2050
EU	<div>» -20% GHG emissions</div> <div>» +20% renewable energy</div> <div>» +20% energy efficiency</div>	<div>» -55% GHG emissions</div> <div>» +32% renewable energy</div> <div>» +32.5% energy efficiency</div>	Climate Neutral
National	<div>» -20% GHG emissions</div> <div>» +20% renewable energy</div> <div>» +20% energy efficiency</div>	<div>» 60 million tonnes to 30 million tonnes</div> <div>» Carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings</div>	Net Zero Emissions

Source: Public Sector Climate Action Strategy 2023-2025

Department of Defence

The CO₂ emissions target, due to commence with the publishing of SEAI's most recent report of 2022, will be based on absolute emissions dating from 2016-2018, with a Departmental baseline yet to be assessed. The 2023 Report is expected to be published in June 2024. The Department is positioned well to achieve both its 2030 and 2050 targets, due to the improvements carried out over the past couple of years.

SEAI's 2022 Scorecard for the Department of Defence buildings shows a 45.2% reduction in CO₂ emissions since the 2016-2018 period. 5.2% less than our 2021 CO₂ emissions.

Our current performance indicators show we have seen a 48.6% lowering in our energy baseline (since 2009) and the Department is on target for 2030 with just 1.4% improvement required to meet our Target of 50% energy reduction. In 2009 our energy usage was approximately 12,488 kWh per FTE employees; in 2022 that figure is now 6,419 kWh per employee.

Year on year we are now 4% lower than our 2021 usage, after removing third party (NSSO) energy consumption from our building Server rooms and Data Centres. The Department is currently waiting on an updated energy scorecard report for 2023 from the SEAI, due to be published in mid-2024.

Further Improvements

1. Solar Panel PV Study, Newbridge

The Department engaged with the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Carbon Care to provide a feasibility study on the installation of PV Panels on the flat roofs of the Newbridge building. This study has been submitted to the OPW for evaluation. Any future course of action by the Department regarding PV panel installation will need to consider the upgrade and replacement of the building's existing roof, as per OPW's recommendation. The department is in ongoing discussions regarding this project.

2. Upgrading existing Wood Pellet Burner

The Department, in conjunction with the OPW, is planning to upgrade the existing biomass boiler/wood pellet burner in Newbridge, which is coming to its end of life and requiring more maintenance as it ages. The proposal incorporates the upgrade of the biomass boiler, installation of a buffer tank and a new hot water cylinder that will replace two existing gas hot water cylinders. This will greatly reduce our dependency on gas.

3. Replacing showers and taps in basement with push stop showerheads and taps.

OPW has also agreed to the Department's water conserving proposal and will incorporate this project into the Upgrade of the Biomass Boiler.

4. Renmore upgrade for Zero building emissions

OPW has identified Renmore for a building upgrade to achieve Zero emissions in future years. OPW and SEAI have carried out a feasibility study with regard to same and have indicated that the building would benefit from a major upgrade which could include some or all of the following: external cladding/insulation, window replacement, installation of a heat exchange system or PV panel fitting. Preliminary plans have commenced with the OPW carrying out surveying, and other auxiliary works, prior to the full retrofit of the building commencing in 2025.

5. Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points

The installation of EV charging points for the Department buildings is being reviewed in consultation with the OPW. OPW has provided costing and possible installation date in the second half of 2025.

6. Roscrea (Civil Defence) building

A feasibility study on options for this building will be developed in consultation with the OPW. There is currently a Roof Access and Guarding/Safety project in design and we are waiting to see if the OPW is able to incorporate roof insulation into this project.

Defence Forces

Energy efficiency and decarbonisation are prioritised agendas in the Defence Forces. The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) is the second update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019, and is the first to be prepared under Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and following the introduction in 2022 of economy wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings.

As part of this plan, government has set out specific targets for power generation, built infrastructure, transport, agriculture, industry and land use. Currently there are no specific carbon budgets for the Defence sector, but these are likely to encompass the aforementioned areas as they apply to the Defence Forces. As a public body, the Defence Forces are required by government to report their energy performance annually. This is completed through the Monitoring and Reporting platform operated by SEAI.

In order to achieve current National Climate objectives, the Defence Forces are implementing plans to achieve a 7% year on year reduction in CO₂ emissions.

Through improvements in efficiency, the installation of Renewable Energy Systems (RES), the upgrading and retrofit of electric heating systems and the roll out of EV road transport, the Defence Forces are committed to becoming exemplars and leaders in this area. The Defence Forces will continue to engage with industry and other public bodies to learn and gain expertise in order to be best equipped to tackle these targets in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Some Climate Action initiatives in the Defence Forces:

- » 20 solar Photo Voltaic (PV) systems installed on Defence Forces buildings with capacity of 2.2MWp.
- » Rollout of Electric Vehicle (EV) Charger Stations in six Defence Forces locations.
- » Placement of a barracks level sub-metering contract in 2023, with metering equipment due to be installed Q2 2024.
- » Submission of the first Defence Forces Climate Action Roadmap to SEAI, outlining the plans for decarbonising the organisation's buildings and fleets.
- » DF currently on target to meet the 50% improvement in energy performance target as mandated by the SEAI.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Innovation

RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (RTI)

The Defence Research Technology and Innovation (RTI) Strategy Statement 2022 – 2025, outlines the alignment of the RTI Strategy and the Department of Defence and Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2021 – 2023 that provided for the establishment of a civil/military research, technology and innovation unit.

RTI has continued to ensure that the Department and the Defence Forces have access to research, technology and Innovation through RTI initiatives and supporting capability development. RTI is also tasked with supporting Irish industry and higher-level academic institutions in accessing EU funding from the European Defence Fund and engaging with the new European Innovation Hubs, with the European Commission and the European Defence Agency.

RTI continues to engage with projects from the Science Foundation Ireland SFI/Def Org Challenge and in June 2023, it showcased the winning project, Co-Pilot AI, at the European Defence Innovation Days in Brussels.





Defence *Sparx* 2023, RTI's innovative programme, focused on cultivating a progressive mindset and honing critical skills within Defence. Defence *Sparx* stands as an innovation training programme where participants actively devise creative solutions to address authentic challenges faced by the Defence Forces and the Department of Defence. The programme, designed with a structured, immersive, and hands-on approach, involves expert guidance to assist participants working in small teams. Together, they strive to craft effective solutions for assigned real-world challenges encountered across Defence.

Defence*Sparx* serves dual purposes of developing innovation skills in Defence personnel and in creating innovative solutions to Defence challenges. The outputs of this programme are a significant body of research into a challenge area and a team of knowledgeable people who can advise the organisation from within. 2023 projects were:

- » **Project Connected:** Improve employee relations with increased use of the DF Connect App.
- » **Project Red:** Improve Security of DF Personnel during incidents through the use of rapidly deployable drones.
- » **Project Optic:** Increase DF Recruitment through the establishment of physical recruitment centres.
- » **Project Polaris:** Improve career management within the DF through improved structures and more touch points.
- » **Project PTECap:** Enhance Defence Capabilities by sharing information on emergency response assets and capabilities through a live portal accessed by Defence Forces, Department of Defence, Civil Defence, AGS, Coast Guard, County Councils etc.

Through active participation in the Defence *Sparx* program, individuals not only acquire crucial innovation skills but also gain a broader perspective, enabling them to approach diverse problem-solving scenarios more effectively. Defence *Sparx*, with its agile methodology, facilitates the delivery of solutions grounded in internal insights and practical experience.



DefenceInnovate is the Department of Defence and Defence Forces' Internal Innovation Challenge Funding programme that was developed by the RTI Unit and launched in late 2022. The programme continues to provide DF and DOD personnel with an opportunity to avail of once off financial grants (up to €15,000) to prototype, test and implement solutions to challenges they have identified in their work environment.

RTI hosted a national event in the Ashling Hotel in Dublin in November 2023 titled *InnovationXChange: identifying connections for collaboration in security, defence and dual use technologies*; a networking and information event for Irish industry and higher-level academic institutions.

The event built on the success of the two previous networking events held in 2021 and 2022. Secretary General Jacqui McCrum, Chief Of Staff Seán Clancy and Head of Transformation Brian Molloy addressed the event. There were also three panel discussions and opportunities for questions and answers. The event addressed two of the pillars in the RTI Unit Strategy Statement: Ecosystem and Emerging Technology i.e.

- » Building the ecosystem: supporting networking connection and collaboration for Irish industry and higher-level academic institutions in the security, defence and dual use technology space.
- » Identifying emerging technology: helping the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces to more fully understand what technology is or what may be coming to the market and identifying alignment with our capability needs.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Digital Agenda



MODERNISING THE DEFENCE ICT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES IN LINE WITH DEPARTMENTAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE ICT STRATEGIES

The Technology Strategy and Roadmap for the Department of Defence 2023 – 2027 was launched in March 2023. It will guide the Department in the adoption of new technologies and digital ways of working to support the effective delivery of our policy objectives. The strategy continues to prioritise cyber security to improve our resilience as an organisation while also focusing on key strategic objectives including leveraging data to inform decision making and using technology to enable interoperability and collaboration across the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces and wider Government. A new Digital and Technology Steering Board will guide implementation of the strategy, ensuring that it is adaptable to meet the dynamic needs of the Department.

The Enterprise Applications Stabilisation Programme was completed in Q4 2023 by a joint Department of Defence and Defence Forces team. The programme included an upgrade of infrastructure in our data centres, upgrade of the Oracle eBusiness Suite financial application to R12.2, upgrade of the forms and database and the introduction of a new Business Intelligence tool for the Defence Forces Personnel Management System. A new Identity Access Management solution was also introduced to enhance the security of the enterprise applications.

Work on the Financial Management Shared Services (FMSS) programme concentrated on the Wave 1 Public Service Bodies and core common financial processing. The Finance Shared Services (FSS), went live with eight Public Service Bodies in April 2022. FSS will provide a centralised, standardised accounting and finance service on a single-technology platform to 48 government bodies who will be brought on board on a phased basis over the next three to four years. The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces are expected to transition to FSS in Wave 4.

ICT branch worked closely with Civil Defence Branch and Civil Defence Officers to develop a new Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS) which was launched in Q3 2023. This digital transformation project manages registration of volunteers, Garda vetting, volunteer training, competencies, deployments, equipment maintenance and ordering stock. The system includes an online portal for volunteers where they can apply for training and respond to deployment requests. VEMS includes dashboards that provide an up-to-date view of Civil Defence activities and will support the Department in strategic and budgetary decision making.

ICT branch continued to work with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) in the delivery of ICT services to users under Build to Share initiatives. In Q4, the branch supported the move of our Dublin office from Clonmel Street to Trinity Point, significantly increasing the Department's footprint in Dublin. The Trinity Point office is set up to cater for 60 staff using hot desks and has additional individual offices, meeting and conference rooms offering a full suite of ICT services for Department staff in Dublin.

In 2023, the Defence Forces CIS Corps progressed a number of key initiatives in order to underpin the digital transformation of the Defence Forces by significantly upgrading Tactical and Enterprise CIS networks and continuing to develop Defence Forces Cyber Defence capability in alignment with the Government's Digital Strategy.

In order to progress the upgrade of CIS Enterprise networks, the CIS Corps is implementing the Next Generation Working Environment (NGWE) project. This project will provide for the evolution of the CIS Enterprise network by enhancing all nodes and functions of the network, including security, backup and applications. The NGWE will be a key technological pillar of future digital transformation allowing the Defence Forces to operate a hybrid cloud strategy - securely accessing cloud services where required, as well as maintaining a secure 'on premise' national IT system built around two resilient Data Centres located in McKee Bks and Defence Forces HQ, Newbridge. This allows Defence Force personnel to access Defence Forces applications such as Restricted email remotely facilitating mobile working by Defence Forces personnel.

In order to enhance Tactical CIS networks and enhance C2 capability across the Joint Force at home and on peace support operations overseas, a new Software Defined Radio (SDR) manufactured by Thales (France) has been selected as a replacement for the SINCGARS radio which has been in service since the mid-1990s. The contract with Thales for the provision of SDR for the Defence Forces was signed in December 2023. The adoption of an SDR military communication system across the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps will form the Defence Forces' backbone tactical communications system for the next 20 years. It will significantly enhance multinational interoperability capability delivering secure voice and high data rate transmission capability and Tactical Internet. The SDR will provide protection against modern jamming and direction finding systems and significantly enhance the Defence Forces' ability to conduct Joint Operations.

Recognising the fundamental importance of Cyber to military operations, in 2016, NATO designated Cyber as one of five operational domains alongside Land, Air, Maritime and Space. The Report of the CoDF proposed the establishment of a Joint Cyber Defence Command. The first stage of this process was the standing up of an initial Cyber Planning Office in 2023. In subsequent years, this will be followed by the phased roll-out of a new Cyber establishment across Army, Naval Service and Air Corps. The Cyber Planning Office will develop a new strategy, setting out the steps that need to be taken in order to achieve an effective military Cyber Defence capability. The Defence Forces participated in major international cyber exercises in 2023 in order to enhance Defence Forces' Cyber Defence Capability and gain valuable experience in responding to, and recovering from, realistic cyber-attacks/incidents. These exercises included the European Defence Agency (EDA) organised MilCERTS (Military Computer Emergency Response Team) cyber exercise and the Tallinn, Estonia based NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD CoE) Exercise Cyber Coalition 2023. These exercises provide an excellent opportunity for Defence Force personnel (permanent and reserve) based in Ireland, working in cooperation with national agencies such as the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre), to access virtual exercise networks and exercise with international partners.

As indicated in the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP), a Digital Transformation Officer will be recruited in early 2024 and a new Digital Transformation team will be stood up within the Office of Strategic Transformation to drive the digital transformation agenda forward.





Section 2

Ensuring the Capacity to Deliver

STRATEGIC GOAL

Development and maintenance of capabilities



CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

A key recommendation made by the CoDF called for the immediate establishment of a capability development planning process through the creation of a new permanent civil-military structure. During 2023, a new permanent civil-military Capability Development Unit was established. This small initial team progressed work throughout the year to introduce a capability development planning process, including visiting an EU Member State to learn about their processes. The team will expand considerably over the coming years as the new capability planning process reaches full optimisation. Outcomes of the new process include:

- a. The development of an effective investment strategy based on capability priorities, identified through a strategic top-down planning process, which will guide Capability Development across the short, medium and long term.
- b. The delivery of, for the first time, an integrated 12 year Capability Development Programme that identifies, the short, medium and longer term capability needs. This Capability Development Programme will in turn facilitate the delivery, also for the first time, of an initial four year Capability Development Plan that will provide a prioritised schedule for implementation over the following four years.

HLPPG OUTPUT AND MAJOR PROCUREMENT IN 2023

The High Level Planning and Procurement Group (HLPPG) is a joint civil-military group whose role is to develop and implement multi-annual rolling plans for equipment procurement and disposal, and infrastructural development based on the policy priorities in the White Paper. The HLPPG met on 12 occasions in 2023. Over the year the HLPPG approved 48 contracts with a total value of approximately €384 million and a further 29 requests to go to market with a value of approximately €207 million.

During 2023, the HLPPG oversaw substantial progress, made through joint civil-military working, with the five-year Equipment Development Plan (EDP). The Plan provides strategic oversight and visibility to the equipment acquisition process, in terms of cost, schedule and capability development planning requirements for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service.

Force Protection

The procurement of force protection equipment for individual soldiers progressed with a competition placed in the market for a new combat helmet, procurement and delivery of Chemical Biological, Radiological and Nuclear protection suits, new thermal imaging targeting systems and the finalisation of a competition for new general service body armour systems with deliveries planned for 2025.

Land Mobility

Further progress was made throughout 2023 on the multi-annual mid-life maintenance and upgrade programme in respect of the Army's fleet of Armoured Personnel Carriers. When completed, this will extend the utility of the fleet and provide greater levels of protection, mobility and firepower, which will seek to ensure viability of the fleet out to 2030 and beyond.

Delivery of 30 Armoured Utility Vehicles was completed in 2023. These vehicles provide a level of protected mobility between the levels of soft-skinned light transport and heavier armoured vehicles.

The main softskin transport related procurements in 2023 included the procurement of 60 4 X 4 Troop Carrying Trucks, 10 electric saloons, 10 electric stores vehicles, three EV Forklifts, 30 Crewcabs, 18 minibuses and three tele handlers. Funding was provided on an ongoing basis for the maintenance of vehicles in the military transport fleet, both at home and overseas.

Military Communications

Following a competitive tender process, a contract was placed for the supply of a next generation Software Defined Radio System for the Defence Forces. This project provides for the replacement of existing Defence Forces communications infrastructure and will include enhanced interoperability and high bandwidth data transmission.

Ammunition

The acquisition of ammunition for training and overseas deployments continued in 2023. Consignments of ammunition needed to deliver training and maintain operational stockpiles were received in 2023 with an emphasis on infantry training types.

Air Capability

Two new Airbus C-295 Maritime Patrol Aircraft were delivered in 2023. These new aircraft, which replace the two existing CASA CN235-100 Maritime Patrol Aircraft purchased for the Air Corps in 1994, are primarily equipped for maritime surveillance, particularly fisheries protection, but will also provide the Air Corps with the capability to deliver a range of services including logistics support and transport of troops and equipment, medical evacuation and air ambulance services, search and rescue, as well as a broader general utility role. The C-295 aircraft have reached initial operational capability phase, and are now available to conduct maritime patrols. Additional capabilities will be stood up in early 2024, including both the search and rescue and air ambulance capabilities. These aircraft represent the largest equipment acquisition project ever undertaken for the Defence Forces and will greatly enhance Ireland's maritime surveillance capability.



Good progress was maintained through 2023 on the manufacture of a new Fixed Wing Military Transport Aircraft for the Defence Forces, which is presently under build at Airbus. The new aircraft is on schedule for delivery in 2025. The highly versatile Airbus C295W aircraft will provide a dedicated asset to support the Defence Forces military airlift transport requirements. The aircraft will enable the Air Corps to provide a wide range of services including logistics support and transport of troops and equipment, medical evacuation and air ambulance, Special Operations Forces operations and a general utility role.



Naval Service

The Mid-Life Extension programme for the Naval Service P50 Class continued in 2023. Following the completion of work in 2021, LÉ Roisín returned to operational service before being placed in operational reserve in January 2023. Similar work is ongoing on LÉ Niamh, which is due for completion in 2024, after which LÉ Niamh will also enter operational reserve.

The decision to place the LÉ Roisín and LÉ Niamh into operational reserve is aimed at stabilising operational delivery and assisting in Naval Service regeneration which entails the prioritisation of personnel training and development of existing Naval Service personnel.

Two Inshore Patrol Vessels (IPVs) were purchased from the New Zealand Government in 2022 to replace the two P40 vessels decommissioned in 2022. The IPVs are undergoing a programme of work following their arrival in Ireland in 2023 and are expected to enter service in 2024 when this work is completed, followed by crew familiarisation and training, as well as a Naming and Commissioning Ceremony.

The project to replace LÉ Eithne, also decommissioned in 2022, with a Multi-Role Vessel was progressed during 2023. Marine Advisors have been appointed to support the procurement of a multi-role vessel (MRV) to replace the decommissioned flagship LÉ Eithne. Work is currently underway that will inform next steps.



DISPOSAL OF DECOMMISSIONED NAVAL SERVICE VESSELS

Following a competitive process, a preferred bidder has been identified to recycle LÉ Ciara and LÉ Orla and LÉ Eithne in line with the EU Ship Recycling Regulation and relevant national regulations. The plan is to complete the recycling process in 2024.

COLLABORATIVE PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not only changed the security environment in Europe, it has caused structural changes in the Defensive Equipment and Ammunition markets. EU Leaders, meeting in Versailles in March 2022, agreed measures to enhance cooperation and effectiveness between Member States. These include a short-term instrument to incentivise Member States to pursue joint procurement (EDIRPA), and the establishment of a Defence Joint Procurement Task Force to work with Member States to facilitate the practical identification of potential joint procurement projects and to work with industry to find solutions to industry gaps.



The Defence Joint Procurement Task Force

This Task Force, made up of the European Defence Agency, the Commission and the European External Action Service, is working with Defence acquisition personnel from Member States to identify common requirements for goods that could potentially be procured in a joint manner. During 2023, Department officials and military colleagues participated in 18 meetings with the EU Defence Joint Procurement Task Force and the European Defence Agency to explore the possibility of engaging with certain common procurement projects. Government approval was received in July 2023 for Ireland's participation in four EDA projects including three specific capability areas, which are being explored by the EDA for common procurement, namely (1) CBRN individual protection and equipment, (2) individual soldier equipment and (3) different calibres of ammunitions. Work is continuing on developing these potential joint procurement projects.

European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA)

Contracts Branch officials participated in three meetings on the European Commission's proposal for a Regulation to establish the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act or EDIRPA. Branch officials also participated in the EDA Defence Acquisition Expert Network (DAEN) and in EDA meetings on Green Procurement in the Defence Sector.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Major Infrastructure Investment 2023

The Defence Forces Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) sets out a programme of anticipated project delivery based on the achievement of the high-level goals as set out in White Paper 2015. The Programme reflects the complex environment in which the Defence Forces operate and the corresponding need for appropriate infrastructure to provide for accommodation and training of personnel, maintenance and storage of equipment for land, sea and airborne operational requirements.

The Plan, which was launched in 2020, is reviewed annually to determine key built infrastructure goals on a rolling five-year basis. An update on projects to be progressed in the 2023/2028 period is underway and will be completed in early 2024.

In 2023, over €35 million was spent on building works in military installations and barracks across the country under the capital element of the Defence Forces Built Infrastructure Programme. In addition, there is a programme of ongoing works to ensure the upkeep and repair of buildings and facilities generally for Defence Forces personnel. These works are treated as current expenditure under the Programme and the sum spent in 2023 amounted to over €13.5 million.

The capital element of the Programme focused mainly on infrastructural projects comprising the construction of new buildings and the refurbishment of existing buildings and facilities. At the end of 2023, over €141 million worth of capital projects were at various stages of the procurement pipeline, from design, planning and construction to substantial completion, including the following significant projects:

- » Upgrade and refurbishment of three buildings at McKee Barracks, - €18.8 million.
- » Casement Military Medical Facility (Relocation of St Brigid's) - €15.4 million.
- » Upgrade of two buildings (Block 4 Accommodation and Block 9 Office Accommodation) at the Naval Base, Haulbowline - €17 million.
- » Upgrade of former USAC Block, Galway - €10.3 million.
- » New CIS Workshop Facility, Defence Forces Training Centre - €10.7 million.
- » Collins Barracks New Accommodation Block and Refurbishment of Block 1 - €9.6 million.
- » Aiken Barracks Dining Hall - €7.2 million.
- » Stephens Barracks Block C Accommodation - €0.76 million.
- » ARW New HQ Building - €7.8 million.
- » Various projects to develop the Joint Induction Training Centre in Gormanston Camp - €23 million.
- » Gymnasium works at Finner Camp, Casement Aerodrome, Haulbowline Naval Base and Renmore Barracks - €16.4 million.
- » Coolmoney new Vehicle Garaging Facility - €0.45 million.
- » DFTC Garaging - €2.5 million.
- » Casement Hangar 3 Upgrade and Doors - €1.4 million.





Disposals

The Department of Defence administers the Defence Property Portfolio (approx. 8,300 hectares) comprising of land and buildings at numerous locations throughout the country, being a mix of operational military facilities, training lands, married quarters, forts and other properties.

Since 1998, the Department of Defence has been engaged in an ongoing programme of barracks consolidation and the property portfolio is kept under continual review. This programme has resulted in the disposal of a range of properties that were identified as surplus to military requirements. There were no property disposals in 2023 but the management of ongoing associated administrative tasks continued in 2023.

Planning

The Planning Unit is responsible for the assessment and management of the Department's response to any planning applications and scoping requests, which could affect Defence Forces installations, operations and / or security. In this regard, the Planning Unit regularly reviews, for example, the following types of application:

- » Strategic Housing Development / Large Scale Residential Developments.
- » Onshore / Offshore Windfarm Developments.
- » COMMs Masts.
- » Solar Panels.

Up to December 2023, the Planning Unit had assessed 22,796 applications over the course of the year, and determined that 126 planning applications and 56 additional scoping documents required further consideration by Defence Forces subject matter experts. The purpose of this engagement is to ensure the Department's and the Defence Forces' views are captured and communicated to the planning authorities where absolutely necessary for operational reasons and for the future safeguarding of Defence Forces installations and infrastructure.

The Planning Unit is also responsible for ensuring the Department's position is reflected in County and Local Area Development Plans, as required.

DEFENCE ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE

During 2023, co-operation between the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces and Enterprise Ireland continued. The Defence Forces also continued to participate in one capability development related Horizon 2020 project, AI-ARC. The AI-ARC project will develop a shared collaboration workspace based on innovative and efficient AI-services, a Virtual Control Room that will significantly enhance border and external security, as well as support cooperation in managing external borders in the Arctic and High North Seas.

Horizon Europe is the EU's largest research and innovation programme to date with almost €95.5 billion of funding available over seven years (2021-2027). The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, with the support of Enterprise Ireland, will engage with Horizon Europe, where relevant to their capability development needs.

LEGISLATION

Significant progress was made in relation to legislation during 2023 with the following items progressed:

Civil Defence Act 2023

The Civil Defence Act was signed by the President on 26 June 2023 and the legislation was commenced on 18 July 2023. The Act consolidates and modernises legislation relating to Civil Defence matters contained in the Air-Raid Precautions Acts 1939 to 1946 and the Civil Defence Act 2012.

Amendment to the Defence Act 1954

Drafting of Heads to amend sections 169 and 192 of the Defence Act 1954 was completed for inclusion in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023, which is being progressed by the Department of Justice. The Bill was published in July 2023 and by the end of 2023 was at Report Stage in Dáil Éireann.

The Defence amendments included in the Bill arise from recommendations in the Independent Review Group Report on Dignity and Equality issues in the Defence Forces and relate to the investigation and trial of sexual assault cases involving persons subject to military law occurring within the State.

Defence (Amendment) Bill 2023

Drafting of the Defence (Amendment) Bill was approved by Government on 20 December 2023. The Bill will progress the following matters:

- i. to establish the External Oversight Body of the Defence Forces on a statutory basis;
- ii. to address the longer-term associate membership of ICTU for the representative associations; and
- iii. to bring forward a number of important miscellaneous amendments to the Defence Acts.

Secondary Legislation

Work continued during 2023, in conjunction with the relevant policy branches, on the amendment and modernisation of various Defence Force Regulations made pursuant to the Defence Act 1954, including a number of recommendations contained in the reports of the CoDF and the Independent Review Group Report on Dignity in the Defence Forces.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Efficient and innovative
management of resources

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Comprehensive details of Defence Vote expenditure and Army Pensions Vote expenditure during 2023 are provided at Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this Report while Section 4.3 contains details of the volume of transactions processed.

In terms of compliance with Prompt Payment obligations, 99.69% of all payments made in 2023, within the Defence Sector, were paid within 30 days, with 88.08% of all payments being made within 15 days. Prompt Payment interest of €1,216 was paid on 101 invoices (totalling €192,058) in accordance with the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997 (Late Payments in Commercial Transactions Regulations, 2002).

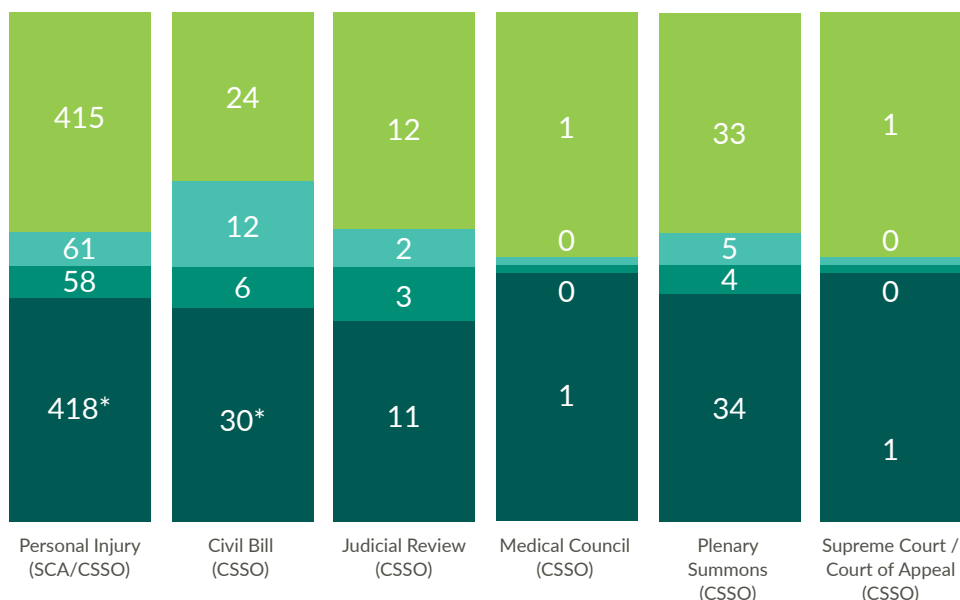
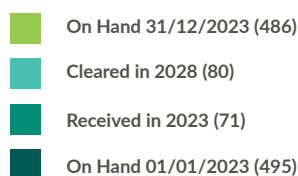
Throughout 2023, Finance Branch continued to perform very efficiently, with a robust set of internal controls and an upgraded financial system ensuring that all service delivery channels continued to operate effectively and mitigate against an increasing threat of fraud.

LITIGATION

The Department's Litigation Branch manages cases taken against the Minister for Defence, including Personal Injuries Claims, Judicial Reviews, Plenary Summonses and Civil Bills. In doing so, the Branch works closely with both the State Claims Agency (SCA) and the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO).

Chart 2.1 and Table 2.1 provide details of the position in relation to all litigation cases handled during 2023.

Chart 2.1
Details of Litigation Cases
during 2023



* Figures adjusted from Annual Report 2022 due to one claim being re-categorised.

Table 2.1
Details of Litigation expenditure during 2021, 2022 and 2023

	CSSO			SCA			Other			Total		
	Employment			Personal Injury			Miscellaneous					
	2021 €	2022 €	2023 €	2021 €	2022 €	2023 €	2021 €	2022 €	2023 €	2021 €	2022 €	2023 €
Settlements	335,547	130,181	396,981	2,537,422	2,938,678	1,517,819	-	-	0	2,872,969	3,068,859	1,914,800
Plaintiff Legal Costs	453,170	191,490	84,484	1,079,285	1,035,694	2,274,583	-	-	-	1,532,455	1,227,184	2,359,067
Medical Costs	-	-	-	94,384	205,965	91,168	-	-	-	94,384	205,965	91,168
Agency Solicitors Fees	-	-	-	742,889	497,895	479,937	-	-	-	742,889	497,895	479,937
Agency Counsel Fees	-	-	-	224,781	531,391	207,137	-	-	-	224,781	531,391	207,137
Injuries Board Assessment Fees	-	-	-	13,200	6,900	14,700	-	-	-	13,200	6,900	14,700
Miscellaneous Costs	-	-	-	52,674	74,998	145,044	13,376	480,897	25,106	66,050	555,895	170,150
DMP Legal Costs	-	-	-	-	-	0	10,626	59,228	64,463	10,626	59,228	64,463
Totals	788,717	321,671	481,465	4,744,635	5,291,521	4,730,388	24,002	540,125	89,569	5,557,354	6,153,317	5,301,422



WORKPLACE RELATIONS
COMMISSION COMPLAINTS

The Department works closely with the Chief State Solicitor’s Office (CSSO) in managing cases taken against the Minister for Defence to the Workplace Relations Commission and Labour Court.

Chart 2.2 provides details of Workplace Relations Complaints (CSSO) during 2023.

Chart 2.2
Details of Workplace Relations
Complaints (CSSO) during 2023



IRISH RED CROSS SOCIETY

The Red Cross Act, 1938 provides for the establishment, by Government Order, of a national Red Cross Society. Pursuant to this Act, the Society was established by the Irish Red Cross Society Order 1939, in which the Government set out the basis upon which the Society is administered. The Order, as amended, provides that the Society’s General Assembly shall exercise the powers of the Society, organise the Society and control and manage its affairs. Whilst the Irish Red Cross Society is an independent charitable body corporate which is responsible for handling its own internal affairs, Red Cross legislation has traditionally been sponsored and brought to Government by the Minister for Defence.

The current Irish Red Cross General Assembly commenced its three year term in July 2022. The Government nominated three members to the General Assembly in accordance with the Irish Red Cross Society (Amendment) Order, 2012.

The Department of Defence provides an annual grant-in-aid to the Society which is a contribution towards the salary and administration costs of running the Society’s headquarters. The grant in 2023 amounted to €975,000 of which €130,000 represented the Government’s annual contribution to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

STRATEGIC GOAL

Develop our people and enhance planning for future HR requirements

PERMANENT DEFENCE
FORCE STRENGTH

The Permanent Defence Force (PDF) consists of the Army, the Air Corps and the Naval Service. The Government is committed to stabilising the numbers of personnel in the Defence Forces with a view to attaining a PDF establishment of at least 9,589 serving personnel, comprised of 7,520 Army personnel, 886 Air Corps personnel, 1,094 Naval Service personnel and an agreed establishment strength of 89 to account for the first cohort of CoDF appointments, however, these posts have not been broken down by branch.

As of 31 December 2023, the strength of the PDF in whole time equivalent (WTE) posts stood at 7,550 personnel, comprising of 6,136 Army personnel, 689 Air Corps personnel and 725 Naval Service personnel.



RECRUITMENT TO THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE

In order to attract personnel to the Defence Forces, Recruitment and Competitions section engaged with the recruitment demographic (18 – 29 years) and pre-recruitment demographic (under 18 years) through various platforms. The physical platforms included recruitment events, job expos and school visits. There were also various virtual platforms engaged, such as online talks, an enhanced social media presence and through recruitment platforms such as LinkedIn and the Defence Forces website. From an advertising perspective, social media sponsored placements were used, video adverts appeared on YouTube, TV, video on demand as well as adverts on radio and print media. 2023 saw the roll out of a marketing strategy aimed specifically at increasing recruitment to the Naval Service. Ads appeared on radio and television, including during the Rugby World Cup.

In terms of increasing the strength of the Defence Forces, rolling recruitment competitions were maintained for all three Services in 2023. Further to these, twenty other individual recruitment competitions were also successfully completed, including Cadetship competitions, Pharmacist Officer, Dental Officers, Medical Officers and School of Music Conductor, to name but a few.

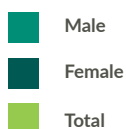






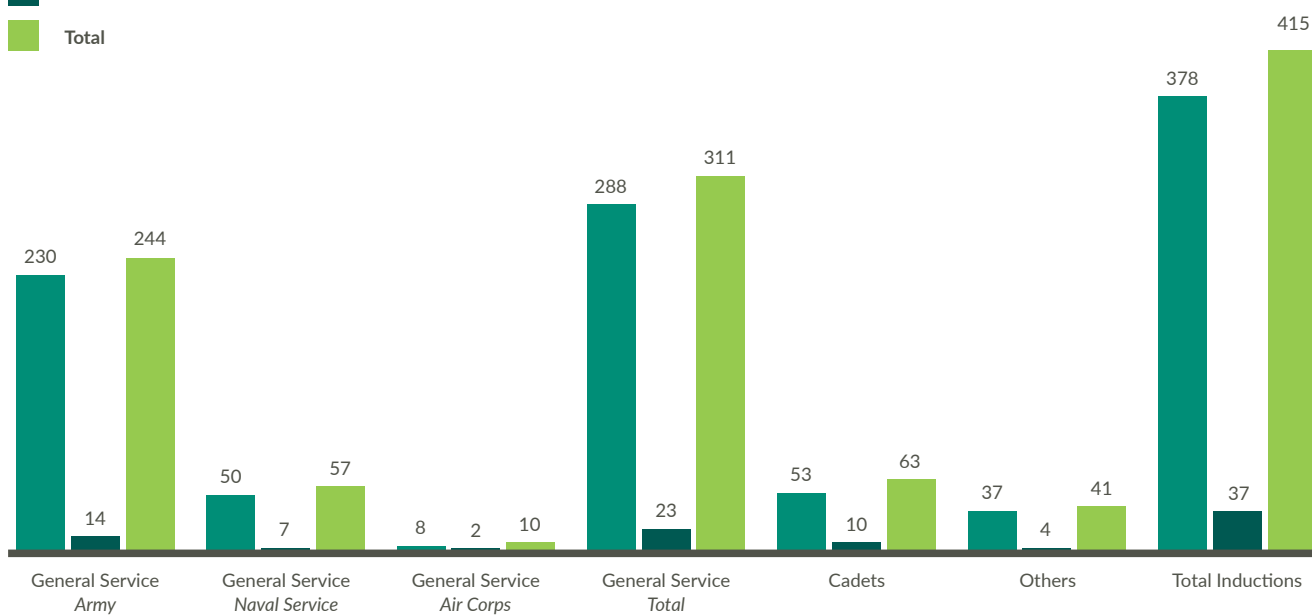
Chart 2.3

Details of Inductions to the PDF in 2023



INDUCTIONS TO THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE IN 2023

The Defence Forces progressed inductions and training throughout 2023. Overall, recruitment efforts in 2023 resulted in a total of 415 personnel being inducted as per Chart 2.3.



The cadet inductions in this category include four (three Army and one Air Corps) substitutes to cover voluntary discharges in the initial weeks of training, and six (five Army and one Air Corps) serving personnel who were awarded a Cadetship



MEASURES TAKEN IN 2023 TO ADDRESS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

The Government has acknowledged the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges facing the Defence Forces and Civil/Military management continue efforts to help alleviate such challenges. The focus remains on stabilising the number of personnel and facilitating capacity for further increases. This will enable the Defence Forces to align ultimately with the level of ambition recommended in the report of the CoDF, and agreed by Government.

In addition to traditional recruitment and a competition for Air Corps Trainee Military Aircraft Systems Technicians, direct entry was utilised in 2023 for 12 recruitment competitions. These were Medical Officers, Defence School of Music Instrumentalists and a Defence School of Music Conductor, Motor Technician Fitters and eight competitions specifically for the Naval Service i.e. Engine Room Artificers, Hull Artificers, Electrical Artificers, Radio/Radar Technicians, Chefs, Bridge Watch-keeping, Marine Engineering and Electrical Engineering.

The ongoing schemes allowing for the re-commissioning of former Officers and the re-enlistment of former enlisted personnel of the Permanent Defence Force has also assisted in addressing particular skills gaps. In 2023, one Officer (Naval Service) was recommissioned while 17 personnel re-enlisted (Army 13, Air Corps three and Naval Service one).

In 2023, the Department engaged external specialist recruitment expertise to re-evaluate the Defence Forces current recruitment methods. Given the particular and critical issues presenting in the Naval Service, its initial efforts were concentrated there.

RETENTION OF PERSONNEL

The retention of Defence Forces Personnel continues to be a key priority for the Department. This is demonstrated by the priorities set out in the Strategic Framework for Transformation of the Defence Forces, published in September 2023.

A range of financial and non-financial retention measures have been introduced, such as:

- » Significant progress on pay, with starting rates of pay in the Defence Forces comparing very well to comparable rates of pay across the Public Service. In addition, there is scope for further income from duty allowances;
- » Service Commitment schemes for Air Corps Pilots and certain Naval Service Personnel;
- » A Naval Service personnel tax credit;
- » Commissioning from the ranks, the re-entry of former Permanent Defence Force personnel with specific skills and extending service limits for Privates, Corporals and Sergeants;
- » Provision of fitness, training and sports facilities across Defence Forces installations;
- » Provision of fully funded opportunities to continue education to gain professional and academic qualifications;
- » The 2023-2027 Defence Forces Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) underpinning the development and maintenance of the necessary operational and training infrastructure with the highest level of financial resources in the State's history;
- » A revised policy on maternity and associated protected leave which is fully aligned with national legislation;
- » The implementation of a range of work-life balance and 'harmony' initiatives.

In addition, on foot of a Programme for Government commitment and a Commission on the Defence Forces recommendation, sanction was received from the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in September 2023, to extend private healthcare to all ranks in the Defence Forces, in addition to access to free medical, physiotherapy and dental care.

Further measures addressed during 2023 include:-

- » Progress on policy in relation to mandatory retirement ages in all ranks in the Permanent Defence Force;
- » The replacement of existing sea-going allowances with less complex sea-going duty measures;
- » The finalisation of the policy position on the Working Time Directive.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGES IN THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE

The Public Service Pay Commission in their report on recruitment and retention in the Permanent Defence Force in 2019 included in their recommendations the need to consider options to tackle barriers to extended participation in the Permanent Defence Force.

A joint civil/military review was subsequently completed in 2021. The Report of the Review Group made a number of recommendations for extended service limits across a number of ranks in the Defence Forces. These recommendations were considered by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to costs and pensions.

In December 2021, the Minister for Defence secured agreement with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, which allowed for an extension in service limits for Privates and Corporals, who were recruited to the Permanent Defence Force since 1 January 1994, to remain in service up to 50 years of age, subject to them meeting certain criteria including medical and fitness standards.

In October 2022, the Minister for Defence secured an interim arrangement from the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform to allow for the retention in service of Sergeants in the Permanent Defence Force who were due to be retired on age grounds to the end of 2024. Those sergeants who were recruited since 1 January 1994 and would be due to retire on the basis of mandatory retirement age in 2022 and 2023 would not be required to do so until the end of 2024.

The Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform has established an interdepartmental working group to consider mandatory retirement ages and service limits for public service groups who have fast accrual occupational pension arrangements. The recommendations from the joint civil/military review of mandatory retirement ages in the Permanent Defence Force are being considered as part of the work of this group.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Arising from a Programme for Government commitment, and strongly endorsed by the CoDF, sanction was secured from the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform during 2023 for the extension of private secondary medical care to all Defence Forces ranks. This provision was implemented fully in September 2023.

Arising from the CoDF Report, an RFT process was conducted during 2023 for consultancy to conduct a review of the medical services provided to the Defence Forces.

The Civilian Consultant Psychiatrist role, which had been filled hitherto on a temporary basis since 2020 within the Defence Forces, was made permanent via an open competition during 2023.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The first Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Defence Forces 2020–2023 was launched by the Minister in December 2020. The aim of this strategy was to support a coordinated and effective mental health and wellbeing support system for the personnel of the Defence Forces through the adoption of a series of measures between 2020 and 2023.

Implementation of the strategy is overseen by the Defence Forces Mental Health and Wellbeing Standing Committee which draws on the full range of clinical and non-clinical services and supports currently in place for members of the Defence Forces.

Work will get underway during 2024 to review the strategy. The report of the Standing Committee will inform the review process for the development of a follow-on Mental Health Strategy for 2024–2029, which will look to build on the progress achieved and ensure the effective delivery of mental health and wellbeing services and supports within the Defence Forces to the end of the decade.

SCHEMES TO REJOIN THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE

Re-enlistment Scheme

The re-enlistment of former personnel with the relevant skills and experience is one of a number of actions being pursued to address skill shortages in the PDF. The scheme, established in 2020, provides a means to facilitate the re-enlistment of suitably qualified former enlisted members of the Defence Forces to fill such critical technical positions.

During 2023, 18 candidates were approved by the Tánaiste on foot of recommendations from the Chief of Staff; 17 of which were attested throughout the course of the year. Further recommendations from the Chief of Staff for the Tánaiste's consideration are expected in 2024. In total, 134 candidates have been approved by the former Minister and Tánaiste since the re-enlistment scheme began and 107 members have been attested under the terms of the scheme.

Recommissioning Scheme

There have been particular challenges with vacancies in certain specialist officer posts such as Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers and certain Technicians.

One of the measures to address such shortages is the scheme to recommission former Air Corps officers, which was launched in 2019. There is also scope to recommission officers in other specialist streams across the Defence Forces, if shortages exist.

During 2023, 10 applications were received under the terms of the Recommissioning scheme with one officer recommissioned on foot of a recommendation from the Chief of Staff. Since the launch of the scheme in 2019, a total of 80 applications have been received, of which 15 officers have been recommissioned into the Air Corps, two officers into the Naval Service and three Officers to the Army, bringing the total number of recommissioned officers at year-end to 20.



FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE

The strength of females in the PDF at 31 December 2023 was 559 WTE personnel comprising of 467 Army personnel, 31 Air Corps personnel and 61 Naval Service personnel. This represents 7.4% of the current (WTE) strength of 7,550.



RESERVE DEFENCE FORCE STRENGTH

The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) is comprised of the Army Reserve (AR), the Naval Service Reserve (NSR) and the First Line Reserve (FLR). The Government recognises the important role that the three elements of the RDF play in contributing to Ireland's defence capability. The Report of the CoDF is clear that there is a continued requirement to regenerate and revitalise the RDF.

The regulatory establishment of the AR and NSR is 4,069 personnel, as provided for in Defence Force Regulation CS4. The primary role of the RDF is to augment the PDF in crisis situations and to contribute to State ceremonial events. On foot of the enactment of the Defence Amendment Act, members of the Reserve can deploy on a voluntary basis in support of the Permanent Defence Forces, including deployments overseas.

The FLR is comprised of former members of the PDF who have undertaken to, either voluntarily or on foot of a contractual commitment, complete a period of service in the FLR. The AR and NSR consist of individuals, from a broad variety of backgrounds, who have voluntarily committed to complete a period of military service.

At the end of 2023, the strength of the Reserve Defence Force was 1,670 personnel consisting of:

First Line Reserve: 282 personnel;
(comprising 132 Army, 123 Naval Service, and 27 Air Corps)

Army Reserve: 1,305 personnel

Naval Service Reserve: 83 personnel.

There were 66 additional new members inducted during the year, 60 of which were inducted into the AR and 6 into the NSR. Regarding a gender breakdown of these statistics, 11 female candidates were inducted into the AR. Three officers (two male, one female) were also appointed to the FLR in 2023.

The Government remains committed to on-going recruitment to the RDF and several initiatives in this regard continued during 2023, involving the use of social media, the Defence Forces Press Office, outreach activities by RDF members, and the use of PDF exit interviews which provide information on applying to the RDF.

FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE RESERVE DEFENCE FORCE

As of the end of 2023, a total of 175 women were members of the Reserve Defence Force i.e. Army Reserve (168 members) and Naval Service Reserve (7 members).

PROGRESS ON PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO FULL PARTICIPATION OF RDF AT 4,000 PERSONNEL

The Report of the CoDF, published in February 2022, contained a number of recommendations on the RDF. Two recommendations from the report, denoted as 'Early Actions', relate to the establishment of an Office of Reserve Affairs (ORA) and the development of a Regeneration Plan for the Reserve. The ORA has been established and is currently staffed by seven members (six PDF and one RDF). The development of the Regeneration Plan, of which a key area is 'recruitment', is the initial priority for the ORA and this work has commenced.

A recruitment drive for the RDF in 2023 resulted in over 1000 applications being received. On 3 October 2023, the recruitment portal opened again and 200 applications were received in 38 hours. At year end, there were 844 live applications with 34 medicals completed.

Work has been completed on streamlining the two-stage medical process and fitness testing is now completed before medicals. A more robust and streamlined recruitment process lends itself also to the CoDF recommendations relating to the structure and strength of the RDF, such as increasing the future RDF establishment strength to include, at a minimum, an Air Force Reserve of 200, and a Navy Reserve of 400.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN 2023 ON COMMISSION ON THE DEFENCE FORCES PROJECTS (RDF)

The High Level Action Plan for the Commission on the Defence Forces includes the recommendation to establish the Office of Reserve Affairs and a Regeneration Plan for the RDF, which are categorised as Early Actions.

THE OFFICE OF RESERVE AFFAIRS

The Office of Reserve Affairs (ORA) was formally established in 2022 in accordance with the recommendations and early actions of the CoDF. The ORA achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in September 2023 and currently has a staff of six PDF and one RDF member. The next tranche of CoDF recommended appointments will see an increase in the numbers of RDF personnel assigned to the office.

Principal amongst the roles and responsibilities assigned to the ORA is the development, implementation and oversight of a plan to revitalise the RDF. This requirement has been outlined in the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) and the Reserve Defence Force Regeneration Development Plan (RDFRDP) is due for delivery in Q2 2024.

Plan

- a. The momentum necessary to drive the revitalisation of the RDF has been gaining pace over the course of 2023. It is apparent the early actions are generating a significant sense of positivity that is encouraging and energising stakeholders to facilitate and support the change necessary to transform and revitalise the RDF. The ORA, through the RDFRDP, will focus on the delivery of products created within the actions.
- b. The Detailed Implementation Plan has outlined a clear pathway for the revitalisation of the RDF. The coordination of these efforts is, in the main, the responsibility of the ORA and thus far is being delivered within the timeline outlined in the DIP.
- c. The revitalisation of the RDF through the implementation of the RDFRDP will be enabled through the provision of a robust operating environment. There are three key enablers in this regard; policy, regulation and finance. The ORA will support the Department of Defence in the formulation of these enablers through the provision of military advice as required. This cooperation is already underway and will be reinforced throughout 2024.

RESERVE DEFENCE FORCE REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATION (RDFRA)

During 2023, RDFRA met with the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, the Secretary General and Senior Officials, the Chief of Staff, the Assistant Chief of Staff, General Officers Commanding (GOCs) 1 Bde, 2 Bde and DFTC, and the Flag Officer Commanding the Naval Service (FOCNS). Engagements primarily focused on progressing the RDF-specific elements of the CoDF report, the subsequent High Level Action Plan and the Detailed Implementation Plan.

The RDFRA has engaged regularly with the ORA on a wide range of issues. Of particular note during 2023 was the establishment of a productive bimonthly forum at which RDFRA, Defence Forces Personnel Policy Branch (DFPPB), the ORA, and J1 (HRM) Branch seek to progress additional required amendments to Defence Forces Regulation R5, as well as address a range of other RDF matters.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION OUTPUTS DURING 2023 IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

The 2022 CoDF report describes the delivery of training and education in the Defence Forces as a cornerstone of military life, and therefore one of the most important outputs of the organisation. The primary focus of the Defence Forces, when not on operations, is the development and subsequent delivery of training and education. During 2023, these activities continued to be central to retaining and developing capability. Table 2.2 summarises the outputs delivered by the Defence Forces' Training and Education Branch during the year.

Table 2.2

Details of Training Courses completed during 2023

	Instructor Courses	Skills Courses	Career Courses	Other Courses*
Number of Courses completed in Defence Forces training installations	26	1,131	45	Multiple
Number of Students	249	13,500	914	11,738

* Other courses are the type that are completed annually e.g. Manual Handling, Response team briefings, Sexual Ethics and Respectful Relationships (SERR) briefings, Gender Diversity and Unconscious Bias Training. These briefings are recorded as certification for courses that have been completed.





Career progression in the Defence Forces is facilitated by successful completion of the relevant primary career progression courses. During 2023, a total of 499 personnel completed 19 primary career progression courses across a range of areas, as illustrated hereunder in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3
Details of Primary Career Courses conducted

Course Title	No. of Courses	No. of Students
Potential NCO (Naval Service)	1	18
Potential NCO (Army)	3	160
Junior NCO Logistics Course	1	21
Senior NCO Logistics Course	1	30
Standard NCO Course (Naval Service)	1	15
Standard NCO Course (All Corps)	5	58
All Arms Standard NCO Course	1	60
Senior NCOs Course Army	1	50
Young Officers Course (All Corps) (2 ongoing)	3 completed	36
Land Command and Staff Course	1	29
Joint Command and Staff Course	1	22
Totals	19	499

RECRUIT INDUCTION TRAINING

In 2023, a total of 415 Permanent Defence Force (PDF) (378 Males and 37 females) and 66 Reserve Defence Force (RDF) recruits (55 male and 11 females) were inducted into the Defence Forces.

Table 2.4

Details of Recruit Induction Training by formation and service during 2021, 2022 and 2023

	PDF*			RDF		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
Army	364	326	311	29	90	60
Naval Service	65	21	68	12	0	6
Air Corps	13	3	36	0	0	0
Totals	442	350	415	41	90	66

* Excluding Direct Entry Officers and Cadets.

TRAINING FOR OVERSEAS

Throughout 2023, the conduct of essential Pre-Deployment Training, for both units and individuals being deployed to overseas missions, (e.g. UNIFIL, UNDOF and EUTM Mali), was coordinated by Defence Forces' Training and Education Branch in collaboration with the Military College in the Defence Forces Training Centre (DFTC) and assisted by the lead formation.

Four Mission Readiness Exercises were conducted for larger troop deployments to UNIFIL and UNDOF involving 935 personnel in order to certify minimum capability and competence prior to deployment. The Domestic Exercise Evaluation Model (DEEM) continued to be used to evaluate the four Field Training Exercises which are conducted as part of the Mission Readiness Exercises for UNIFIL and UNDOF. The DEEM allows for evaluation in line with international best practice and provides both an initial and final feedback report for the commander. A further three Overseas Qualification Courses were conducted in 2023 for personnel who deployed on smaller Missions, including EUTM Mali. The DEEM was not used to evaluate the preparedness of personnel travelling on smaller missions.



Table 2.5
Reserve Defence Force Training

	No. of Reservists Paid	Total No. of training days
Standard Training	820	19,442
RDFRA	73	590

RESERVE DEFENCE FORCE TRAINING

The RDF continued to prepare and train for its role in augmenting the PDF in times of crisis. This is achieved by the integration of PDF and RDF capabilities within the Single Force concept.

The funding available for RDF training in 2023 was maintained at a level to support planned training. The budget for the RDF was exceeded by €189,363 with €2,239,363 spent from a budget of €2,050,000 as of 15 January 2024. An extra €600,000 was sought for the budget in 2024. This increase is due to the uptake in paid training days as a result of work on implementing the CoDF recommendations for regeneration of the RDF. There has also been a small number of overseas days completed and there are various allowances associated with this. There have also been claims for instructor's allowance and there has been an increase in the number of active FLR members also.

A total of 20,032 man-days were utilised during 2023 by 828 RDF members. This can be subdivided further as detailed in Table 2.5: 820 personnel completed 19,442 standard training days in pursuit of professional development through career courses, continuous professional development seminars and participation in integrated exercises as part of the Single Force concept and 73 personnel completed 590 RDFRA-related days.



DEFENCE FORCES SPORTS ACTIVITIES

2023 was a successful year in reinvigorating sport in the Defence Forces on both the National and International stage. Promoting sport within the Defence Forces serves a dual purpose of enhancing physical fitness and fostering team camaraderie, both critical elements for operational effectiveness. By integrating sports into the Defence Forces culture, it not only promotes overall health and well-being among service members but also cultivates essential skills such as leadership, discipline and resilience. Furthermore, utilizing sports as a recruitment tool underscores the Defence Forces commitment to holistic development, appealing to potential recruits who value physical activity and teamwork.

Notable sports include Athletics, Boxing, Soccer, Rowing, Rugby, GAA, DFCAT - a culmination of Kayaking, Diving, Parachuting, Mountaineering, Sailing and Adventure Racing, DF Golf, DF Orienteering and DF Sea Angling.

By emphasising the role of sports in recruitment campaigns shows that the Defence Forces are dedicated to nurturing individuals who are not only capable soldiers but also well-rounded individuals with a strong sense of community and teamwork. The dedication, quality of training and instruction conducted by Defence Forces clubs, in particular DFCAT clubs, became paramount when they assisted in search and rescue operations with emergency services. By leveraging the expertise and experience gained through Defence Forces club instruction, civilian emergency services can enhance their effectiveness and better serve their communities in times of need.

Work is ongoing in securing a tender for clothing for sports teams and clubs to supply teams with fit for purpose and professional kits. Work is also ongoing to secure a tender for a gym equipment supplier in order for all Defence Forces' establishments to have a consistent high standard of gym facilities.

LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND DEFENCE STUDIES PROGRAMME

During 2023, the Leadership, Management and Defence Studies (LMDS) Programme for enlisted personnel continued to develop and to be a source of significant success for the Defence Forces and its members. On 11 January 2024, 261 personnel were conferred with awards by South East Technological University (SETU) for LMDS course work completed in 2023. This includes 119 with a Higher Level Certificate in LMDS (Level 6), 96 with a Minor Award in LMDS (Level 7), 27 being conferred with a BA LMDS (Logistics) (Level 7) and 19 BA LMDS (Level 7). Additionally, 14 personnel graduated with a Certificate in Introduction to Fire Service Operations.

Over 2,000 personnel have been conferred with awards by IT Carlow/SETU under the LMDS Programme since its inception in 2012. The Defence Forces' Training and Education Branch continues to promote the benefits of the Programme among soldiers, sailors, and aircrew of 3* Private rank and to attract them to join the LMDS Programme.

Defence Forces Officers continued participating in the collaborative LMDS programme with Maynooth University throughout 2023. In total, 123 Awards were conferred by Maynooth University in November 2023. This included 43 Special Purpose Awards at Level 7 (LMDS) associated with Cadet Training. 56 personnel graduated with a Level 8 Higher Diploma in Leadership and Contemporary Security associated with the Land Command and Staff Course, and 24 personnel completed a Master of Arts (Level 9 - LMDS) related to the Joint Command and Staff Course.



LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND NAVAL STUDIES PROGRAMME

In 2023, The National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) conferred Leadership, Management and Naval Studies (LMNS) awards at Level 6 to 36 personnel. Two officers were conferred with a Level 7 in Nautical Science and four were conferred with a Level 8 in Nautical Science.

THIRD LEVEL OFFICER SCHEME

Under the Third Level Officer Scheme, Defence Forces Commissioned Officers who, on induction to the Cadet School, had not completed a bachelor's degree programme at Level 8 are afforded the opportunity to earn an appropriate degree. There are currently 112 Officers attending Higher Education Institutions. In 2023, 34 officers completed their third-level studies.

EXTERNAL EDUCATION

The Defence Forces also engaged in external and foreign training and education activities during 2023 to facilitate organisational learning and to ensure that training, education and capability development gaps are identified and addressed. In total, the Defence Forces participated in 323 foreign activities involving 786 personnel. This engagement helps to ensure that the Defence Forces remain up-to-date with regard to best international practice in terms of military thinking and expertise, and ensures that the Defence Forces remain interoperable both at home and overseas. The numbers of personnel that availed of external courses either at home or courses/training abroad in 2023 are as follows:

- » Attended training activities abroad - 786
- » Availed of External Courses at home – 1488. These courses ranged from one-day continuous professional development training courses to nine-months Masters Level 9 accredited programmes and included the Trainee Technician Scheme (TTS), Third Level Officers Scheme, Refund of Fees and LMDS programme.

TRAINEE TECHNICIAN, APPRENTICESHIP AND OTHER TRADE SCHEMES

The Defence Forces operate a Trainee Technician Scheme (TTS) to meet the technical education needs of the organisation. Options within the scheme range from traditional trades such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical, in the Engineer Corps, to heavy vehicle mechanic in Transport Corps to more military technical specialist roles such as armourer in the Ordnance Corps, or Communication Information Services (CIS) technicians in the CIS Corps. Both the Naval Service and Air Corps also conduct technical training to qualify personnel in the technical skills appropriate to their roles.

During 2023, a total of 64 personnel qualified under the army's TTS. Successful trainees comprised of 11 CIS Corps students (Level 7), 18 Ordnance Corps Students (Level 7), 20 Engineer Corps students (Level 6), 11 Transport Corps students (Level 6) and four from the Printing Press (Level 6).

Within the Naval Service (NS) during 2023, 11 personnel were conferred under the Naval Service TTS with five personnel being awarded a National Trade Certificate (Level 6) and four personnel being awarded a Level 7 Bachelor of Engineering from Munster Technological University, and two personnel being awarded a Level 7 Bachelor of Information Science.

Within the Air Corps during 2023, eight Air Corps apprentices were awarded a Bachelor of Engineering (Level 7) from TUD upon completion of their apprenticeship as Aircraft Technicians.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION

A scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) for members of the PDF provides a formal mechanism for the Representative Associations, i.e. Representative Association for Commissioned Officers (RACO) and Permanent Defence Force Other Ranks Representative Association (PDFORRA) to engage with the Official side on matters which come within the scope of the scheme.

REVIEW OF THE CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION SCHEME FOR PDF MEMBERS

The Independent Chair of the Conciliation Council is currently undertaking a review of the C&A Scheme. All parties to the Scheme mutually agreed this review. The Chair received individual submissions, sought from all parties to the Scheme, and discussions between the Chair and the individual parties continue.

A plenary session, involving all parties to the C&A Scheme, was held in late 2023. Following on from this, further discussions have taken place. The Chair plans to hold a final plenary session with all parties early in 2024 in order to complete this review.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

- » Eight Conciliation Council Reports were signed with PDFORRA and two with RACO in 2023.
- » A total of 26 meetings with the Representative Associations took place in 2023 including 12 Conciliation Council meetings, 12 Pay and Allowance (P&A) meetings (six each for both RACO and PDFORRA)
- » Two Induction Subcommittee meetings were held with RACO in 2023.
- » For RACO, seven claims were resolved at Conciliation Council, with a further 22 claims being closed at P&A Subcommittee in 2023. For PDFORRA, six claims were resolved at Council and a further 30 at P&A Subcommittee in 2023.

The Tánaiste, the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff attended the Annual Delegate Conference of PDFORRA in May 2023. In November 2023, Minister Jack Chambers TD, accompanied by the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff, delivered a speech at RACO's Annual Delegate Conference, as the Tánaiste was unavailable to attend.

BUILDING MOMENTUM: A NEW PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT 2021-2023

The implementation of the Sectoral Bargaining Fund element of Building Momentum in 2022 resulted in additional payments totalling €373,000 per annum to members of the Defence Forces – these payments will primarily benefit the lower paid members of the Defence Forces. Eighteen CCRs were agreed with PDFORRA in this regard.

Negotiations on an extension to the existing Building Momentum public service pay agreement were held in mid-2022 with public service trade unions and representative associations. As temporary associate members for the purpose of the public service pay negotiations, the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations took part in negotiations under the ICTU umbrella. An extension to the existing agreement was subsequently agreed and ratified by the Representative Associations.

The 'Building Momentum' pay agreement extension provided for further increases in pay and allowances to all public servants, including members of the Defence Forces. This agreement provided for a 6.5% increase over 2022 and 2023, including:

- » 3% backdated to 2 Feb 2022
- » 2% on 1 March 2023
- » 1.5% or €750, whichever is the greater, on 1 October 2023.

Pensionable allowances in the nature of pay also benefit.

A new public sector pay agreement was negotiated and published in early 2024.

WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

The Government has committed to bringing the Defence Forces (and An Garda Síochána) within the scope of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, which transposed the EU Directive on Working Time (Council Directive 93/104/EC of 23 November 1993), into Irish law.

The Working Time Directive (WTD) recognises the unique nature of certain military activities and allows for derogations and exemptions of such activities. It is determined that while some activities may qualify for exemption or derogation under certain provisions of the Directive, a high percentage of the normal everyday work of the Defence Forces is already in compliance with the Working Time Directive.

Action 28, of the Strategic Framework Transformation of the Defence Forces, published in September 2023, stipulated that the Department of Defence finalise the policy position on the implementation of the Working Time Directive within the Defence Forces, with regard to activities which are deemed outside the scope of the Directive by the end of December 2023.

Significant consultations by civil and military management on the wider implementation of the Working Time Directive within the Defence Forces continued during 2023, including at the subcommittee of the Defence Conciliation and Arbitration Council (comprising of the Representative Associations, military and civil management). These consultations have been informed by the interpretation of recent European Case Law on military service, as well as the fundamental requirement to ensure that appropriate rights and protections with regard to health and safety, are afforded to serving members, while also ensuring that the Defence Forces can continue to fulfil their essential State functions.

A proposed policy position setting out the activities deemed outside the scope of the Directive has been developed. The finalised policy position will inform the approach to be taken by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which is responsible for developing the appropriate legislative mechanism to remove the blanket exemption for the Permanent Defence Force from the provisions of the Working Time Directive.

COMMISSION ON DEFENCE FORCES (CoDF) PAY RECOMMENDATIONS

Government has progressed a number of key measures arising from the Report of the CoDF to address pay and recruitment issues in the Defence Forces. These include a number of projects undertaken to bolster the attractiveness of a career in the Defence Forces, and cover a range of measures which improve pay and conditions.

It is worth noting in this regard that the Report observed that much of the commentary surrounding issues of pay in the Defence Forces does not fully reflect the totality of the remuneration package and believes that this needs to be better communicated.

The CoDF made a number of recommendations concerning pay structures, which have been implemented including:

- » Removal of the requirement for a Private 3 Star/Able Seaman to 'mark time' for the first three years at that rank (as detailed in terms of starting pay rates);
- » Payment of the full rate of Military Service Allowance (MSA) applicable to the rank of all Private 3 Star/Able Seaman personnel.

Government further provided an extension of private secondary medical care to all Defence Forces' personnel, a measure that commenced in September 2023. Previously, various benefits applied to Commissioned Officers only. It will now apply to all personnel and will be of immediate benefit to a further 84% of the Permanent Defence Force based on current strengths. In addition to the comprehensive range of primary care currently provided, this new measure will facilitate referrals to private consultants, as well as the costs of any diagnostic tests.

In addition to the above, the Tánaiste, in November 2023, announced new changes to the existing Naval Service allowances, as a means of simplifying current structures, by consolidating the daily allowance and the sea-going commitment scheme into one enhanced allowance. This is in line with the CoDF recommendation to replace existing sea-going allowances with less complex measures. The sea-going commitment scheme will be abolished from the end of 2023.

Specifically, the current Patrol Duty Allowance, paid to Naval Service personnel, will be doubled after ten days at sea. This measure will take effect from 1 January 2024. It will result in the daily rate increasing from €64.67 to €129.24 for an officer, and from €64.27 to €128.54 for an enlisted person, after ten days at sea.

Having due regard to all of the measures mentioned it is important to note that significant progress has been delivered on pay and conditions, for the Defence Forces, in recent years. Following the implementation of the recommendations of the CoDF, and the pay increases under the Building Momentum public service pay agreement 2021-2023, recruits on completion of training (which takes approximately 24 weeks), started at:

- » €38,016 in Year 1
- » €39,413 in Year 2 and
- » €40,700 in Year 3

In terms of Officers, a school-leaver Cadet, on commissioning as an Officer, is paid €41,962. This is a second Lieutenant position. After two years' service as an Officer, they are promoted to Lieutenant and their pay rises to €47,245. Where a graduate joins, the pay rate on commissioning as a Lieutenant begins at €47,245. These rates all include pensionable military service allowance, which is an allowance that is paid to all ranks up to and including the rank of Colonel, for the unpredictable nature of the work encountered by the Defence Forces. These compare very well to starting rates of pay across the public service.

GENDER, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

Throughout 2023, the Gender Adviser cell within the Defence Forces continued to work in accordance with the Defence Forces Third Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions. The Third Defence Forces Action Plan articulates the organisation's priorities for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The WPS agenda seeks to address the disproportionate effects conflict has on women and girls under four thematic areas: Conflict prevention including Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Participation and Representation of Women in Decision Making, Protection Relief and Recovery from GBV and SEA and the Promotion of Gender Equality. The Defence Forces Action Plan on WPS 2019-2024 includes a number of key action areas in relation to training and builds on previous tasks. Previously gender training has been concerned with matters such as pre-deployment training and operational training. This new Action Plan specifically tasks the Defence Forces with examining data gathering measures with a view to capturing the effectiveness of Defence Forces' training regarding the WPS agenda. It aims to build upon and effectively capture achievements to date, as well as paving the way for future developments in respect of the wider Women, Peace and Security sphere.

In light of the CoDF report and the report of the IRG, a significant programme of reform and culture change within the Defence Forces, commenced during 2023. The end goal of this cultural change is to ensure that the Defence Forces is an equal opportunities employer, reflective of contemporary Irish society, which provides a workplace underpinned by dignity and mutual respect, and where self-worth is actively promoted.

The Organisational Culture Standing Committee (OCSC) along with the Gender Equality and Diversity office, continued its work in 2023 to drive and coordinate the process of cultural change within the Defence Forces, aligning its actions with CoDF and IRG recommendations.

Each Formation has its own OCSC Committee to drive the change process throughout the organisation. One effort of the OCSC in 2023 was to continue its engagement with the British Armed Forces who assisted in developing an all stop day, 'Operation Training Muster'. The focus of the muster was to highlight correct report procedures, appropriate behaviour in the training environment and reaffirm the Defence Forces Values.

Work continued during 2023 on relevant White Paper Projects. One of the main focuses was on White Paper Project 56, with the finalisation of the report on the survey to identify impediments to the advancement of women in the Permanent Defence Force. Following consideration of this Report, the General Staff directed the establishment of a 'Standing Committee for increasing Females in the Defence Forces'. This Standing Committee has worked to implement recommendations from the report. The Standing Committee meets regularly to review actions taken and to agree future actions to be initiated. To date incremental, but positive, progress has been made in several areas, these include recommendations relating to balanced recruitment imagery as part of the Defence Forces recruitment strategy, and review of regulatory provisions in relation to grooming standards.

In 2023, a new Gender Diversity and Unconscious Bias Training course was introduced. In addition, Sexual Ethics and Responsible Relationship (SERR) workshops were developed and rolled-out in cooperation with University College Cork. These training initiatives are mandatory for all personnel to attend.

International online training courses were also conducted throughout 2023. Through both the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM) and The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), two personnel successfully qualified as a Military Gender Advisors and 46 personnel gained the Gender Focal Point qualification.

With regard to wider diversity and inclusion, Defend with Pride, the Defence Forces' LGBT+ Network continued to support LGBT+ personnel within the organisation. The Defence Forces have also joined PWIN Proud to Work for Ireland Network and are represented regularly at meetings. Work is ongoing by the joint civil-military working group to progress the development of a Transgender Employment Policy for the Defence Forces. Throughout 2023, the Defence Forces continued to sit on the committee for the implementation of the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy and the 30% Club Public Sector Network. The Defence Forces has also collaborated with An Garda Síochána's Diversity and Inclusion networks.

With the assistance of an external legal firm, extensive work continued during 2023 to ensure that the Defence Forces are compatible with the provisions of the relevant equality legislation, while a new policy for maternity and associated protected leave was introduced.

2023 also saw the rollout of sanitary products throughout Defence Forces installations, an initiative the Defence Forces Women's Network advocated for. Also in 2023 following research and deliberations between Departmental and Military officials, a new scheme to reimburse the cost of purchasing sports underwear to all female Defence Forces personnel was introduced. In addition, a new policy position was formulated by the Defence Forces on personal appearance and grooming standards and is now underpinned in Regulation.



DEFENCE WOMEN'S NETWORK

The Defence Women's Network (DWN), a joint civil/military initiative, was officially launched in 2022.

The role and remit of the DWN continued to grow and expand during 2023, and its membership is representative of all grades/ranks across Defence, with the ongoing contribution and support of Secretary General Jacqui McCrum and Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Seán Clancy. The DWN is supported by a robust civil/military Committee who plan and run events.

Given the level of change and the impact of the release of the IRG report, activities in 2023 focused on wellbeing and developing resilience. This included a very successful event in the Curragh to mark International Women's Day with Deputy Commissioner Shawna Coxon as key note speaker and a much enjoyed Wellness and Wellbeing day in Athlone with a number of excellent speakers on the mental health and resilience both from the literary and sports worlds. This event also showcased the Sportswear Initiative for women of the Defence Forces.

The DWN continues to produce Quarterly Newsletters covering DWN events and also sharing relevant information from training and external conferences.



The Network supported Defence Forces Women's Network events and strengthened links, and advertised and attended relevant national and international conferences including 30% Club events. The DWN was represented by Department and Defence Forces members at an international Defence Women's Network conference in London.

The committee is delighted with the level of participation and collaboration from all parts of the Organisation. The DWN has afforded individuals across the Department and the Defence Forces the opportunity to engage at a variety of forums on a range of matters and look forward to more in 2024, with the DWN looking to engage with allies internationally on matters which impact women in similar civil and military organisations.

DEFENCE FORCES WOMEN'S NETWORK

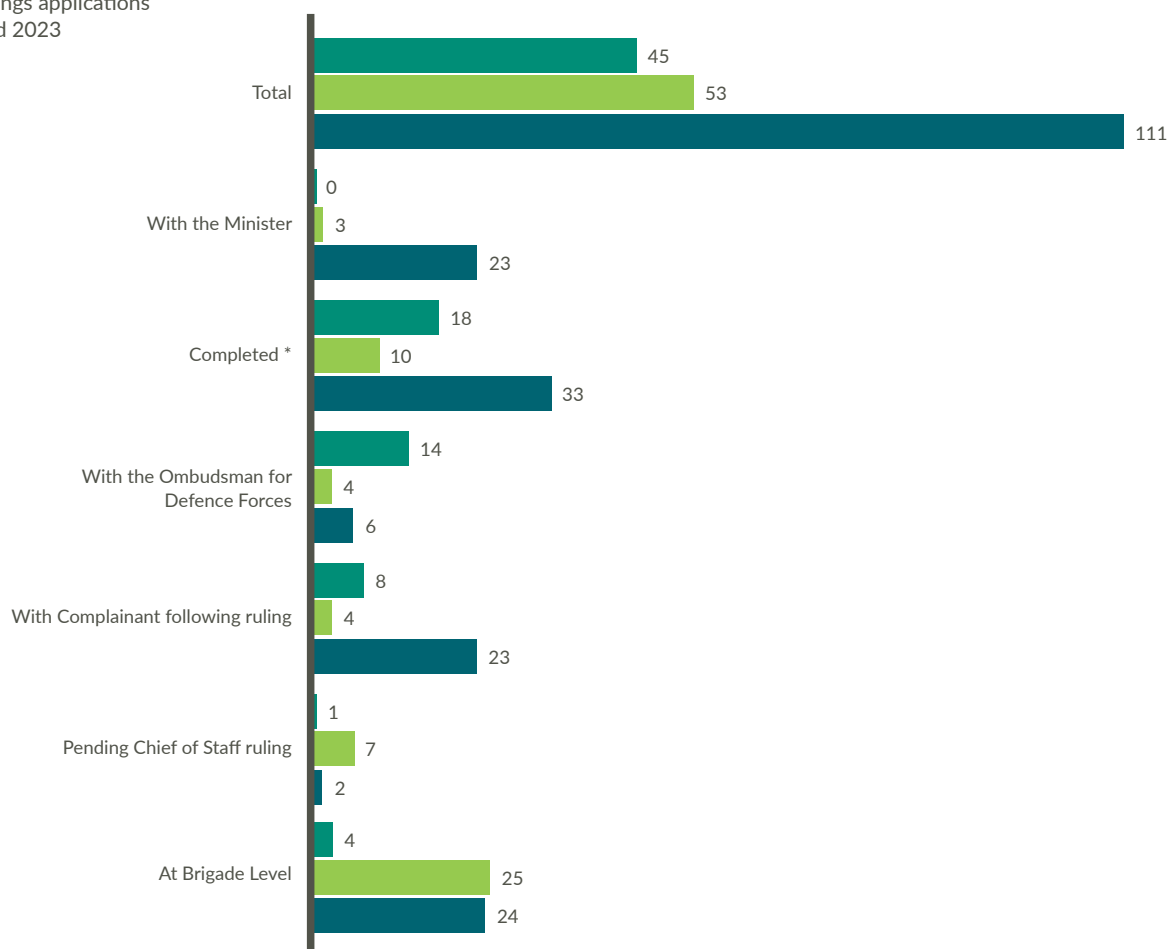
Defence Forces Women's Network (DFWN) throughout 2023 continued to provide a safe space for females to meet. Each brigade and Formation held regular meetings to discuss matters of importance, career progression and development. Both formal and informal mentoring is offered to DFWN members, this is coordinated at Unit level. The DFWN representatives contributed to the review process and updating of policy document such as A9 and GRO 01 of 23 Maternity Policy, this input contributed to the delivery of new policies that support females in their careers in the Defence Forces, and make the Defence Forces a more inclusive work environment for all.

REDRESS OF WRONGS

The internal complaint and redress system provided for in the Defence Forces is known as the *Redress of Wrongs* (RoW) and is provided for by Section 114 (Chapter VI) of the Defence Acts 1954 to 2021. If a member of the Defence Forces considers themselves wronged, they may make a complaint to either their Company Commander (enlisted) or Commanding Officer (officer), stating the nature of the complaint and the redress sought. There are no time limits for a member of the Defence Forces to submit a complaint under this process. It is also open to the complainant to submit their complaint directly to the Ombudsman for the Defence Forces or if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the Redress of Wrongs process.

Chart 2.4 provides end of year details in respect of 45 *Redress of Wrongs* applications received during 2023 with 2022 and 2021 figures also provided for comparison.

Chart 2.4
Redress of Wrongs applications
2021, 2022 and 2023



* Completed instead of withdrawn as the complainants accepted the Officer's findings on the matter.



OMBUDSMAN FOR THE DEFENCE FORCES

The Ombudsman for the Defence Forces (ODF) published his Annual Report for 2022 in May 2023. In the Report, the ODF notes that 54 Notification of Complaints were received in 2022 which represents a 50% decrease on the 106 notifications received in 2021. Two new cases were referred to the ODF for full investigation in 2022 compared to none in 2021. Another notable statistic is that complaints from former members of the Defence Forces numbered 9 in 2022, whereas in 2021 there were only 2 such referrals. A total of 45 case reports were produced by the Ombudsman in 2023, of which 18 were signed and completed by the Minister. A further four reports from previous years were signed off by the Minister in 2023.

DRUG TESTING DURING 2023

In 2023, the Defence Forces Drugs Testing Team (DFDTT) conducted 959 individual tests. During testing two distinct types of drugs tests were conducted:

- » Random Drug Testing, (R): The DFDTT conducted random drug tests in 15 locations, testing 949 personnel.
- » Target Drug testing, (T): The DFDTT conducted 10 target tests during the testing period.

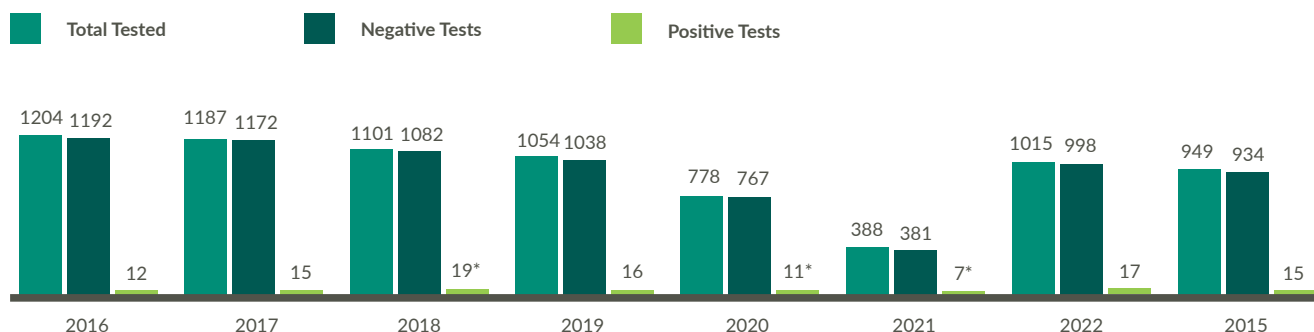
The total number of tests conducted equated to 10.4% of combined PDF/RDF strength. The 959 tested (random and targeted) in 2023 included 87 Members of the Reserve Forces and 872 members of the PDF. At the end of the testing period, 15 randomly selected individuals had a positive test recorded. This figure represents 1.56% of the numbers tested. This figure is broadly in line with the general trend over the past number of years, as indicated in Chart 2.5 and 2.6.

Further details are contained in Charts 2.5 and 2.6, along with comparisons with recent years.

It is worth noting that although there was a reduction in positives this year, the trend line is still trending upwards, and this only serves to reinforce the importance of conducting CRDT on an ongoing basis. Whilst the primary role of the process is to act as a deterrent, the inclusion and formalisation of an education and information campaign will reinforce the statement that “the use of illegal substances is incompatible with a career in the Defence Forces”.

Chart 2.5

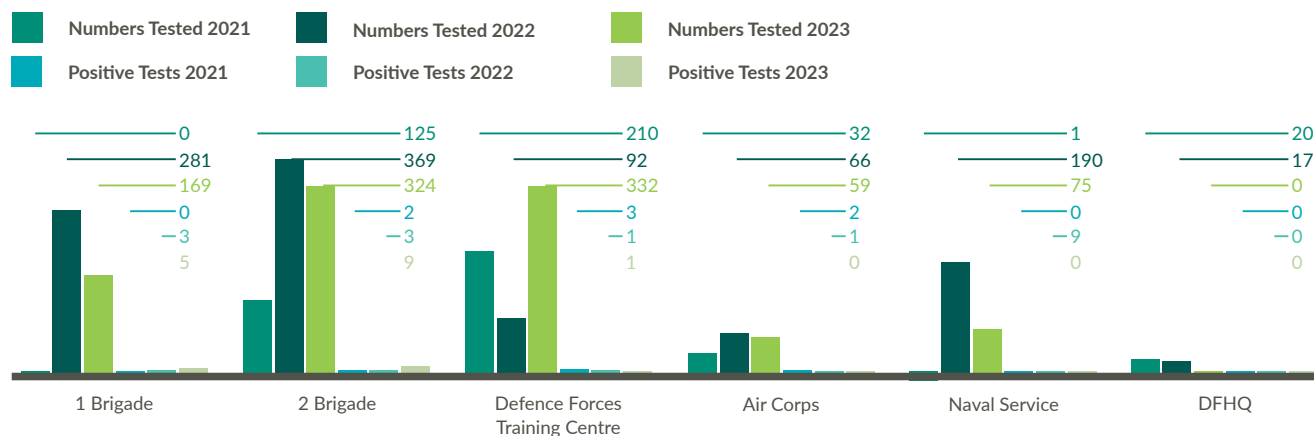
Details of Compulsory Random Drug Tests (CRDT) from 2016 to 2023



* Includes two positives in 2018 and 2020 under heading "Failure to Report", and one positive in 2021 under heading "Failed to Provide a Sample".

Chart 2.6

Compulsory Random Drug Testing by location in 2021, 2022 and 2023



In terms of targeted drug testing (TDT), one person was in the targeted drug testing programme at the commencement of 2023. An additional four personnel were added to the TDT list during 2023. Two personnel were removed from the programme: one completed testing and was retained in service and one person was 'Discharged by Purchase'. One person remained on the TDT programme at the end of 2023 and into 2024.

If an individual fails a CRDT in accordance with Admin Instruction 7 Chapter 3, there are three options to conclude the case:

1. Discharge for enlisted ranks, retirement for both officers/cadets, or
2. Retention in Service, or
3. Defer decision, allowing the individual to be retained in service, conditional on participation in a TDT process for a specified period, as laid down in Para 304 b.

SUPPORT TO VETERANS GROUPS

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to support the establishment of centres for retired members of the Defence Forces. This has been subsumed into the ongoing activities of the Department involving two Branches namely, Capability (People) Development and Support (CPDS) and Property Management Branch (PMB).

The Department has Service Level Agreements in place with each of the recognised Veterans Associations and annual grants of €130,000 and €30,000 were paid to the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE) and the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) respectively in 2023.

In addition, a further €200,000 of funding was secured under the Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan 2024 to assist ONE and IUNVA with specific projects. This brings to €900,000 the total amount of funding secured to date. This funding, alongside the efforts of the Department's Property Management Branch, has assisted ONE in further developing its network of Veterans Support Centres nationwide.





DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE CIVIL SERVICE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, the Department continued to prioritise the delivery of learning and development opportunities for employees. The Department utilised a mix of traditional classroom, virtual and eLearning methods of delivery to help make learning accessible to all.

During 2023, 1550 learning and development interventions were provided through training courses, conferences, seminars and briefings. Three new and notable interventions included:

Defence Studies

The first defence studies micro accredited diploma in conjunction with Maynooth University was introduced in 2023. This programme is designed to offer improved sectoral knowledge with an introduction to the field of Defence Studies, with particular emphasis on how current security and defence issues impact on Ireland. An example of modules include: Strategic Studies, Contemporary Conflict, Political-Military Interface, Air and Naval Warfare, Peace Support Operations and the Role of Intelligence and Counter Terrorism.

Live Well – Work Well

Live Well - Work Well is the Department's new Wellbeing Framework that describes how it will continue to develop health and wellness initiatives across the Department. The appetite for interesting wellness seminars and over all engagement is continuing to build with over 700 wellbeing interventions taking place in 2023.

New learning pathways

The Department also developed new grade specific learning pathways. Each pathway clearly lays out a series of learning interventions that are available to each employee and are designed to aid their continuous development while working in the Department.

The Department also funded 16 employees to undertake academic courses through the "Refund of Fees" scheme. Courses in areas such as employment law, human resource management, military history, strategic studies, and government and public policy received funding.

The Department continues to ensure that learning and development requirements, including niche Department of Defence and Defence Forces requirements, are addressed as required.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces are committed to the provision of the highest standard of Customer Service to the individuals and organisations with whom we interact. The Department of Defence and Defence Forces Customer Charter sets out the standards of service we aim to provide in accordance with the principles of quality Customer Service, as approved by Government. During 2023, the Department was contacted on a total of 240,257 occasions, either by telephone, post or e-mail. This includes two items of correspondence received in Irish. In summary, 99% of correspondence received was acknowledged within three working days and the rate of response within three working weeks was 99.7%.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE COMMUNICATIONS DELIVERY AND SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

During 2023, the Communications Unit increased its level of communications activity, internally and externally, and across platforms. The Communications Unit provides focused communications delivery and advice, in a proactive manner through a variety of means, to accurately demonstrate the reality of the significant role, which the Department plays, day-in, day-out in Ireland's evolving Defence environment.

Broadly speaking, Communications activities covered the following four key areas, Internal Communications, Media Relations, Engaging with our Stakeholders and communicating the work of our Department. Increasingly during 2023 this communication was digital.

During 2023, the Communications Unit increased video output by 50% compared to 2022, a remarkable achievement for a small team which produces content solely in-house. The top Department of Defence video received 25,177 views.

In addition to increased Press Releases issued year on year, 360 separate media queries were responded to. These entailed significant stakeholder engagement on a 24/7 basis, across Government, and beyond.

The increased focus on Defence included a significant increase in Ministerial and broad Defence related events throughout the year, and associated Media Management.

Digitally, in terms of website management, output increased in terms of volume and complexity; with, for example, two and a half times the images managed compared to 2022, and increased documents, publications, speeches and press releases published.

2023 saw 773,514 impressions and 41,848 engagements on the Department's X/Twitter platform. In terms of video consumption on the X/Twitter platform, total plays numbered 43,053 and there were 16,019 minutes of playback.

The Communications Unit also launched the new internal newsletter 'Defence Dispatch', which issued on a monthly basis throughout 2023.

A Communications Strategy is being developed following on from the Organisational Capability Review and the identified need to develop a comprehensive communications strategy for the Department.



DEFENCE FORCES PUBLIC RELATIONS BRANCH

The Defence Forces Public Relations Branch (PRB) consists of a number of sub-units which engage on different levels with the media, public and the Defence Forces internal audience. These sub-units include the Press Office, Information Office, Audio Visual Section, Photography Section, the An Cosantóir Office, Military Archives and the Internal Communications Section.

Each office is guided by the Defence Forces Communication Strategy, the Defence Forces Communication and Engagement Guidelines and the Defence Forces Social Media Policy. In 2023, PRB achieved the highest ever results in the independently conducted and academically compliant Public Perception Survey.

Currently PRB produce a number of publications including An Cosantóir, the Defence Forces Podcast series and the Defence Forces Review. PRB maintain award winning social media across a range of different platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Spotify. There are currently 53 active subordinate Defence Forces social media accounts which are continuously monitored by PRB to ensure the highest standard of content and engagement. In 2023, the Defence Forces Social Media accounts received a number of social media awards (Sockies), including Gold for 'Facebook run by a State Organisation', Gold for 'Instagram run by a State Organisation', Silver for 'Twitter run by a State Organisation' and Silver for 'Social Media Strategy'.

In 2023, the Internal Communications section launched the Defence Forces Internal Communications App - CONNECT, delivering on one of the Chief of Staff's three key priorities. CONNECT provides a secure platform where all Defence Forces' personnel are afforded equal access to relevant information in a reliable timely manner, enhancing the ability for individual members to better manage their careers. CONNECT has proved extremely popular and has already become a well-developed platform that is informing and assisting with cultural change, Defence Forces' transformation and invigorating the internal audience.

The Defence Forces Military Archives continued the project of professionally cataloguing historical personal files switching their focus to 2 Brigade Headquarters, with over 40,000 personal files catalogued and deposited at the Military Archives. In addition, the Military Archives continued to work with the Department of Defence in their cataloguing and transferring of Departmental files due to be made available for public inspection, some of which date back as far as the 1920s. Throughout 2023, the Military Archives continued its mission as the statutory place of deposit for records of the Defence Forces, Department of Defence and Army Pensions Board in acquiring, preserving and making available Ireland's documentary military/defence heritage.

IRISH LANGUAGE SCHEME

The Department of Defence is committed to fulfilling the obligations set out in the Official Languages Act, 2003 and the Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 2021, with regard to the level of service provided through Irish. In 2023, the Department appointed a member of staff from senior management to oversee the performance of, and report to the Head of the Department in relation to, its obligations under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 2021. In addition to meeting the Department's commitments, staff received training at various skills levels to improve the provision of public services through the medium of Irish. The Department will continue to ensure that these provisions are met.

CIVIL SERVICE RENEWAL PLAN – EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION AWARDS

The Department continues to contribute to the development and implementation of civil and public service renewal and development programmes. This year the Department submitted two applications for the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards. The two entries were the Consultative Forum on International Security Policy and the Civil Defence Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS).

PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSFORMATION WEEK (FORMALLY INNOVATION WEEK)

The Department's Learning & People Development team and the Research, Technology and Innovation Unit delivered a design-thinking event in October 2023. The event was open to civil and public servants from across the country to participate in and brought new approaches and methodologies to introducing innovation into the Civil and Public Service.



CIVIL SERVICE RENEWAL 2030

Department staff worked with One Learning and their training partners to utilise the Project Management handbook and templates and contributed to the delivery of two new project management courses. The "Foundations in Project Management" and "Practical Project Management (Level 2)" are available through the OneLearning portal and are designed for those who are new to project management or who wish to refresh their understanding in the subject.

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The Department actively participated in the 2023 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey that took place in September. The CSO and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform are collating the results, which will be released in mid-2024. The core questions of the survey remained unchanged from the previous iteration in 2020 but additional questions were added on blended working, trust/values and integrity.



ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY REVIEW

Following the publication of the Organisational Capability Review (OCR) of the Department in April 2022, and the subsequent Implementation Plan in July 2022, the Department has continued the programme of work to implement the recommendations outlined therein.

Successes in 2023, instigated under the OCR, include the creation of the Corporate Support Division under a new Assistant Secretary General, with a dedicated Data Governance Unit established for the Department for the first time. Additionally, the Department Technology Strategy was launched, the first graduations from the newly created Defence Studies Level 4 Diploma with NUI Maynooth took place, and an internal HR website to facilitate staff was established.

A series of roadshows were held across all Department locations, between October to December, with positive engagement by the Management Board and colleagues across the Department.

CIVIL SERVANTS AND CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES

The number of civil service staff employed by the Department of Defence as at 31 December 2023 was 410 (or 396.6 Whole Time Equivalent) which includes 13 staff working directly with the Defence Forces. In 2023, there were 23 competitions held during the course of the year across a range of grades.

The Department of Defence also employs civilian staff at various military installations to support the operational capability of the Defence Forces. The grades employed are spread across a wide spectrum and include craft workers (Electricians, Carpenters, Plumbers, Fitters, Welders etc.), services (General Operatives), administrative (Clerks, Storemen), healthcare professionals (Social Workers, Physiotherapists, Pharmacists) and other specialist grades (Archivists, Aircraft Inspector/Instructor, Technicians, Quantity Surveyors, Draughtsmen).

In 2023, 53 civilian appointments were made from external competitions and there were 9 internal promotions. There were 25 competitions held during the course of the year, covering approximately 70 vacancies. The number of civilian employees, employed by the Department at the end of 2023, excluding those in the process of appointment, was 437 (429.61 Whole Time Equivalent).

EQUALITY

The Department continues to operate in a non-discriminatory environment in accordance with the Equality Acts and aims to ensure that the principles of employment equality are implemented in recruitment, promotion, training and work experience.

In compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005, the Department undertook, where practicable, to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities. The percentage of civil servants who have self-declared a disability was 5.4% and the percentage of civilian employees with a disability was 6.4% at end of 2023.

The Department's policy is that all personnel be accorded equality of opportunity and treatment and includes a commitment to the implementation of the Government target that one-third of posts in the grade of Assistant Principal are filled by women. In 2023, 41% of Principals and 57% of Assistant Principals were women. Overall, 51% of staff at the grades of Assistant Principal and upwards were filled by women.



Section 3

Defence Forces Operational Outputs

STRATEGIC GOAL

Deliver operations successfully

OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS

In planning and supporting overseas operations, the combined engagement of the Defence Forces and Departmental staff is an essential element in the effective management of deployments. This includes reviewing potential operations, rotation planning, procurement planning and training. The Department and the Defence Forces work together to ensure the maximisation of options available to Government to meet its international obligations in furtherance of Ireland’s foreign and defence policy objectives.

During 2023, 1,509 members of the PDF served overseas in various missions. Table 3.1 provides a breakdown of mission categories and troop deployments on 1 January and 31 December for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.



Table 3.1

Details of Overseas Postings 2021*, 2022 and 2023

Mission	01 Jan 2021	31 Dec 2021	01 Jan 2022	31 Dec 2022	01 Jan 2023	31 Dec 2023
UNTSO (Middle East)	11	12	12	12	12	12
MINURSO (Western Sahara)	1	0	0	0	0	0
MONUSCO (Democratic Rep Congo)	3	3	3	0	0	0
UNIFIL HQ (Lebanon)	9	9	9	9	9	8
UNIFIL Infantry Battalion (Lebanon)	337	342	342	336	336	306
UNIFIL Sector West HQ (Lebanon)	4	4	4	4	4	4
UNDOF Infantry Group (Golan Heights)	129	126	126	131	131	128
UNDOF HQ (Golan Heights)	9	8	8	6	6	6
MINUSMA (Mali)	14	14	14	0	0	0
Sub-Total (UN)	517	518	518	498	498	464
EUFOR (Bosnia & Herzegovina)	5	5	5	5	5	4
German-led Battlegroup	10	0	0	0	0	0
EUTM Mali	20	20	20	14	14	0
Operations HQ/Floating HQ (Operation Irini HQ)	3	3	3	3	3	4
Sub-Total (UN Mandated Missions)	38	28	28	22	22	8
KFOR HQ	13	13	13	12	12	13
Sub-Total (NATO/PfP)	13	13	13	12	12	13
OSCE	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sub-Total (OSCE)	1	1	1	1	1	1
UNNY (New York)*	1	3	3	3	3	2
EUMS (Brussels)	6	8	8	9	9	8
NATO/PfP (Belgium)	7	7	7	7	3	3
Irish Delegation to OSCE (Vienna)	1	1	1	1	1	1
CSDP/PSC (Brussels)**	8	8	8	8	8	8
Military C-IED Expert, UN Training Entebbe	0	0	1	1	1	1
EUMAM Ukraine	0	0	0	0	0	15
Sub-Total (OSCE / Mil. Reps / Advisers / Staff)	23	27	28	29	25	38
Total Personnel Overseas	592	587	588	562	558	524

* Includes Major General Maureen O'Brien who served on secondment to the United Nations until 2023 following her appointment by the UN as Deputy Military Adviser in the Office of Military Affairs, Department of Peace Operations.

** Both civil and military staff from the Department and Defence Forces are deployed to CSDP/PSC and NATO/PfP offices in Brussels

European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine)

As part of the European Union's response to Russia's attack on Ukraine, the Council of the EU launched a European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). Formally established on 17 October 2022, the aim of this mission is to enhance the military capability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognised borders, as well as to protect the civilian population. The Mission provides training to the UAF at basic, advanced and specialised levels in a range of areas. Following Government approval in February 2023, the Defence Forces have delivered several training modules as part of EUMAM Ukraine in tactical combat casualty care/Combat Lifesaver (Germany), demining and clearance (Cyprus), and drill instructor training (Germany). None of the training takes place in Ukraine. The Defence Forces are currently planning other modules and identifying other opportunities for support. These trainers are supplemented by a small number of staff positions based in Belgium and Germany. The number of Defence Force personnel that may be deployed to the training mission at any given time is limited to 30, in line with the Government approval. This number includes the trainers that will be delivering training directly to UAF personnel as well as the Defence Forces' personnel deployed in the mission's Operational Headquarters in Brussels and the multi-national Special Training Command (STC) in Strausberg, Germany.

By end of 2023, EUMAM has trained approx. 38,000 Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) personnel in 603 training modules. Defence Forces' personnel have delivered training to approximately 283 UAF personnel across seven training module iterations in Demining and Clearance, Combat Medical and Drill Instructor training. Cyprus and Germany acted as host nations for the delivery of these training modules.

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established in 1978 to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, restore international peace and security and assist the Lebanese Government in restoring its effective authority in the area. Following the July-August 2006 war, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1701 enhancing UNIFIL and deciding that in addition to the original mandate, it would, among other things, monitor the cessation of hostilities; accompany and support the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) as they deploy throughout the south of Lebanon; and extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.





The largest contingent of Defence Forces personnel, some 350 personnel, is deployed to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). On 16 May 2023, the Government approved the continued participation of the Defence Forces in UNIFIL for a further 12-month period. The Irish contingent serves as part of a joint Ireland/Poland Battalion, with additional officers from both Hungary and Malta. The Battalion's operational tasks include the provision of security, vehicle and foot patrols, and checkpoints, establishing and occupying temporary observation posts and liaison/engagement with local leaders. Joint operations are conducted with units of the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. Irish troops also occupy two forward static UN posts on the Blue Line separating Israel and Lebanon. Defence Forces personnel are well trained prior to deployment to mitigate against risks and scenarios that may arise in deployments overseas, including the circumstances in which they find themselves due to the current conflict in the region. Permanent Defence Force personnel normally rotate in May and November each year. The Government remains strongly committed to the maintenance of peace and security in Lebanon through our continued participation in UNIFIL.

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)

The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was established in May 1974 by the United Nations Security Council, following the agreed disengagement of the Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan Heights in May 1974. UNDOF supervises the implementation of the Disengagement Agreement, maintaining an area of separation between the forces, which is over 75 kilometres long. The Irish contingent deployed with UNDOF is tasked primarily to serve as the Force Mobile Reserve, providing a Quick Reaction Force, which is on standby to assist with on-going operations within the UNDOF area of responsibility. There were two rotations of personnel during 2023. The 68th Infantry Group is the last large-scale deployment with the UNDOF mission, at least for the present time. The decision to withdraw the Infantry Group and conclude Ireland's participation in the UNDOF was a decision that will ensure that the Defence Forces have the capacity to fulfil their commitment to the EU Battlegroup 2024/2025 as well as allowing the Defence Forces to undertake a process of consolidation with regard to their overseas commitments and to prepare for future peace-keeping missions.

European Union Training Mission – EUTM Mali

A contingent of the Permanent Defence Forces has been deployed to EUTM Mali since March 2013. The objective of this EU Training Mission is to improve the capacity of the Malian Armed Forces to maintain security in Mali and restore the authority of the Malian Government and the territorial integrity of the Malian State.

In March 2023, the Government renewed the Defence Forces' participation in the EU Training Mission in Mali for a further twelve months. However, following assessment and advice from the Defence Forces, it was agreed to conclude Ireland's participation in the mission in September 2023.





European Union Force (EUFOR) – Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

Operation 'ALTHEA' in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) continues to focus on maintaining a safe and secure environment while overseeing the transfer of military tasks to national authorities. This mission remains an important part of the EU's comprehensive efforts in BiH to support a political process aimed at enabling BiH, on the basis of necessary reforms, to continue to move forward in the EU integration process. Five members of the Defence Forces were deployed to the mission headquarters in Sarajevo during 2023.

Kosovo Force (KFOR)

Ireland continues to contribute to the UN authorised and NATO-led Peace Support Operation in Kosovo (KFOR). During 2023, 13 Defence Forces personnel were deployed to this mission.

United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO)

Ireland deployed 12 Defence Forces personnel as military observers within the UNTSO mission area of Lebanon, Syria and Israel during 2023.





Naval Service EU Naval Mission in the Mediterranean

Operation IRINI, is a UN mandated EU Naval mission in the eastern Mediterranean and its core task is the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya (through the use of aerial, satellite and maritime assets). Ireland currently has four members of the Defence Forces deployed to Operation IRINI. These personnel are deployed to the Operational Headquarters (OHQ) in Rome in staff officer posts. In addition, following government approval, a naval vessel and associated support staff was deployed to Operation Irini for a period of 7 weeks in June/July 2023.

AID TO THE CIVIL POWER

Domestic security is primarily the responsibility of the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána. The Defence Forces provide Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) support on request from An Garda Síochána. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the type of ATCP supports provided to An Garda Síochána by the Defence Forces during 2023. The table also provides a comparison with the number of ATCP operations in recent years.

In addition, the Defence Forces continued to carry out a 24/7/365 day armed guard at both Government Buildings and at Portlaoise Prison. These operations arise from Government direction rather than an ATCP request from An Garda Síochána.

Table 3.2
Aid to the Civil Power operations 2020-2023

Type of ATCP Operation	Number of Operations			
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Garda Air Support Unit missions	1,070	1028	982	865
Central Bank patrols	1,095	1095	1,095	1,095
Airport security duties	178	74	104	253
Explosive production security guard	366*	365*	365*	365*
Central Bank security guard	366*	365*	365*	365*
Prisoner escorts	29	15	11	9
Explosive Ordnance Disposal callouts	81	76	61	75
Naval Service diving operations	5	2	4	9
Explosive escorts	7	3	2	5
EURO Cash in Transit escorts	6	3	6	1
Hospital guard	3	2	0	0
VIP visits	1	0	1	1
Search operations (& Other Army AGS Support)	12	16	33	21**
Air Corps (Other)	9	5	7	3
Air Corps (Repatriation Flights)	-	15	4	2
Naval Service (Other)	-	2	1	0
Totals	3,228	3,066	3,041	3,069

* Refers to Days

** Further detail on 'Search operations (and Other Army AGS Support)' is outlined at Table 3.3

Table 3.3

Details of Army ATCP (Search Operations and Other Army AGS Support on island):

Dates	Locations	Task	Total Personnel-Days
17 Mar 23	Dublin City	Place two Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams on Stand By for St Patrick's Day Parade - Dublin	8
12-13 April 23	Dublin City	Security in the Phoenix Park for visit of the President of the United States (POTUS)	27
11-14 April 23	Dublin, Louth, Mayo	Search / Secure Operations in support of POTUS visit	572
27 April 23	Limerick	Searching open ground in Operation targeting organised crime	16
27 April 23	Carlow	Missing Persons Search	35
04 May 23	Limerick	EOD to Limerick Ex POTUS visit	12
06 June 23	Kerry	Search assistance to An Garda Síochána (AGS)	12
19-20 June 23	Meath	Search assistance to AGS	155
07-08 July 23	Donegal	Search assistance to AGS	41
21-23 July 23	Donegal	Missing Persons Search	87
08 August 23	Dublin	Search assistance to AGS	7
12 August 23	Longford	Search assistance to AGS	1
25 August 23	Dublin	Naval Dive assistance	5
04 September 23	Cork	Search assistance to AGS	11
20 September 23	Cavan	Search assistance to AGS	9
27 November 23	Dublin	Search assistance to AGS	3
20 December 23	Tipperary	Search assistance to AGS	19
Total			1,020



AID TO THE CIVIL AUTHORITY (ATCA)

The Defence Forces provide a range of support roles to the relevant Principal Response Agencies (relevant Local Authority, An Garda Síochána and Health Service Executive). The framework for Major Emergency Management enables the Principal Response Agencies to prepare for and make a coordinated response to major emergencies resulting from events such as fires, transport accidents, hazardous substance incidents and severe weather.

In relation to non-security related emergencies, whilst the Defence Forces are not a primary response agency, as defined in the Framework for Major Emergency Management, they provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a natural disaster or emergency situation in its ATCA role. In this regard, the full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment, commensurate with operational requirements, is available for deployments. The Defence Forces hold a wide range of engineering and transport plant and equipment which are suitable for use in emergency situations and these are made available, within current means and capabilities, as the need arises.



The ATCA supports provided by the Defence Forces during 2023 include assistance to the Department of Foreign Affairs Emergency Civil Assistance Team to assist Irish citizens, residents and visa holders being evacuated from Sudan amid an evolving situation in the country. In June, supports to Cork City Council with regard to Defence Force fire-fighting crews were provided and aerial firefighting capabilities were provided in Co. Antrim and in October flood relief operations were conducted in Cork, in Middleton and in Glanmire. Details of ATCA supports are outlined in Table 3.4:



Table 3.4
Details of ATCA supports

Dates	Locations	Task	Total Personnel-Days
April 2023	Sudan	ECAT	N/A
15-16 June 2023	Antrim	Fire Fighting	9
18-24 October 2023	Cork	Flood Relief	98
Total			107

The Defence Forces also contributed personnel and expertise supporting the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment's National Cyber Security Centre.

Table 3.5

COVID-19 Supports - 2023 Operational Outputs

Operational Heading	DF Personnel Deployed	DF Reserve Personnel*	DF Personnel committed	DF Vehicles Deployed	AC Flights	NS Ship Days
Logistics Operations	699	167	737	14	0	0
Total Operation Fortitude 2023	699	167	737	14	0	0

* Included in 'DF Personnel Deployed' figures

OPERATION FORTITUDE - ATCA – COVID-19 SUPPORTS

In addition to providing ATCP to An Garda Síochána and participating in overseas operations, the Defence Forces, as part of the Government response to COVID-19, stood up Operation FORTITUDE from 23 March 2020 to 31 May 2023, a total of 1,165 days. Operation FORTITUDE was stood down on 31 May 2023.

The Joint Task Force (JTF) continued to co-ordinate Defence Force capability to Operation Fortitude in 2023 through delivery of Logistical support.

From 01 January 2023 to 31 May 2023, this effort required 699 Defence Force deployed workdays (737 committed workdays), and 14 vehicle movements, as detailed in Table 3.5.

OPERATION FÁILTE - ATCA – DEFENCE FORCES SUPPORT TO DEPARTMENT CHILDREN, EQUALITY, DISABILITY, INTEGRATION AND YOUTH

On 17 March 2022, as part of a whole of Government response to the war on Ukraine and on receipt of a request from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs (DCEDIY), the Defence Forces were requested to assist with the response to the arrival in large numbers of Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP).

Following on from the initial establishment of Operation Fáilte, the tasking extended to include accommodation supports to the DCEDIY for persons seeking International Protection (IP).

The JTF co-ordinated the Defence Forces response, which included the provision of Defence Forces properties, tentage and associated ancillary equipment to support BOTPs/IPs.

In total, 2,457 DF deployed workdays and 490 vehicle movements have been dedicated to BOTP and IP Accommodation operations in 2023.

Over the course of 2023 both the accommodation and logistics efforts required 3,259 DF deployed workdays (4,987 committed workdays), and 506 vehicle movements as detailed in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6

DF support to DCEDIY - 2023 Operational Outputs

Operational Heading	DF Personnel Deployed	DF Reserve Personnel*	DF Personnel Committed	DF Vehicles Deployed	AC Flights	NS Ship Days
Accommodation Operations	2,457	0	4,185	490	0	0
Logistics Operations	802	357	802	16	0	0
Total Operation Fáilte 2023	3,259	357	4,987	506	0	0

* Included in 'DF Personnel Committed' total

Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP)/International Protection (IP) Accommodation

- » DF provision to Kerry County Council of accommodation in Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee with capacity for up to 62 BOTPs.
- » DF provision of accommodation at Kilbride Camp, Co. Wicklow with capacity for up to 124 IPs.
- » DF donated 40 tents and auxiliary equipment capable of accommodating up to 320 BOTPs/IPs at Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum.
- » Mullingar Barracks was made available to DCEDIY for tented accommodation with a capacity of accommodating up to 160 BOTPs/IPs. In addition, Mullingar Barracks was identified as a suitable location for the Government's pilot initiative for the installation of self-catering modular type accommodation units for BOTP accommodation. This process commenced in 2023 and when finalised will contain 62 self-catering modular homes which will have the capacity to house 248 BOTPs.

Air Corps ATCA Operations

Air Corps ATCA supports included the Air Corps deploying air assets to assist civil authorities combating gorse fires in Antrim during 2023. As part of this deployment, thousands of litres of water were dropped via the "Bambi Bucket" concentrating drops on small areas, making an immediate impact on wildfires.

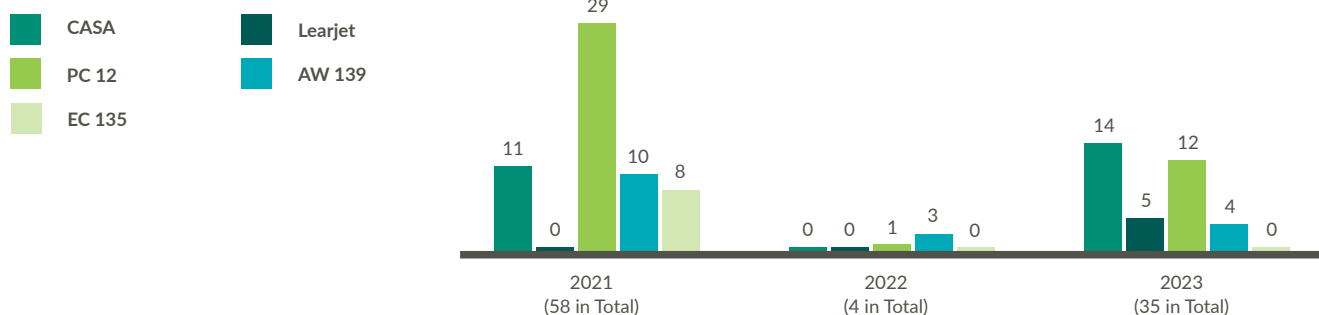
Chart 3.1 provides details of ATCA operations carried out by the Air Corps during 2023, with details for 2022 and 2021 also provided for comparison purposes. Such missions include search and rescue support to the Irish Coast Guard, flood relief missions, response to major accidents, gorse fires, bog surveys and wildlife surveys.

These missions also include the inter-hospital Air Ambulance Service which provides for emergency transfers of patients and transport of emergency organ retrieval teams, including paediatric organ transplant transfers to the UK. The HSE's Aeromedical Desk in its National Emergency Operations Centre is responsible for the co-ordination of the transport arrangements for these patients.

The Air Corps provided assistance to the Joint Task Force on Drug Interdiction in conjunction with the Naval Service and Army Ranger Wing in September 2023. This operation resulted in the successful detention of the MV Matthew vessel.

Chart 3.1

Details of Air Corps civil assistance missions flown during 2021, 2022 and 2023



NAVAL SERVICE ATCA OPERATIONS

Details of the level of support to civil authorities, including other government departments and state agencies, provided by the Naval Service (NS) in 2023 are as follows:

- » NS Diving Section conducted nine ATCP/ATCA operations ranging from ship bottom searches, missing person search and recovery and EOD disposal, as well as routine mechanical engineering works on NS ships.
- » NS RHIBS responded to an Irish Coast Guard (ICG) request for assistance in the recovery of a missing person in Cork harbour.
- » LÉ WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS responded to a PAN PAN in the vicinity of Youghal for a person in the water.
- » The Joint Task Force on drugs was operational and is a combined effort involving the NS, Air Corps, Revenue and AGS. There were two operations conducted in 2023.

FISHERY PROTECTION

Fishery protection services provided during 2023 were based on outputs agreed with the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). This resulted in successful outputs throughout 2023, with five detentions and one infringement detected. During the year, the Naval Service carried out a total of 466 fishery patrol days while the Air Corps carried out a total of 54 separate patrols. The reduced number of Naval Service and Air Corps fishery patrols in 2023 was due to a change in operational posture for the Naval Service as well as the reduced serviceability of the CASA C235 aircraft and pilot training commitments associated with the new maritime patrol aircraft.

Charts 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 and Table 3.7 provide details of Air Corps and Naval Service patrol activities during 2023 with details for 2021 and 2022 also provided for comparison purposes.

Chart 3.2.1
Air Corps CASA Fishery Patrols
2021 - 2023 Number of Missions

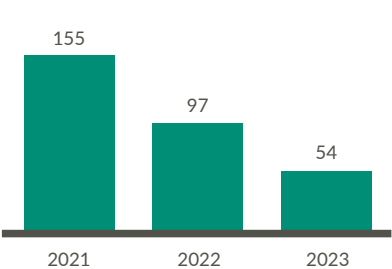


Chart 3.2.2
Air Corps CASA Fishery Patrols
2021 - 2023 Total Flight Hours

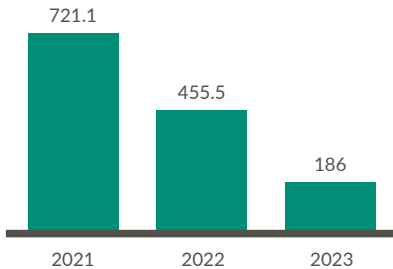


Table 3.7

Details of Naval Service fishery protection activity during 2021, 2022 and 2023

Nationality	Sightings			Boardings			Detentions			Infringements		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
Irish	590	559	307	94	168	58	6	2	2	8	8	1
Spanish	206	156	24	94	58	9	2	0	0	5	0	0
UK	79	102	46	16	26	15	0	0	0	2	0	0
French	194	190	56	56	65	16	1	1	1	0	1	0
Belgian	28	55	20	8	21	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
German	2	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
Dutch	12	9	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Portuguese	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian	4	2	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norwegian	12	16	4	7	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Faroese	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lithuanian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polish	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,131	1,091	465	284	350	104	10	3	5	16	9	1

REVIEW OF THE EMERGENCY AEROMEDICAL SUPPORT SERVICE

The Air Corps supports the HSE's Emergency Aeromedical Support (EAS) service. The service was established on a permanent basis following a Government decision in July 2015, subject to ongoing review in the context of ensuring a sustainable, long term service arrangement. In line with this decision, White Paper Project No. 16 is currently underway to conduct this review. The joint civil/military White Paper Project Team is in the process of concluding its final report, which will include a detailed analysis of the current service and will propose a series of recommendations for future actions to ensure sustainable and resilient EAS service provision going forward.

EMERGENCY AEROMEDICAL SUPPORT (EAS) SERVICE

Service delivery levels of the Air Corps' support to the HSE's EAS service, which operates on a daily basis out of Custume Barracks, Athlone, are shown in the charts below. This service provides rapid patient transport to an appropriate facility where the land

transit time, given the patient's condition and its severity, would not be clinically acceptable. A decision to deploy the EAS service is guided by EAS clinical tasking criteria, as determined by the National Ambulance Service Medical Director.

Chart 3.3.1
Details of EAS Missions completed during 2023 (Aircraft AW 139)

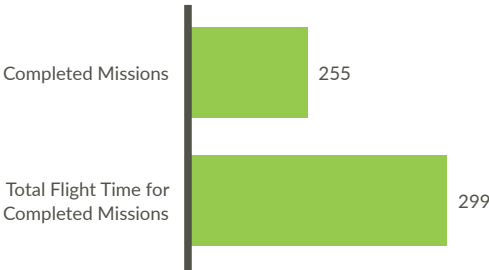


Chart 3.3.2
Comparison of Total Operational Flight Hours on EAS Missions*
* Includes missions where the AW139 was stood down

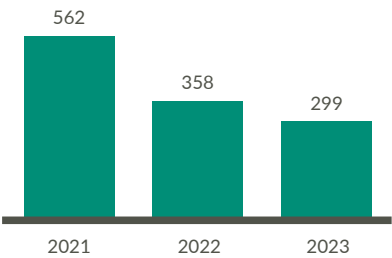


Chart 3.4.1
Nature of EAS Missions completed during 2023

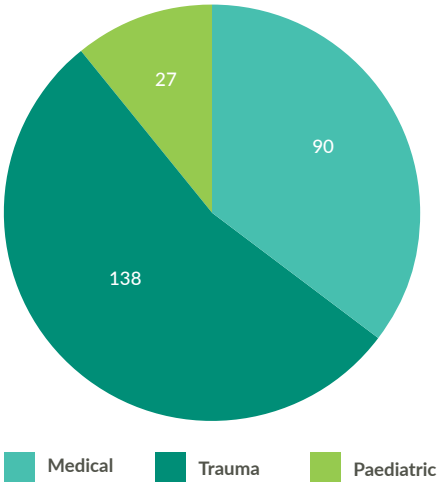
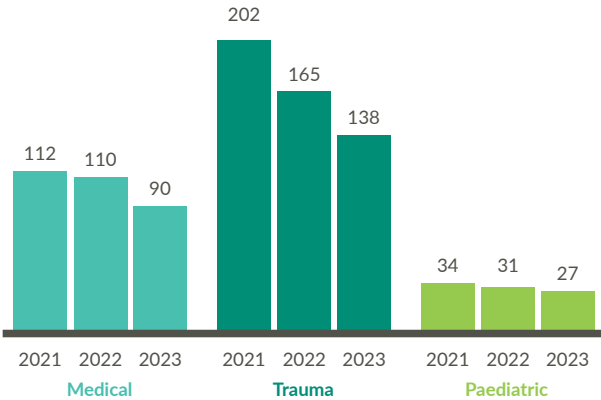


Chart 3.4.2
Number and Nature of completed EAS Missions 2021 - 2023



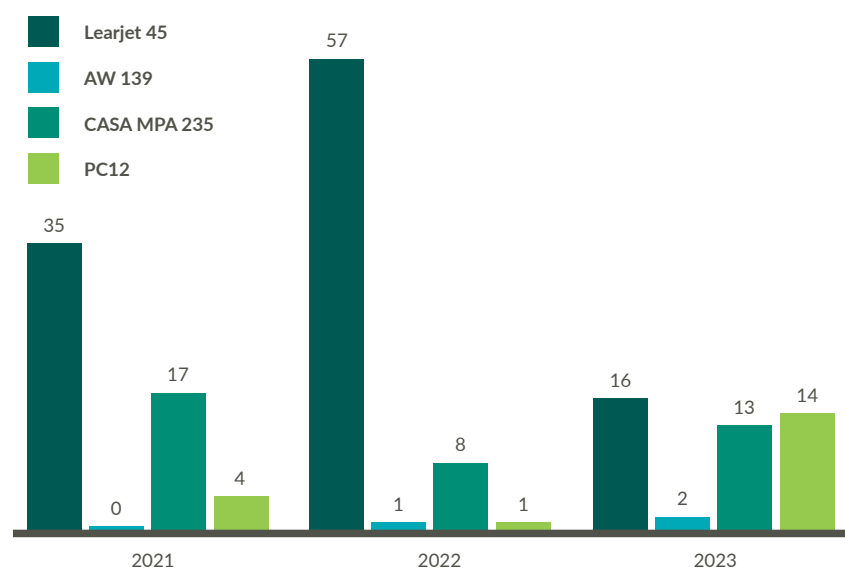
MINISTERIAL AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE

The Ministerial Air Transport Service is provided by the Air Corps to assist the President and members of the Government in fulfilling their official engagements at home and abroad. Information in relation to Ministerial Air Transport flights is publically available via a link entitled "Routinely Published Information" on the Department of Defence website where it is updated on a monthly basis: <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/e8132-routinely-published-information/>

Chart 3.5 contains summary details in respect of 2023 with similar details for 2021 and 2022 also provided for comparison purposes.

Chart 3.5

Number of MATS Missions by aircraft type carried out 2021 - 2023



MINISTERIAL AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE REVIEW GROUP

The Ministerial Air Transport Service (MATS) is currently provided by a Learjet 45 which is approaching its natural estimated end of life by 2024. For this reason, an inter-departmental high-level group of officials (the MATS Review Group) chaired by the Department of Defence was established in 2021. The role of the Group was to examine options for the future provision of an independent, international air transport service for use by the President, Taoiseach and other members of the Government. The capability of the aircraft, to carry out a broader utility role including tasks and strategic reach (beyond Europe) in crisis situations and medical evacuation, was also examined.

The MATS Review Group has concluded its work and made its final recommendations, which were submitted to and accepted by the Minister for Defence in early 2023. The project has subsequently progressed to a procurement phase under the direction of Contracts Branch subject to further deliberation and consideration in line with the Public Spending Code.

ARMY EQUITATION SCHOOL

In 2023, the Army Equitation School (AES) competed in 16 International Horse Shows; winning 11 international classes with two of those victories at International Federation for Equestrian Sports 5 star FEI 5* shows. In addition, the Army Equitation School participated in over 50 national competitions throughout the country. The highlights of the season were Comdt Geoff Curran and Tempo Manor winning the Longines Nations Cup in Bratislava in June followed by Bishops Quarter winning the Puissance at the Dublin Horse Show.

During 2023, the AES purchased five new horses and continued to lease two horses, leaving the Equitation School with a total of 40 horses at the end of the year. There are currently 34 horses in training, with six in retirement. The personnel strength of the Equitation School was 32: comprising of nine Commissioned Officers (including six Riding Officers), five Non-Commissioned Officers and 18 Privates.









CEREMONIAL AND COMMEMORATION SERVICES

The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces play a highly significant and noteworthy role in many State commemoration ceremonies.

The Defence Forces participated in nine ceremonies at Áras an Uachtaráin where a total of 27 Ambassadors presented their Credentials of Office to Uachtarán na hÉireann.

A quintet for the Army No 1 Band, Defence Forces School of Music accompanied by a Combined National and Regimental Colour Party travelled to Messines, Belgium to take part in a ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Island of Ireland Peace Park in November.

Throughout 2023, a variety of other ceremonial and support duties were performed across the country by members of the Defence Forces in support of State and other ceremonial events as detailed in Table 3.8.



Table 3.8

Details of the Defence Forces contribution to State and Military ceremonial events during 2023.

Date	Event	Total DF Numbers
16 Feb 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
01-03 Mar 23	State Visit – President of Malta	152
20 Mar 23	Ministerial Review - 67 Inf Gp UNDOF	160
23 Mar 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
30 Mar 23	Visit of Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (CEUMC)	71
17 Mar 23	St Patrick's Day Escort of Honour	27
29 Mar 23	Cadet Commissioning Ceremony	120
09 Apr 23	Easter Sunday Commemoration	205
09 Apr 23	Glasnevin Wreath Laying Ceremony	10
13 Apr 23	State Visit – President of the United States	121
03 May 23	1916 Leaders Commemorations, Arbour Hill	142
04 May 23	Ministerial Review - 121 Inf Bn UNIFIL	400
11 May 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
21 May 23	National Famine Commemoration	67
28 May 23	Civil War Commemoration	110
08 Jun 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
09 Jul 23	National Day of Commemoration	273
30 Jul 23	Rededication of DF Plot, Glasnevin	75
13 Aug 23	Collins Griffith Commemoration	8
15 Sep 23	Ministerial Review, 68 Inf Gp, UNDOF	160
20 Sep 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
01 Oct 23	Veterans' Day	140
03 Oct 23	Visit by UN MILAD, General Diop	20
13 Oct 23	Presentation of DSM to Maj Gen Maureen O'Brien	110
25 Oct 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
31 Oct 23	Ministerial Review 123 Inf Bn, UNIFIL	400
10 Nov 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
11 Nov 23	25 th Anniversary of the Opening of the Island of Ireland Peace Park, Messines, Belgium	11
22 Nov 23	DF Remembrance Ceremony, Merrion Square	100
28 Nov 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69
13 Dec 23	DF Carol Service	50
19 Dec 23	Presentation of Ambassadorial Credentials	69



In addition, the Defence Forces participated in 32 significant military and State ceremonial events in 2023.

State ceremonial honours were afforded on the occasion of the Official Visit to Ireland of The President of the United States of America in April. Ceremonies were conducted at Áras an Uachtaráin, Farmleigh and Dublin Castle for the visit.

State ceremonial honours were also afforded to the President of Malta on the occasion of the State visit to Ireland in March.

A ceremony of reconciliation and remembrance of all those who lost their lives in the Irish Civil War took place in the Garden of Remembrance, Dublin in May with the Taoiseach and Tánaiste in attendance.



The Defence Forces participated in the National Famine Commemoration, held this year in Milford, Co. Donegal in May, which was attended by President Higgins.

Military honours were afforded to the Military Advisor to UNHQ, General Diop, in October when he visited United Nations Training School Ireland, Defence Forces Training College, Curragh, Co. Kildare.





A ceremony to rededicate the National Army Monument in honour of soldiers who died during the Civil War took place in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin in July, which was attended by the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Chief of Staff.



The Defence Forces celebrated Veterans' Day in McKee Barracks in October where members of the Defence Forces Veterans Association paraded along with Unit Veteran Associations.

The Defence Forces Remembrance Ceremony was held at the National Memorial, Merrion Square in November to remember the nine members of the Defence Forces who lost their lives in the past 12 months. As part of this ceremony the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence and families of the deceased laid wreaths.





The Defence Forces participated in annual State commemoration ceremonies, including the commemoration of the 107th anniversary of the Easter Rising at the GPO, O'Connell Street; the 1916 Leaders Commemoration at Arbour Hill and at the National Day of Commemoration in Collins Barracks, Cork.

Four Ministerial reviews for overseas contingents took place throughout the Country to mark their deployment for peacekeeping duties with UNDOF and UNIFIL.





Section 4

Corporate Information and Data

4.1

Details of Defence Vote Expenditure for 2021, 2022 and 2023 by category*

Expenditure Category	2021		2022		2023	
	€m	%	€m	%	€m	%
PDF Pay and Allowances	465	59.2	471	56.3	461	50.8
Pay and Allowances of Civilian Employees and RDF	22	2.8	23	2.8	23	2.5
DF Capability and Development	91	11.6	117	14.0	139	15.3
Air Corps: Equipment and Support	27	3.4	26	3.1	35	3.9
Naval Service: Equipment and Support	16	2.0	18	2.2	17	1.9
Barracks Expenses, Engineering Equipment and Maintenance	25	3.2	31	3.7	35	3.9
DF Built Infrastructure – Capital	16	2.0	19	2.3	36	4.0
Military Transport	26	3.3	27	3.2	32	3.5
Litigation and Compensation Costs	6	0.8	6	0.7	5	0.6
Other non-pay military expenditure	58	7.4	61	7.3	82	9.0
Administration	28	3.6	31	3.7	35	3.9
Civil Defence (incl. dormant accounts funding)	5	0.7	5	0.6	5	0.6
Irish Red Cross Society	1	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1
Total (Gross)	786	100	836	100	906	100

* Minor discrepancies may arise due to rounding. Provisional outturn figures for 2023.

4.2

Details of Army Pensions Vote Expenditure for 2021, 2022 and 2023 by Category*

Expenditure Category	2021		2022		2023*	
	€m	%	€m	%	€m	%
Defence Forces (Pensions) Scheme & Payments in respect of Transferred Service	251.3	96.7	268.7	96.6	281	96.6
Wound & Disability Pensions, allowances and gratuities, to or in respect of former members of the Defence Forces	8.3	3.2	9.3	3.3	9.7	3.3
Payments in respect of dependants of Veterans of the War of Independence & other miscellaneous expenditure.	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.1
Total (Gross)	260	100	278	100	291	100

* Minor discrepancies may arise due to rounding. Provisional outturn figures for 2023.

4.3

Details of the Volume of Transactions Processed during 2021, 2022 and 2023

Metrics	2021	2022	2023
No. of non-payroll payments made (invoices, etc.)	18,698	19,548	19,701
No. of new pensions approved (service, disability & dependants)	418	536	487
No. of cases processed on death of a pensioner*	291	263	268
No. of payroll family law queries	5	5	10
No. of pensions family law queries	797	887	1,053
No. of pensions benefit estimate statements provided and pension benefit queries answered	2,244	2,688	2,959
No. of Single Pension Scheme annual benefit statements issued**	2,989	3,288	3,358

* Figures relating to Civilian Employee pensions were not included in previous years but have been included from 2021 onwards.

** These relate to annual benefit statements for members of the Single Pension Scheme (military and civilian employees); a further 346 Cessation Statements for such members who have left employment, were also issued in 2023.

4.4

Internal Audit

Internal Audit Section is an independent unit that provides the internal audit service in respect of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. It performs its function in accordance with the audit standards published by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and reports directly to the Secretary General.

The Audit Plan for 2023, reviewed by the Audit Committee before being approved by the Secretary General, delivered a broad coverage of stores and system audits. The Audit Plan incorporated a thematic review of Main Tech Stores, which are integral to the effectiveness of stock management in the Defence Forces. The Unit completed some 67 audits in 2023.

Internal Audit also had several unplanned programmes throughout the year, which included a comprehensive analysis of stock for approval for adjustments, and extensive user acceptance testing of reporting capabilities for the upgrade of the financial system to Oracle R12.

In addition to a briefing from the State Claims Agency, the Defence Audit Committee met five times in 2023 and reviewed the section's work on an ongoing basis. Members for 2023 were:

- » Mr Kevin Cardiff, Independent Chair,
- » Ms Éimear Fisher, Independent Member,
- » Major General Adrian O'Murchu, Deputy Chief of Staff (Support),
- » Mr Eamonn Murtagh, Assistant Secretary General.

4.5

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, as separate data controllers, continued throughout 2023 to carry out their obligations under the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. This was achieved through training and awareness for staff and the implementation of obligations contained in data protection policies. Both data controllers continued to engage with the Data Protection Commission and external subject matter experts as required.

Charts 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 provide details of the number of Subject Access Requests processed by the Data Protection Offices of both data controllers during 2023.

Chart 4.1.1

GDPR Subject Access Requests 2023
Department of Defence

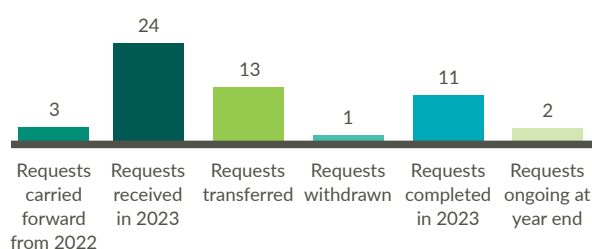


Chart 4.1.2

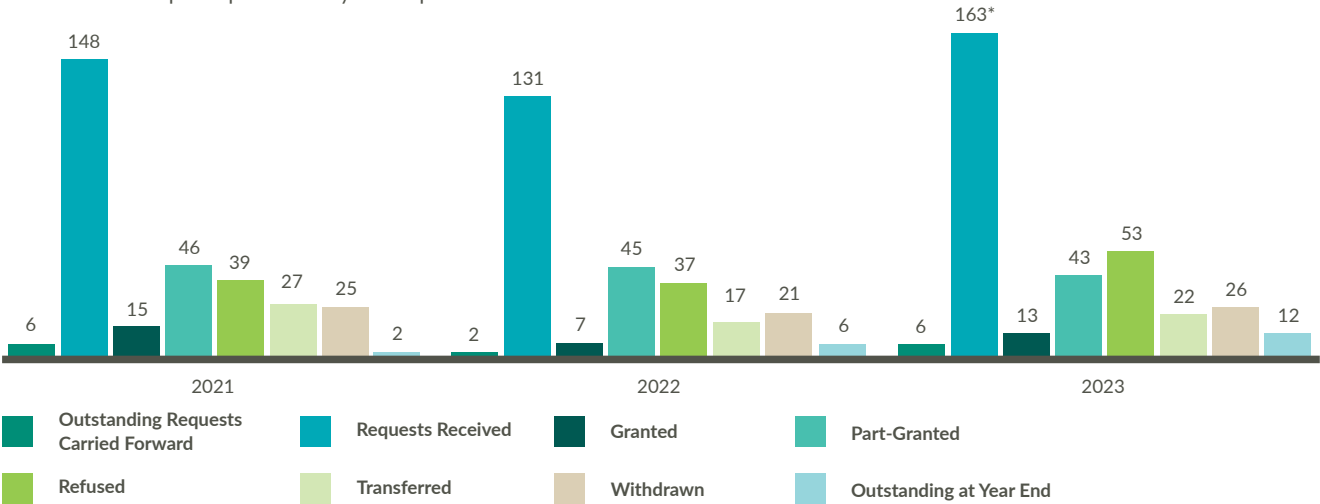
GDPR Subject Access Requests 2023
Defence Forces



4.6
Freedom of Information

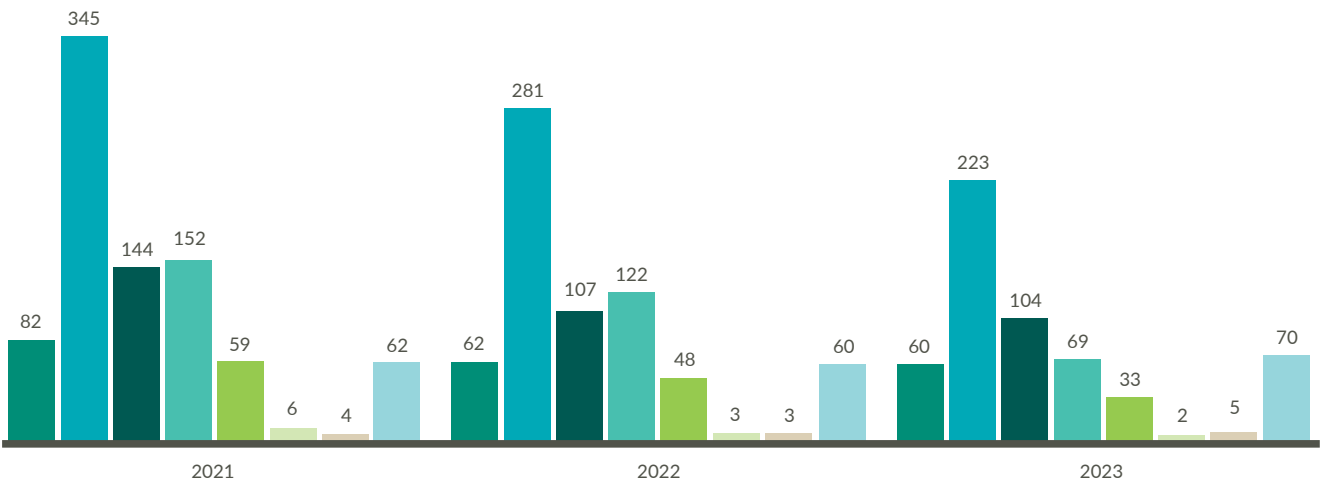
The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces are treated as separate bodies for the purposes of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. Charts 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 provide details of the number of FOI requests processed by both bodies during 2023, with details for 2021 and 2022 also provided for comparison purposes.

Chart 4.2.1
Details of FOI Requests processed by the Department of Defence



* 163 includes 2 FOIs that were subdivided

Chart 4.2.2
Details of FOI Requests processed by the Defence Forces



4.7

Protected Disclosures

Protected Disclosures made to the Minister for Defence are dealt with jointly by the civil and military authorities.

The Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 established the Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner (OPDC). The OPDC is responsible for assigning cases to the correct organisation. The Commissioner also has a role under the Act in assessing and referring all disclosures made to Ministers of the Government and Ministers of State. The Amendment Act introduced new obligations on the Department and widened the scope of the legislation. An annual report was published to the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in March 2024.

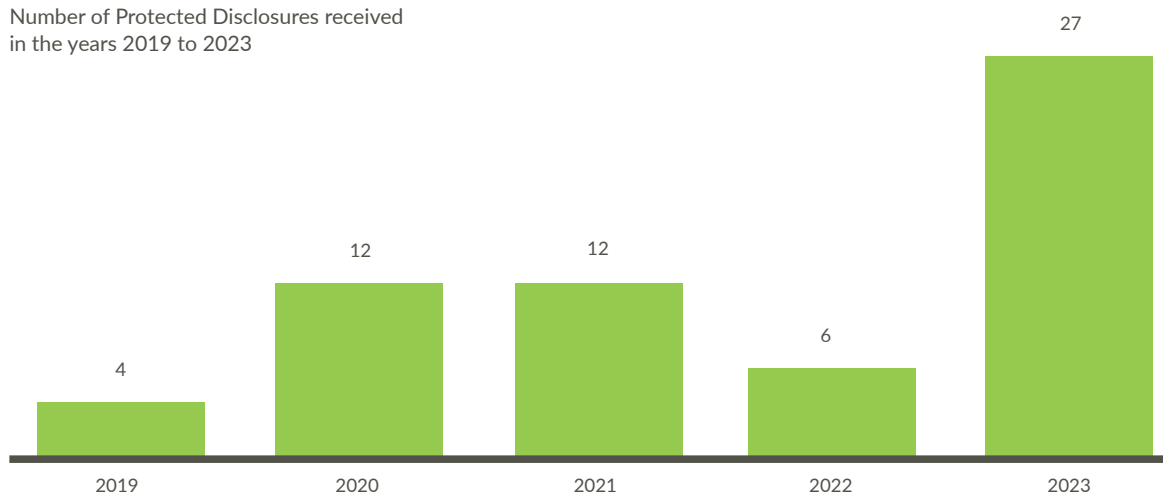
Concerns received from workers are processed in line with our published procedures, which are currently under review in light of legislative changes.

- » During 2023, the Department received 27 submissions under the heading of protected disclosures. This number relates to the total number of disclosures made to the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, and also to cases transferred to the Department/Defence Forces by the Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner.
- » One case was submitted directly to the Defence Forces.
- » 20 cases were submitted to the Minister for Defence and rerouted to the Department/Defence Forces by the OPDC.
- » Six cases were submitted directly to the OPDC and assigned to the Department/Defence Forces.
- » In 2023, the Department formally closed 29 cases.

Chart 4.3 details the numbers of protected disclosures received in the years 2019 to 2023. These details are not broken down further in keeping with the confidentiality requirements specified in the 2014 Act. The Department received a significant increase in cases in 2023.

Chart 4.3

Number of Protected Disclosures received in the years 2019 to 2023



4.8

Archives Unit

The Archives Unit is responsible for managing the transfer of departmental records which are more than 30 years old to the Military Archives to facilitate their availability for public inspection and ensure their enduring value is preserved. The Unit performs its function in accordance with the National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988. In 2023, the Unit continued to prepare files for release to the public at the Military Archives.

4.9

Records Management Unit

eDocs Migration

Three new business areas in the Department successfully migrated to eDocs in 2023. The Department is scheduled to upgrade to eDocs V2.0 in 2024. The Department is an active member of the Interdepartmental eDocs Working Group, and regularly attends information sessions and forums on the eDocs application.

Records Management

In 2023, there was ongoing monitoring of compliance with the records management policy and the records management eLearning course, which will continue into 2024. The paper file rationalisation project has continued, with over 1,000 files sent to offsite storage in 2023.

4.10

Energy Consumption 2023

Department of Defence

The Department of Defence continues to take a very proactive approach throughout its buildings in Newbridge, Dublin, Renmore and Roscrea in progressing energy-efficient initiatives. Efforts towards improving energy efficiency have been achieved annually by departmental energy teams since 2007.

While a lot of energy efficiency initiatives previously focused on reducing usage over the past few years, the removal in 2022 of IT systems in the Department buildings (post OGCI system migration in 2020) yielded significant savings on energy consumption. With the completed upgrade of the Department's Management Accounts system (MIF), further IT energy improvements will be reflected in future SEAI reports.

The SEAI has yet to finalise and communicate to each public body their target goals up until 2030. Nevertheless, the Department of Defence continued to reduce its energy consumption in 2023 and, by default, carbon emissions. As we wait for the 2022 CO₂ emission figures for the Department from the SEAI, we have however seen over 60% reduction in emissions since 2007, and 40% in the last six years.

The total usage of energy in the Department for 2023 was 1,957,318kWh compared to 1,923,166kWh, in 2022, a slight increase year on year. The Department's Headquarters in Newbridge and its premises in Clonmel Street, Dublin collectively make up 68% of energy consumption, totalling 1,428,669kWh (Trinity Point replacing Clonmel Place for 2024). Energy usage at the premises in Renmore saw a reduction of about 10% at almost 188,000kWh (excluding Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the National Shared Services Office who also share the building).

Civil Defence buildings in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary and Ratra House reduced their usage slightly over all, from approx. 353,000kWh to 341,000kWh. As noted under the Climate Action section, it is important to work with OPW on retrofitting the Department buildings to help improve on our energy consumption.

Defence Forces

The Senior Energy Executive has decided to move to a CO₂ based reporting model, with emissions shown in kgCO₂ going forward. This was done to show the progress made by electrifying our building heating and road transport, while benefitting from the decarbonisation of the national grid.

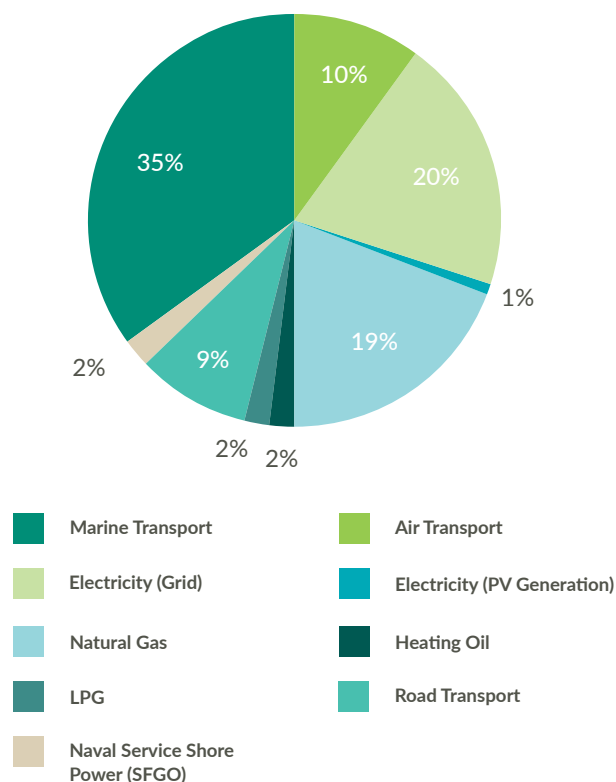
The total final emissions of energy in 2023 was 37 million kgCO₂ as reported through the Defence Forces Energy Management System (EnMS). In 2021, the Climate Action Plan set Public Sector targets to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) by 51% to 2030 (vs average 2016-2018 baseline) and to improve energy efficiency by 50% to 2030. Overall, the Defence Forces have reduced emissions by 39.7% against the

2016-18 baseline year. The main sources of energy use within the Defence Forces during 2023 were utilities (electricity, natural gas, LPG and heating oil) and transport fuel (including aviation fuel, marine fuel and road diesel and petrol and SFGO for Naval Service shore power). It should be noted that while there were positive trends in all sources of emissions, the largest single contributor to this decrease was the Naval Service, which emitted 39.6% less CO₂ than in 2022. This is largely due to the reduced capability for NS ships to put to sea during this reporting period.

Chart 4.4 provides a breakdown of the main categories of energy consumption by the Defence Forces during 2023.

Chart 4.4

Defence Forces Energy Consumption by type (kgCO₂), 2023



The decrease in Road Transport fuel emissions can possibly be attributed to the rollout of new EVs, along with the retirement of older less efficient vehicles and replacement with vehicles with newer, more efficient EURO6 engines.

Aviation fuel emissions reduced by 22% since 2022, however this decrease in consumption can largely be attributed to some of the CASA fleet being replaced with the new C295s, as well as the Learjet being offline for a period.

The Defence Forces continue to maintain certification to the international energy management standard ISO 50001:2018 and were fully recertified in November 2023 as part of the three-yearly recertification audit, which visited four Defence Forces' locations.

The Defence Forces' Senior Energy Executive (SEE) chaired by Deputy Chief of Staff (Support) approves an Annual Plan of Action (POA) to address energy use across the full spectrum of energy categories. Some notable achievements of the POA 2023 include:

- i. Completion of further Solar photovoltaic (PV) projects, bringing the installation of PV Capacity in the Defence Forces to over 2.2MWp. PV is now installed in 14 DF locations. Electricity generated by renewables (PV) increased to 1.3 GWh, a 12% increase since 2022 (1.1GWh).
- ii. EV Charge points installed in six DF locations (DFTC, Haulbowline, Casement, Custume, Collins & McKee), with further rollout planned for smaller barracks.
- iii. Continued rollout of heat pumps in suitably identified DF buildings with notable new heat pump installations in H Block DFTC, McKee Barracks, Pearse Officers Mess and Casement Officers Mess demonstrating the ability to electrify heating in Significant Energy Users (SEUs).
- iv. A feasibility assessment study was conducted for the proposed installation of a Wind Turbine in a DF installation to further diversify the DF Energy Sources. Industry leaders are being engaged with to examine the possibility of putting in place Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) to directly procure low carbon energy.
- v. Modernisation and upgrade of our metering systems will allow for greater saving opportunities to be identified in our Significant Energy Users (SEUs), with a contract placed in 2023 for DF wide sub-metering.

European Defence Agency (EDA) Collaboration - Energy

The Defence Forces continued to engage with the EDA on a number of energy initiatives during 2023. Since 2014, the Defence Forces have participated in the EDA's Energy and Environment Working Group. This Working Group examines opportunities to improve energy performance across the Defence Sector.

In 2023, Ireland continued its participation in the European Commission's 'Consultation Forum for Sustainable Energy in the Defence and Security Sectors' - Phase III (CFSEDSS III) which is coordinated by the EDA. This consists of a series of conferences which examine the applicability of EU energy legislation and how it can be implemented by European militaries. The forum comprises four working groups (WG): Energy Management 1 and 2, Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and Protection of Critical Energy Infrastructure, each of which are attended by Defence Force personnel. In 2023, the Defence Forces continued to provide a Moderator to the RES working group and Defence Force personnel have been significant contributors to the work of the other groups.

4.11

Cross-Departmental Groups with Input from Defence

The Department of Defence has input into 142 Cross Departmental groups. Attendance by Department Officials at meetings of these groups is across all grades from Secretary General to Clerical Officer.

- » All Island Information Exchange
- » Brexit Coordinators Group
- » Central Government Accounting Manual Development Group
- » Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group
- » CISM Network (Critical Incidence Stress Management Network)
- » Civil Service Data Protection Officer network
- » Civil Defence Inter-Agency Guidance Team
- » Civil Service ICT Managers' Group
- » Civil Service Management Board
- » Civil Service Renewal Working Group on cross-cutting issues
- » CNI Cyber Risk Assessment Steering Group
- » Commission on the Defence Forces Implementation Oversight Group
- » Commission on the Defence Forces High-Level Steering Board
- » Consultative National Maritime Pollution Response Forum
- » Courts-Martial Rules Committee
- » CPT Liaison Officer Interdepartmental Group
- » Cross-Border CNI Cyber Interdependencies Working Group
- » Cross Governmental Group on Climate Communications
- » Cross Governmental Head of Communications
- » Cross Governmental Communications Group
- » Cross Governmental Communications Press Officer
- » Data Officer Network
- » Department of Environment, Climate & Communications - Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce
- » Department of Housing City and County Managers Association
- » Department of the Taoiseach National Risk Assessment Steering Group
- » Destination Earth Plenary Committee
- » Disability Liaison Officers Network
- » Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF) Interdepartmental Group
- » Equality Budgeting Interdepartmental Network
- » EU Coordinators' Network Meeting
- » European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund Monitoring Committee
- » European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Monitoring Committee
- » European Social Fund (ESF) Programme Monitoring Committee, chaired by the Department of Education & Skills' ESF Managing Authority
- » Finance Officers Network
- » FOI Inter-Departmental Working Group
- » Garda Air Support Unit Steering Group

- » Government Banking Services Steering Group
- » Government Communications Network
- » Government Contracts Committee for Construction (GCCC)
- » Government CORE network
- » Government Task Force on Emergency Planning
- » Government Task Force on Emergency Planning - Subgroup: CBRN
- » Government Task Force on Emergency Planning - Subgroup: Emergency Communications
- » Government Task Force on Emergency planning - Subgroup: International Engagement
- » Government Task Force on Emergency Planning - Sub-Group: Resilience
- » Government Task Force on Emergency Planning - Sub-group: Risk
- » Government Task Force on Emergency Planning - Subgroup: Summer Ready
- » Government Task Force on Emergency Planning - Subgroup: Winter Ready
- » Head of Internal Audit Forum (HIAF)
- » Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority Stakeholder Group
- » High Level Oversight Board on Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence
- » High Level Steering Group on Cyber Security
- » ICT Managers Network
- » Impact 2030 Implementation Forum
- » Inter-departmental Committee on Annual 1916 Easter Commemorations at Arbour Hill
- » Inter-departmental Chemicals Policy Group
- » Inter-departmental Committee on Conventional Weapons
- » Inter-departmental Committee on the Decade of Centenaries
- » Inter-departmental Committee on Development Cooperation
- » Inter-departmental Committee on EU Engagement
- » Inter-departmental Committee on Human Rights
- » Inter-departmental Committee on Islands Policy
- » Inter-departmental Committee on Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction
- » Inter-departmental Committee on Peacekeeping
- » Inter-departmental Committee on the Security of Government Buildings Complex
- » Inter-departmental eDocs Working Group
- » Inter-departmental Flood Policy Co-ordinations Group
- » Inter-departmental Group on EU-UK issues
- » Inter-departmental Group on Local Government
- » Inter-departmental Group on Presidency Policy Planning (IDG PPG)
- » Inter-departmental Group on Space Policy
- » Inter-departmental Group on the Irish Abroad
- » Inter-departmental meetings on Famine Commemoration
- » Inter-departmental meetings on National Day on Commemoration
- » Inter-departmental meetings on Sustainable Development Goals
- » Inter-departmental Period Poverty Implementation Group
- » Inter-departmental Planning Group for 1916 Easter Sunday Commemoration
- » Inter-departmental Steering Committee on the Military Services Pensions Collection
- » Inter-departmental Working Group on the Security Environment Assessment
- » IGEES Inter-departmental Advisory Group
- » Irish Refugee Protection Programme Taskforce
- » LGBTI+ National Inclusion Strategy Committee
- » Management Board of the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management
- » Marine Co-ordination Group
- » Marine Strategy Framework Directive Implementation Group
- » Maritime Surveillance (MARSUR) Committee and Working Group
- » MEM Subgroup on Mass Fatality Planning
- » Ministerial Air Transport Service (MATS) Review Group
- » National Advisory Committee on Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
- » National Aeromedical Group
- » National Airspace Policy Body (Flexible Use of Airspace)

- » National Civil Aviation Security Committee
- » National Civil Aviation Security Committee – Threat and Risk Group
- » National Data Infrastructure (NDI) Champions Group
- » National Emergency Co-ordination Group- Press Officer Communications Subgroup
- » National Floods Directive Coordination Group
- » National Maritime College of Ireland Handback Steering Committee
- » National Office of Suicide Prevention "Connecting for Life Cross Sectoral Steering Group" progressing the implementation of the National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2024.
- » National Policy Framework for Children and Young People
- » National Search and Rescue Consultative (NSARC) Committee
- » National Search and Rescue Consultative (NSARC) Forum
- » National Search and Rescue Stakeholders Forum
- » National Security Committee
- » National Shared Services Office (NSSO) Advisory Board
- » National Shared Services Office (NSSO) Employee Services Customer Group (ESCG)
- » National Steering Group on Major Emergency Management
- » National Strategy for Women and Girls Strategy Committee
- » Network of State Archivists and Records Managers
- » OFGUG (Oracle Financials Government User Group)
- » OGCI (Office of the Government Chief Information Officer) ICT Advisory Board
- » OGP (Office of Government Procurement) Category Councils
- » OGP (Office of Government Procurement) ICT Category Council
- » OGP Procurement Executive
- » OGP Procurement Network
- » OGP Strategic Procurement Advisory Group
- » OPW Interdepartmental Flood Policy Co-ordination Group
- » Our Public Service 2020 Action Team 10 "Project Management Network" (DOD Leads)
- » Our Public Service 2020 Action Team 1 "Accelerate Digital Delivery"
- » Our Public Service 2020 Action Team 6 "Promote a Culture of Innovation"
- » Our Public Service 2020 Public Service Leadership Board (PSLB)
- » Our Public Service 2020 Public Service Management Group (PSMG)
- » Oversight Group of Ireland's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
- » Participation in the DCEDYI Framework Panel on Children
- » Participation in the Department of Justice Gender and Domestic-based Violence interdepartmental Group and Senior Officials Group
- » Participation in the Senior Officials Group on Children and Education
- » Policy Forum/Working Group on fast accrual pensions
- » Protected Disclosures Network
- » Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group
- » Public Service HR Leaders' Network
- » Public Service Innovation Network
- » Public Service Management Group
- » Public Service Pensions Network
- » Public Service Project Management Network
- » Quality Customer Service Officers Network
- » Sea Fisheries Protection Authority SLA Management Groups Levels 1 and 2
- » Search and Rescue Aviation Forum
- » Senior Officials Group on Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis
- » Single Pension Scheme Sectoral Steering Group
- » Single Pension Scheme Technical Focus Group
- » Space Enterprise Coordination Group
- » Working Group on Derelict Ships
- » Working Group on developing a Well-being Framework for Ireland

4.12

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

The Department of Defence has completed MOU's with:

- » Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- » Department of Transport
- » Department of Health (x 2)
- » Department of Foreign Affairs (x 3)
- » Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- » Office of Revenue Commissioners
- » Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
- » Department of Social Protection
- » Department of the Taoiseach
- » State Claims Agency
- » United Nations (x 2)
- » Ministry of Defence, UK (x 3)
- » Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, Malta
- » Irish Red Cross Society
- » Department of Defence, Australia
- » Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Poland
- » National Shared Services Office
- » Kildare County Council

SLAs have been agreed with:

- » Department of Education – regarding ESF funding relating to the Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme.
- » Marine Institute – regarding surveys, information sharing and training between the MI and the Naval Service.
- » Medico – in relation to training assistance provided by the Naval Service to Medico.
- » Air Accident Investigation Unit – in relation to services provided by the Defence Forces in the event of an air accident.
- » Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) – regarding Search and Rescue support and other services provided by the Defence Forces to the IRCG.
- » Met Éireann – regarding the exchange of meteorological data between the Naval Service and Met Éireann.
- » Department of Health/Health Service Executive (HSE) – regarding an Air Ambulance Service provided by the Air Corps
- » Health Service Executive/National Ambulance Service – regarding a pilot scheme for the availability of a Defence Forces ambulance and crew to the National Ambulance Service.
- » Marine Survey Office – assistance in routine or emergency situations.
- » Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) – for the provision by the Air Corps of an air transport service to GSOC Investigators.
- » Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) – regarding Air Navigation Services between the IAA and the Air Corps.
- » Department of Justice – regarding the Garda Air Support Unit.
- » Office of Public Works (OPW) – in relation to services provided by the Air Corps to the OPW during extreme weather events.
- » The Department of Foreign Affairs as represented by Irish Aid – in relation to a range of services provided by the Defence Forces regarding the Rapid Response Initiative.
- » Sea Fisheries Protection Agency (SFPA) – in relation to services provided by the Naval Service and Air Corps to the SFPA in regard to fisheries protection.
- » An Garda Síochána (AGS) - terms of service between Civil Defence and AGS in relation to emergency incidents.
- » Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment – regarding the provision of services by the Defence Forces and Civil Defence.
- » Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (National Parks and Wildlife Service) – regarding the provision of services by the Defence Forces.
- » Department of Transport – regarding the provision of services by the Defence Forces to the Dublin Airport Authority.
- » Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in relation to Mass Fatality Planning.
- » Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and the National Cyber Security Centre with the overall aim of improving the cyber-security of the State
- » Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann (ONE) for the provision of services to ONE.
- » Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) for the provision of services to IUNVA.
- » Irish Coast Guard – provision of service between Civil Defence and the Irish Coast Guard in relation to emergency incidents on the waters of Ireland.
- » Department of Foreign Affairs regarding a range of services by the Defence Forces to the Emergency Civil Assistance Team (ECAT)

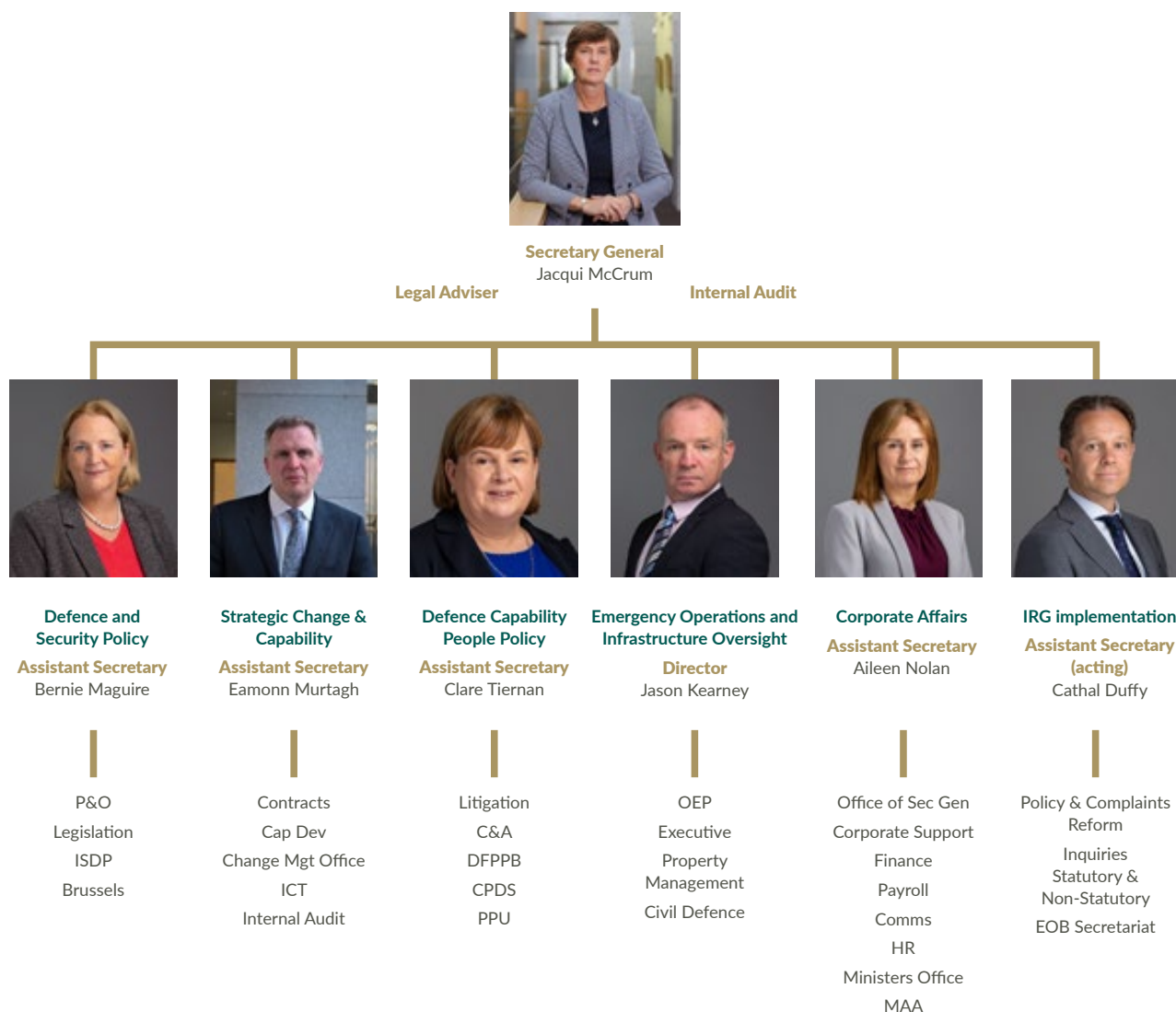


Appendix A

Organogram of the Management Board and the General Staff

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE MANAGEMENT BOARD

(As of 31 December 2023)



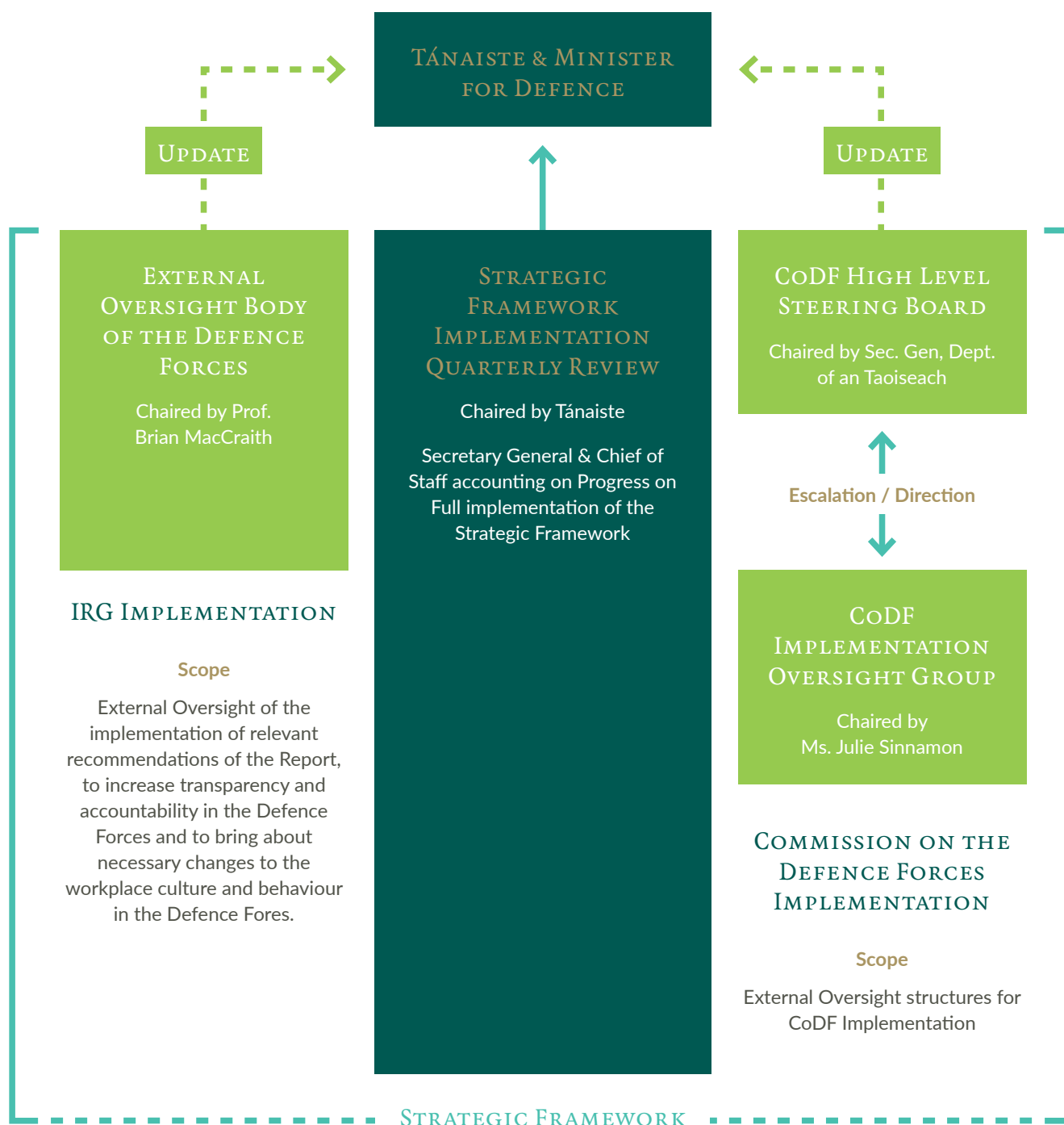
DEFENCE FORCES BOARD

- * Branch or Directorate with Colonel (OF-5) as OIC
 ** Branch Section with Lt Colonel (OF-4) as OIC



Appendix B

Strategic Framework – Governance and Reporting Arrangements



Appendix C

Summary of Recommendations Contained in the Detailed Implementation Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND POSITION FOR EACH RECOMMENDATION

Definition of Responses to Positions			
Accept	Accept In Principle	Further Evaluation	Revert
Recommendation accepted for implementation.	This recommendation is accepted in principle, but further consideration is required on the optimal approach to meeting the intent of the Commission.	This recommendation is desirable. Further evaluation is required with key stakeholders, of the resource, policy, financial and legislative implications before a decision on implementation can be considered.	It is proposed to revert to Government at a later stage with regards to this recommendation.

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
1	The respective roles of the Garda Emergency Response Unit (ERU) and the Defence Forces' ARW should be clarified to ensure that there is a clear understanding of how they would interact in an operational situation and common procedures and operational guidelines should be developed.	Accept in Principle	Nov 2024
2	That the high-level Command and Control structures of the Defence Forces be aligned to international best practice, including: A The creation of a CHOD, supported by a Vice CHOD, with the appropriate military command and control authority of the Defence Forces at the strategic level, including the ability to assign OPCOM, OPCON, TACOM and TACON.	Revert	Revert to Government Jul 2024
3	B The creation of a Defence Forces' Headquarters that will report to the CHOD, who will be assisted by the A/CHOD and the Head of Transformation.	Revert	Revert to Government Jul 2024

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
4	C The creation of three Service Chiefs, and Deputy Service Chiefs, for the land, air and maritime forces, and a Joint Force Commander, who should also be the Vice-CHOD, supported by a Deputy Commander. This high-level leadership team may be formalised as a Command Board or similar title and should support the CHOD in managing issues connected to the development of the Joint Force.	Revert	Revert to Government Jul 2024
5	D The Army, Air Corps and Naval Service should become services, have service headquarters, and have parity of esteem.	Revert	Revert to Government Jul 2024
6(i)	E That the SEAC position, currently being trialled, is made permanent for the purposes of bringing the expertise and experience of the senior NCO appointee to the top table, including being a member of the Defence Staff.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Dec 2023
6(ii)	E Additionally, each Service Chief should be supported by a service Sergeant Major/Warrant Officer who would sit on their respective service staff.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Jul 2024
7	F That the supporting joint functions are staffed by all three services, from all ranks.	Accept in Principle	Q3 2025
8 (i)	G Implementation of the current White Paper Project Report should also be expedited (ARW/IRL SOF).	Accept in Principle	Q3 2025
8 (ii)	G That the ARW should be renamed IRL SOF and include permanent Air and Maritime Task Groups in Casement Aerodrome and Haulbowline Naval Base.	Accept in Principle	2028
9	The enhancement of Defence Forces structures across the cyber domain, to include: A The creation of a Joint Cyber Defence Command that should manage, Defence Forces IT Services, CIS Services and Cyber Defence.	Accept in Principle	Dec 2024
10	The enhancement of Defence Forces structures across the cyber domain, to include B Incorporating practical lessons identified from comparator countries and EU Member States' maturing cyber commands.	Accept	Dec 2024
11	C Updating and publishing a cyber defence strategy in line with best international practice and standards.	Accept	Mar 2024
12	D Increased civil-military engagement across Government on the development of appropriate structures and processes for countering hybrid warfare, learning from current international experience.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Q1 2025
13	Implementation of a comprehensive approach to Strategic HR within the Defence Forces with, in particular, the following enablers put in place: A The establishment of a Strategic HR Change Leadership Team, to be led by the externally recruited Head of Transformation;	Accept in Principle	Dec 2023
14	B The introduction of a talent management system and new career streams;	Accept in Principle	Dec 2024
15	C The conduct of a comprehensive exercise that maps current patterns of career progression and develops a career progression route map for all roles, starting with entry level and those roles that are experiencing higher attrition rates; and	Accept	Dec 2024
16	D All personnel should have a personal Continuous Professional Development plan and at least annual meetings with their commander to review their performance and competencies.	Accept	Dec 2024

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
17	The development of an organisational leadership and development capability within the Defence Forces of the future to lead the transformation agenda.	Accept in Principle	Sep 2024
18	The creation of a permanent training establishment and provision of greater flexibility for managers, within the overall establishment number, to allocate staff across formations and ranks.	Accept in Principle	Q2 2025
19	Development and resourcing of remote and distance learning solutions to provide greater use of ICT-based training and education both in the home and from regional garrison locations or hot desks.	Accept	Mar 2024
20	The creation of a new enlisted rank of Lance Corporal in the Army and the Air Corps.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Sep 2024
21	The creation of a structure to provide a recognised career path for Naval divers that permits rank progression for enlisted personnel within the Naval Service Diving Section.	Accept in Principle	2026
22	Provision of a specialist Military Police career stream for all ranks, with adequate career progression opportunities.	Accept in Principle	2026
23	Re-development of promotion systems to ensure they are open, competitive and entirely merit-based, while the necessity for all officers and NCOs to undertake long career courses needs to be examined.	Accept in Principle	Dec 2024
24	There should be objective, competitive selection processes designed for career course selection that recognise high performing individuals and avoids creating a 'box ticking' culture.	Accept in Principle	Dec 2024
25	There should be equal emphasis and access to career training and professional military education for officers, NCOs and reservists.	Accept in Principle	2027
26	Service specific courses need to be introduced at a junior and senior level, with joint courses and training where required at a senior level.	Accept in Principle	2027
27	A practice should be developed of actively managing the retention of valuable members of the Defence Forces who have decided that promotion is not for them, or whose career stream has a restricted rank structure.	Accept in Principle	Dec 2024
28	A fundamental cultural change process, using the most up-to-date approaches, should be undertaken; and the Defence Forces should ensure early implementation of the following high profile immediate impact changes:		
	A Creation of a full-time senior rank position of Gender Advisor (OF-5) with a dedicated staffing resource and full time co-ordinators for staff networks such as the Women's Network and the Defend with Pride group;	Accept in Principle	Mar 2024
29	B Creation of a mechanism to ensure there is female participation and input at all meetings at General Staff level (or the equivalent under the proposed new structures);	Accept in Principle	Completed Jan 2023
30	C Full integration of all dining facilities, on land and at sea; and	Accept in Principle	2028
31	D Regular climate and continuous attitude surveys to assess morale, command climate and underlying culture on an ongoing basis.	Accept	Sep 2024

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
32	Development of expanded recruitment channels with objectives set for the recruitment and participation of under-represented groups, through:		
	A Setting an overall female participation rate of 35% to be achieved through a combination of entry-level inductions (Cadet and General Service) and civilianisation, as well as direct entry into more senior, and specialist, positions across the organisation;	Accept in Principle	2028
33	B Consultation with the communities of under-represented groups to discuss the attractions and barriers to service in the Defence Forces;	Accept	Mar 2024
34	C Adoption of measures to enable easier access to Irish citizenship for those who serve in the Defence Forces; and	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Q3 2025
35	D Development of a profile of current serving personnel as an essential starting point to underpinning longer-term approaches to strategic HR and ensuring the Defence Forces is more reflective of the diversity of Irish society.	Accept	July 2024
36 (i)	Consideration of the gender perspective should become mandatory in all aspects of decision making across the Defence Forces and particularly in relation to HR practices, promotion processes, procurement and development of infrastructure, including:		
	A Immediate removal of gendered rules, regulations and standards that are unfavourable to women, and others who do not fit a perceived 'norm';	Accept	Jun 2024
36 (ii)	A including a review and modernisation of grooming standards for both men and women in line with trends in other armed forces and Irish society;	Accept	Jan 2024
37	B A guaranteed minimum female participation rate of 35% on all command and other relevant career courses by 2025;	Accept in Principle	2028
38	C Identification and removal of practices around access to promotion opportunities and courses which, in effect, indirectly discriminate against women or other groups such as, for example, primary carers;	Accept	Dec 2024
39	D Fitness standards should be reviewed and updated to ensure they are relative to accepted standards for females and modern military roles;	Accept	Mar 2024
40	E Women in the Defence Forces should be supplied with and have ready access, without delay or special request, to clothing and equipment that are designed for females and, as such, are fit for purpose;	Accept	Jul 2024
41	F Immediate extension of the Defence Forces' Women's Network to include female members of the Reserve; and	Accept	Completed Oct 2022
42	G Establishment of a female mentoring programme to allow women in the Defence Forces to benefit from the experience of identified role models and mentors.	Accept	Dec 2023
43	Gender, diversity and unconscious bias training should become mandatory across all ranks of the Defence Forces.	Accept	Aug 2024
44	The development of a statement of the Defence Forces' vision of its role and value to the people of Ireland.	Accept	Dec 2023
45	Implementation of an administrative solution without delay to enable the ODF to investigate complaints received more than 12 months after the date of the alleged action, or the date the complainant became aware of the alleged action.	Accept	Completed Mar 2023
46	Increased use of direct entry recruitment to fill specialist posts with appropriately adjusted training and physical fitness requirements.	Accept	Aug 2024

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
47	Urgent reform of existing working arrangements including:		
	A Any necessary legislative and organisational changes to allow for flexible service and flexible work practices;	Accept in Principle	2026
48	B Extension and enhancement of existing family friendly policies to the greatest practicable extent, including for overseas postings, and recognition of the challenges faced by single parents and parents of children with disabilities, amongst others; and	Accept	Nov 2024
49	C Introduction of a non-financial 'labour hours budget' for all managers.	Accept	Q1 2025
50	The expeditious removal of the blanket exclusion of the Defence Forces from the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 subject to the application of the derogations permitted by the Working Time Directive.	Accept	Sep 2024
51	Establishment of an Officer Training Centre comprising the existing Cadet School and a new Officer Candidate School which would conduct Potential Officers Courses, Late Entry Officers Courses and Reserve Officers Courses every two years.	Accept in Principle	2027
52	Urgent reform of medical services within the Defence Forces to include:		
	A Implementation of measures to extend provision of private healthcare to all enlisted personnel in the Defence Forces;	Accept	Completed Sep 2023
53	B Completion of all outstanding reviews into medical services within a 12-18 month period and the implementation processes started immediately; and	Accept	Q3 2025
54	C Extension of HIQA's remit to include the Defence Forces' medical services.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Q2 2026
55	Greater transparency of the wider benefits of membership of the Defence Forces should become a central feature of future recruitment campaigns, which should be supported by external expertise.	Accept	Completed Nov 2022
56	That the equity of existing pay and allowance structures be enhanced by:		
	A Removing the requirement for a 3 Star Private/Able Seaman to 'mark time' for the first three years at that rank;	Accept	Completed Dec 2022
57	B Ensuring that all personnel of Private 3 Star/Able Seaman rank are paid the full rate of MSA applicable to the rank;	Accept	Completed Dec 2022
58	C Providing immediate access to the Sea-going Service Commitment Scheme to direct entry personnel in the Navy;	Accept in Principle	Completed Dec 2022
59	D Replacing the existing sea-going allowances with less complex sea-going duty measures; and	Accept	Completed Nov 2023
60	E Introducing Long Service Increments to the pay scales of all ranks of enlisted personnel.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Mar 2024
61	On the basis that all personnel should, in the first instance, be paid the full rate of MSA applicable to their rank, MSA should be abolished and the full applicable rate integrated into core pay.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Dec 2024
62	The introduction of a mechanism to provide for ongoing review of the application of existing specialist pay rates and allowances to groups and categories of military personnel, and to make recommendations, within public pay policy parameters, where adjustments are required.	Accept in Principle	Q1 2025

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
63	PDF Representative Associations should be facilitated if they wish to pursue associate membership of ICTU.	Accept	Dec 2024
64	A new high level vision be articulated for the RDF that clarifies its core purpose as being to support the PDF in all its roles.	Accept	Apr 2024
65	Decisions to deploy RDF personnel should be taken by the unit commanders, and should not be limited by the overarching policy as at present.	Accept in Principle	Dec 2024
66	A detailed regeneration plan for the RDF, with clear and specific timelines, be developed and published by the end of 2022 setting out how a reformed RDF will be operationalised and funded.	Accept in Principle	Apr 2024
67	The CHOD be supported by a Reserve Assistant Chief of Defence and that each Service Chief should be supported by a Reserve Assistant Chief of Service.	Accept in Principle	Q3 2025
68 (i)	The establishment of the RDF should include, at a minimum, an Air Force Reserve of 200	Accept in Principle	2028
68 (ii)	The establishment of the RDF should include, at a minimum, a Navy Reserve of 400.	Accept in Principle	2028
69	The Army Reserve establishment should stand at 3,900 with a ratio of 50:50 between Combat / Combat Support and Combat Service Support	Accept in Principle	2028
70 (i)	A joint Office of Reserve Affairs (ORA), with senior staff from RDF and with support from the PDF, be established which should report regularly to the CHOD and senior commanders on all reserve matters. Command authority should remain with the integrated PDF/RDF unit commanders in conformity with the SFC.	Accept	Q1 2025
70 (ii)	A joint Office of Reserve Affairs (ORA), with senior staff from RDF and with support from the PDF, be established which should report regularly to the CHOD and senior commanders on all reserve matters. Command authority should remain with the integrated PDF/RDF unit commanders in conformity with the SFC but: A The deployment of RDF personnel should be audited annually and documented by the ORA, with appropriate and effective follow-up, including in commanders' annual appraisals, to ensure best practice and accountability, and	Accept	Q1 2025
71	B The ORA should provide an annual progress report to the Minister for Defence on the implementation of the RDF regeneration plan.	Accept	Dec 2023
72	The role of reservists be highlighted and embedded in the curriculum of education courses for senior NCOs and officers.	Accept	2027
73 (i)	The Defence Forces should urgently develop revamped and efficient recruitment processes for the FLR, the Army Reserve, the Air Force Reserve and the Naval Reserve. For the Army, Air and Naval Reserves, a maximum recruitment time of eight weeks, from application to initiation, should be set.	Accept in Principle	Jun 2024
73 (ii)	The Defence Forces should urgently develop revamped and efficient recruitment processes for the FLR, the Army Reserve, the Air Force Reserve and the Naval Reserve. For the Army, Air and Naval Reserves, a fast-track system should be developed for those who wish to join the FLR on discharge from the PDF.	Accept in Principle	Jul 2024
74	The Defence Forces should develop a clear and focused recruitment plan, with clearly identified milestones and annual reviews, targeted at meeting the full establishment of the RDF within eight years to include recruitment of specialists, Combat Support and Combat Service Support personnel. A part of its recruitment plan, the Defence Forces should: A Ensure that the RDF fully reflects the diversity of contemporary Irish society;	Accept	Q2 2025
75	B Clarify the specific skillsets where targeted Reserve recruitment would be most likely to yield positive benefits and build the outcome into a sustained recruitment effort;	Accept	Q2 2025
76	C Provide for increased utilisation of direct entry commissions and direct entry at NCO level to the RDF, including an expanded use of direct entry mechanisms to all services and Corps;	Accept	Q2 2025

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
77	D Create lateral entry mechanisms for those with prior foreign military experience who wish to join the RDF; and	Accept in Principle	Q2 2025
78	E Focus the recruitment plan around attracting highly skilled people to staff an expanded range of clearly defined non-combat and specialist functions, as well as general recruitment to conventional combat units	Accept	Q2 2025
79	Employment protection legislation should be considered and discussed with employer representative bodies and Trade Unions to protect reservists and ensure their availability when needed.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Q1 2025
80	Ireland should deepen its engagement with the implementation of the EU's Maritime Security Strategy.	Accept in Principle	Q4 2025
81 (i)	A whole-of-government National Maritime Security Strategy should be developed. As part of this, or in advance, the powers required by the Naval Service for effective enforcement, in support of national security, in the maritime domain should be addressed.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation TBC
81 (ii)	A whole-of-government National Aviation Security Strategy should be developed.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation TBC
82	Opportunities offered by the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation to develop Ireland's defence capabilities should be more fully explored and exploited than at present.	Accept	Completed Sep 2023
83	Future Government decisions on Ireland's capacity and appetite to take on higher intensity peace support operations must be coherent with the resourcing and scale of the Defence Forces and ensure consistency between international security and defence policy objectives, level of ambition and defence budget.	Accept in Principle	Mar 2024
84	A whole of government air and maritime services 'needs analyses' should be undertaken in the short term in an attempt to highlight trends and predict needs into the future over a 10-20 year period.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation TBC
85	The immediate establishment of a codified top-down Capability Development Planning process through the creation of a permanent civil-military structure in order to embed capability development within the Department and the Defence Forces.	Accept	2026
86	That analysis of green defence solutions and horizon scanning to identify emerging technologies, is embedded in the capability development planning process.	Accept	Dec 2024
87	<p>Within the context of a decision being taken by Government that the capability requirements of the Defence Forces need to step up from LOA 1 to LOA 2, whether as a discrete step or as an interim position en route to LOA 3, the following is recommended:</p> <p>A Replacement of the existing APCs with a larger and enhanced fleet equipped with sufficient firepower for future overseas missions, and with 'level 4' armour across armour platforms where required;</p>		
88	B An accelerated programme of Naval vessel replacement to ensure a balanced fleet of nine modern ships by early in the next decade;	Accept in Principle	2028
89	C That all modern vessels be double crewed to ensure each vessel spends an absolute minimum of 220 days at sea per year, with this being phased in over the course of the vessel replacement programme;	Accept in Principle	2028
90	D That smart metrics for patrol days should be developed and agreed between the Naval Service and the SFPA focused on quality and effectiveness of enforcement activities rather than quantity;	Accept in Principle	Dec 2024
91	E Development of a primary radar capability to ensure a complete Recognised Air Picture can be maintained;	Accept in Principle	2028
92 (i)	F Development of anti-drone or counter UAS capabilities;	Accept in Principle	Q3 2025

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
92 (ii)	F The further development of RPAS capabilities;	Accept in Principle	Q3 2025
93 (i)	G Enhancement of the Air Corps' fleet with the addition of a fixed wing aircraft with strategic reach capability for enhanced Defence Forces support and priority ATCA taskings;	Accept in Principle	Q3 2025
93 (ii)	G Enhancement of the Air Corps' fleet with the addition of two additional medium lift rotary wing aircraft for enhanced Defence Forces support and priority ATCA taskings;	Accept in Principle	Q2 2025
94	H The ultimate replacement of the existing medium lift helicopter fleet with a fleet of eight super-medium helicopters;	Accept in Principle	2028
95	I Deepening Defence Forces involvement in relevant national and international forums to enhance capability development in the cyber domain;	Accept	Mar 2024
96	J A further 100 additional specialist personnel as part a Joint Cyber Defence Command managing Cyber Defence, Defence IT Services, and CIS Services;	Accept in Principle	2026
97	K Establishment of SOF Air and Maritime Task Groups, including associated logistics, to be based at Casement Aerodrome and Haulbowline as part of the planned increase in the ARW/SOF establishment and enhancement of SOF capabilities;	Accept in Principle	2028
98	L Strengthening Military Intelligence capabilities and the establishment of a Joint Military Intelligence Service in the context of a revised mandate underpinned by new legislation (as proposed in Chapter 7);	Accept in Principle	2028
99	M The establishment of an Intelligence School, with shared programmes, which would facilitate enhanced cooperation and joint training opportunities between Military Intelligence and their Garda counterparts; and	Accept in Principle	Q2 2025
100	N The development of relevant military capabilities to counter hybrid activity where military capability is required and to contribute to national resilience.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Q3 2025
101	<p>Within the context of a decision being taken by Government that the capability requirements of the Defence Forces need to step up to LOA 3, the following is recommended:</p> <p>A By 2040 the Infantry element of the Army would have a substantial mechanised component offering state of the art force protection, communications, ISTAR and firepower. All Infantry units would have full organic lift capability, ideally mechanised. Combat Support elements would be modernised, with both Artillery regiments and Cavalry squadrons being fully interoperable to NATO standards, and the land force would have the appropriate level of combat service support elements;</p>		
102	B By 2040 the Naval Service would comprise a balanced fleet of at least 12 ships, supported by appropriate technology, as part of a joint Defence Forces structure;	Revert	Revert to Government 2028
103	C As part of a national Air Defence Plan, the Air Corps would develop an air combat and intercept capability through the acquisition of a squadron of jet combat aircraft, allied to the development of associated operational, infrastructure and support arrangements;	Revert	Revert to Government 2028
104	D The overseas deployment of combat aircraft, pilots and support personnel to provide organic intra-theatre mobility based on tactical transport helicopters. Deployed forces would also have an organic helicopter combat SAR capability armed and equipped to operate in hostile environments;	Revert	Revert to Government 2028
105	E A further 200 additional specialist personnel working under a matured Joint Cyber Defence Command; and	Revert	Revert to Government 2028
106	F ARW/SOF would have an organic self-sustainment capability, which would include dedicated combat helicopter assets to insert, operate and extract from mission areas.	Revert	Revert to Government 2028

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
107	That jointness be inculcated throughout the Defence Forces by:		
	A. Prioritising training institutions, with an emphasis on routine joint exercises to prove future force operational capabilities for national defence and overseas operations.	Accept	2026
108	B. The introduction of joint operational and leadership training courses at junior and senior level for both officers and NCOs.	Accept	2026
109	That the Defence Forces seek to further integrate with whole-of-government processes, with a focus on contributing to national security and national resilience through ATCP and ATCA operations.	Accept in Principle	Sep 2024
110	The modernisation of Military Intelligence, to include:		
	A The role and functions of Military Intelligence be urgently clarified and underpinned by appropriate legislation within the context of a coherent national intelligence architecture.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Jun 2024
111	B The development of an overarching legal and governance framework to ensure optimum coordination and collaboration between the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána on intelligence matters.	Accept in Principle	2026
112	C A fully joint approach to Intelligence within the Defence Forces under the Joint Force Commander.	Accept	2028
113	D Appropriate arrangements in relation to oversight in relation to intelligence should be set out in the legislation.	Accept in Principle	Q2 2025
114	The creation of a Joint Military Police Service, independent of the operational chain of command, with enhanced electronic and analytical supports, and with oversight, inspection and complaints mechanisms also established.	Accept in Principle	2027
115 (i)	The development of a National Defence Academy.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Q2 2025
115 (ii)	The development of an Apprentice School to support a future tech-enabled force.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Q2 2025
116	That the Government and Oireachtas urgently address the need to define a clear level of ambition for the major roles of the Defence Forces: defence of the State, its people and its resources, overseas missions, ATCP and ATCA.	Accept in Principle	Completed Jul 2022
117	That the chosen level of ambition be clearly and credibly linked to the budget provided annually and over the period to 2030*.	Accept in Principle	2028
118	That the forthcoming cycle of Defence Reviews be based on a coherent and consistent approach to defence policy, level of ambition, required capability and budget.	Accept	Mar 2024
119	That consideration be given to a step up to LOA 2, as described in this report, in the short term pending the more detailed policy debate and decision required for higher levels of ambition.	Accept	Completed Jul 2022
120	Specific taskings of the Defence Forces, including those arising from ATCP and ATCA, should be subject to regular review for continued relevance and priority, with appropriately defined levels of ambition.	Accept	Dec 2024

* Government decision was to implement LOA 2 by 2028

Rec #	Commission on Defence Forces Recommendation	Government Position	Planned Completion Date
121	That an immediate focus be given to standing down a number of current Defence Forces' ATCP taskings which no longer seem justified in the current security situation.	Accept in Principle	Nov 2023
122	The reassessment of priorities, structures and the distribution of resources across the full spectrum of ATCP activities and, in particular, in areas such Chemical Biological Radiation and Nuclear (CBRN) response, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), and provision of Engineer Specialist Search Teams (ESST).	Accept	Q1 2025
123	Clear inter-agency policies and planning for the deployment of the Defence Forces to support routine armed policing duties in times of emergency should be developed and that the necessary contingency planning and training for such deployments should be undertaken.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Apr 2024
124	The future Naval legal branch should include additional legal officers with appropriate maritime law and fisheries law specialisations.	Further Evaluation	Further Evaluation to be completed Apr 2024
125	That the Army be urgently restructured by completing the following:		
	A The Chief of Defence to initiate an immediate force design process assisted by external experts with access to international military expertise, and to include a detailed force design process.	Accept	Dec 2023
126	B The creation of a more agile and flexible force structure that can meet current and future operational taskings.	Accept	2027
127	C That the future disposition and structures of the Army be regionally balanced.	Accept in Principle	2027
128 (i)	Modernisation of the Naval Service Diving Section with the establishment of a Defence Forces' School of Diving.	Accept	2028
128 (ii)	Modernisation of the Naval Service Diving Section with the establishment of a diving safety office reporting directly to the Chief of the Navy.	Accept	2028
129	The establishment of an Office of Veterans' Affairs to coordinate veteran supports and provide advice and assistance to veterans and their families.	Accept in Principle	Q3 2025
130	That a focused and detailed review of the Defence estate be carried out by appropriately qualified professionals prior to decisions on the optimum future disposition of the Defence Forces.	Accept in Principle	Q2 2025

Appendix D

Terms of Reference for the External Oversight Body of the Defence Forces

EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT BODY OF THE DEFENCE FORCES (NON STATUTORY) - TERMS OF REFERENCE – JULY 2023

Background

The Report of the IRG, published on 28 March 2023 (the “Report”) and established to examine issues relating to allegations of discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and any form of sexual misconduct in the Defence Forces, recommended the establishment of an external oversight body in recommendation 4.3.1 of its report.

The Government has agreed to prepare legislation to establish the external oversight body on a statutory basis.

Until such time as the statutory body is in place, the Government has decided to establish the External Oversight Body of the Defence Forces (Non-Statutory) (the “Body”) to oversee the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Report, to increase transparency and accountability in the Defence Forces and to bring about necessary changes to the workplace culture and behaviour in the Defence Forces.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Body are:

1. To oversee the implementation and operationalisation of necessary cultural change by the Defence Forces on foot of the matters identified in the Report.
2. To oversee, where relevant, the performance of the Defence Forces in the quality, timeliness and impact of their implementation of the following recommendations of the Report:
 - 4.2.1: Immediate reform to the process of making a complaint of unacceptable behaviour under Administrative Instruction A7, Chapter 1;
 - 4.2.2: Revised grievance model to replace redress of wrongs system under Section 114 of the Defence Act 1954, as amended;
 - 4.4.1: Revisions to policy, practice and procedures to address incidents of unacceptable behaviour;
 - 4.5.1: Recommendations for addressing incidents of reprisal or retaliation;

- 4.6.1: Recommendations for training supports to address workplace issues pertaining to dignity and equality, duty of care, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct;
 - 4.7.1: Practice-based recommendations for supporting a culture based on dignity and respect;
 - 4.8.1: Recommendations for addressing cultural issues related to gender;
 - 4.10.1: Recommendations on the provision of adequate maternity clothing for female personnel;
 - 4.11.1: Recommendations on the development of family-friendly policies and initiatives;
 - 4.12.1: Recommendations on the protection of confidentiality within the Personnel Support Service; and
 - 4.13.1: Recommendations on complaints process for civilians and civil servants.
3. To oversee the performance of the Defence Forces in the operation and reform of the following areas:
 - a. modern human resources practice with specific emphasis on
 - i. supporting a culture based on dignity and respect,
 - ii. supporting greater diversity and inclusion,
 - iii. removing gendered rules, standards and practices;
 - b. initial training and development processes for recruits;
 - c. recruitment outcomes which reflect the diversity of contemporary Irish society;
 - d. ongoing training and development systems;
 - e. performance management systems;
 - f. promotion and career progression systems;
 - g. addressing workplace issues (including bullying & harassment);
 - h. complaints and grievance systems;
 - i. reprisals and retaliation prevention systems;
 - j. sanctions under g, h and i;
 - k. inclusive language; and
 - l. data and monitoring systems under each of the areas above.
 4. To oversee the implementation by the Defence Forces of certain recommendations, as set out in Appendix 1, contained in the High Level Action Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces dated 13 July 2022 as approved by Government.
 5. To examine outcomes (including diversity outcomes) reported through the Defence Forces Data & Monitoring Systems.
 6. To oversee the management of the existing complaints system within the Defence Forces pending the introduction of a new complaints mechanism for members of the Defence Forces;
 7. To identify and monitor clear measures of performance of the Defence Forces under Terms of Reference (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) and (6), including the establishment of relevant baseline data.
 8. To assist in developing greater transparency, and accountability in the Defence Forces in relation to the matters raised in (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6) and (7).

9. To report to the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence on a quarterly basis on:
 - a. the performance and progress of the Defence Forces on the matters in Terms of Reference (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6) and (7);
 - b. the activities of the Body in the period concerned; and
 - c. any obstacles encountered by the Body in performing its role under these Terms of Reference in the period concerned.
10. To provide a comprehensive report to the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence by 31 December 2024 on:
 - a. the performance and progress of the Defence Forces on the matters in Terms of Reference (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6) and (7);
 - b. the activities of the Body;
 - c. any obstacles encountered by the Body in performing its role under these Terms of Reference; and
 - d. any recommendations that the Body deems appropriate in relation to the work of any future external oversight body for the Defence Forces.
11. To advise the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence if the Body considers that it requires further persons with specific skills or experience to be members of the Body to undertake its role.
12. To advise the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence if the Body considers that other specific matters necessary to discharge its oversight role should be addressed in the Terms of Reference. The Tánaiste and Minister for Defence may consider such advice and amend the Terms of Reference if appropriate.
13. To advise the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence on legislative proposals to establish an external oversight body on a statutory basis.

Other

- a. The Body may request documents, data and other information from the Defence Forces as it considers necessary to carry out its role.
- b. The Body may request documents, data and other information from the Department of Defence as it considers necessary to carry out its role.
- c. The Body will be provided with a dedicated secretariat, dedicated resources and access to external support appropriate and proportionate to carry out its role. The Body will put in place its own operational arrangements. The Body will advise the Tánaiste and Minister for Defence of its assessment of these requirements for his consideration and subject to existing approval/sanction processes.
- d. The Body will develop a high-level programme and schedule of priorities to cover the period from its establishment up to 31 December 2024.
- e. The Independent Chair of the Implementation Oversight Group (the "IOG") established to oversee and drive progress in relation to the recommendations from the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces as approved by Government, is a member of the Body.
- f. The Independent Chair of the IOG will inform the IOG on matters referred to at (1) to (7) in the Terms of Reference, as appropriate.
- g. For information only, the Independent Chair of the IOG will update the Body on the progress of the implementation of other elements of the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces as approved by Government.

- h. The Body may invite the Chief of Staff, the General Staff and other relevant personnel of the Defence Forces (including civilian employees and/or civil servants working within the Defence Forces) to attend meetings of the Body to account for matters relevant to the Terms of Reference.
- i. Administrative arrangements shall be put in place between the secretariat of the Body and the Defence Forces regarding the provision of information before meetings of the Body.
- j. The Body may consult with officials from the Department of Defence and with any other party, including representative groups, that it considers necessary and appropriate to perform its functions under the Terms of Reference. This may include inviting relevant individuals to attend meetings of the Body.
- k. The Body may access any source of expertise that it considers necessary and appropriate to perform its functions under the Terms of Reference. This may include inviting persons with such expertise to attend meetings of the Body.
- l. The Body may consider matters referred to in the Terms of Reference as it considers appropriate and are not limited to those relevant recommendations of the Report or the report of the Commission on the Defence Forces.
- m. Recognising that there are a number of matters relating to the implementation of the Report recommendations that will be led by the Department of Defence and that are critical enablers to the role of the Body, such matters also fall within the scope of the Body
- n. The work of the Body is future-focused. The Body does not have a role in any recommendations of the Report not explicitly set out in this Terms of Reference. The Body is not charged with engaging in the fact-finding process recommended by the IRG in recommendation 4.1 of the Report which relates to *“mechanisms to address issues of a historical nature for former and serving members of the Defence Forces”*, which will be the subject of different processes.
- o. The Body shall have due regard to any criminal prosecution, currently in train or pending, that may be affected by its work.
- p. The Body shall note that the criminal investigation of any complaint of rape, sexual assault or aggravated sexual assault within the meaning of the Criminal Law (Rape) Amendment Act 1990, or indeed the criminal investigation of any complaint of the commission of any other criminal act, as such, falls outside the Terms of Reference and is properly a matter for An Garda Síochána and/or the Director of Military Prosecutions.

Appendix 1

Clause (4) states that part of the Terms of Reference for the Body are:

To oversee the implementation by the Defence Forces of certain recommendations, as set out in Appendix 1, contained in the High Level Action Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces dated 13 July 2022 as approved by Government.

This is set out in Table 1 below cross-referenced with the recommendation number outlined in the HLAP for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces dated 13 July 2022 as approved by Government.

HLAP Number	Recommendation
	Implementation of a comprehensive approach to Strategic HR within the Defence Forces with, in particular, the following enablers put in place:
13	The establishment of a Strategic HR Change Leadership Team, to be led by the externally recruited Head of Transformation;
14	The introduction of a talent management system and new career streams;
15	The conduct of a comprehensive exercise that maps current patterns of career progression and develops a career progression route map for all roles, starting with entry level and those roles that are experiencing higher attrition rates; and
16	All personnel should have a personal Continuous Professional Development plan and at least annual meetings with their commander to review their performance and competencies.
17	The development of an organisational leadership and development capability within the Defence Forces of the future to lead the transformation agenda.
18	The creation of a permanent training establishment and provision of greater flexibility for managers, within the overall establishment number, to allocate staff across formations and ranks.
19	Development and resourcing of remote and distance learning solutions to provide greater use of ICT-based training and education both in the home and from regional garrison locations or hot desks.
23	Re-development of promotion systems to ensure they are open, competitive and entirely merit-based, while the necessity for all officers and NCOs to undertake long career courses needs to be examined.
24	There should be objective, competitive selection processes designed for career course selection that recognise high performing individuals and avoids creating a 'box ticking' culture.
25	There should be equal emphasis and access to career training and professional military education for officers, NCOs and reservists.
26	Service specific courses need to be introduced at a junior and senior level, with joint courses and training where required at a senior level.
27	A practice should be developed of actively managing the retention of valuable members of the Defence Forces who have decided that promotion is not for them, or whose career stream has a restricted rank structure.
	A fundamental cultural change process, using the most up-to-date approaches, should be undertaken; and the Defence Forces should ensure early implementation of the following high profile immediate impact changes:
28	Creation of a full-time senior rank position of Gender Advisor (OF-5) with a dedicated staffing resource and full time co-ordinators for staff networks such as the Women's Network and the Defend with Pride group;
29	Creation of a mechanism to ensure there is female participation and input at all meetings at General Staff level (or the equivalent under the proposed new structures);
30	Full integration of all dining facilities, on land and at sea; and
31	Regular climate and continuous attitude surveys to assess morale, command climate and underlying culture on an ongoing basis.
	Development of expanded recruitment channels with objectives set for the recruitment and participation of under-represented groups, through:
32	Setting an overall female participation rate of 35% to be achieved through a combination of entry-level inductions (Cadet and General Service) and civilianisation, as well as direct entry into more senior, and specialist, positions across the organisation;
33	Consultation with the communities of under-represented groups to discuss the attractions and barriers to service in the Defence Forces;
35	Development of a profile of current serving personnel as an essential starting point to underpinning longer-term approaches to strategic HR and ensuring the Defence Forces is more reflective of the diversity of Irish society.

HLAP Number	Recommendation
	Consideration of the gender perspective should become mandatory in all aspects of decision making across the Defence Forces and particularly in relation to HR practices, promotion processes, procurement and development of infrastructure, including:
36	Immediate removal of gendered rules, regulations and standards that are unfavourable to women, and others who do not fit a perceived 'norm', including a review and modernisation of grooming standards for both men and women in line with trends in other armed forces and Irish society;
37	A guaranteed minimum female participation rate of 35% on all command and other relevant career courses by 2025;
38	Identification and removal of practices around access to promotion opportunities and courses which, in effect, indirectly discriminate against women or other groups such as, for example, primary carers;
39	Fitness standards should be reviewed and updated to ensure they are relative to accepted standards for females and modern military roles;
40	Women in the Defence Forces should be supplied with and have ready access, without delay or special request, to clothing and equipment that are designed for females and, as such, are fit for purpose;
41	Immediate extension of the Defence Forces' Women's Network to include female members of the Reserve; and
42	Establishment of a female mentoring programme to allow women in the Defence Forces to benefit from the experience of identified role models and mentors.
43	Gender, diversity and unconscious bias training should become mandatory across all ranks of the Defence Forces.
45	Implementation of an administrative solution without delay to enable the ODF to investigate complaints received more than 12 months after the date of the alleged action, or the date the complainant became aware of the alleged action.
46	Increased use of direct entry recruitment to fill specialist posts with appropriately adjusted training and physical fitness requirements.
	Urgent reform of existing working arrangements including:
47	Any necessary legislative and organisational changes to allow for flexible service and flexible work practices;
48	Extension and enhancement of existing family friendly policies to the greatest practicable extent, including for overseas postings, and recognition of the challenges faced by single parents and parents of children with disabilities, amongst others; and
49	Introduction of a non-financial 'labour hours budget' for all managers.
51	Establishment of an Officer Training Centre comprising the existing Cadet School and a new Officer Candidate School which would conduct Potential Officers Courses, Late Entry Officers Courses and Reserve Officers Courses every two years.
	The Defence Forces should develop a clear and focused recruitment plan, with clearly identified milestones and annual reviews, targeted at meeting the full establishment of the RDF within eight years to include recruitment of specialists, Combat Support and Combat Service Support personnel. A part of its recruitment plan, the Defence Forces should:
74	Ensure that the RDF fully reflects the diversity of contemporary Irish society;

Table 1: Implementation of HLAP Recommendations within Terms of Reference of the Body under Clause (4)

Clause (g) under section 'Other' notes that

For information only, the Independent Chair of the IOG will update the Body on the progress of the implementation of other elements of the High Level Action Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces

It is noted that progress in, and outcomes from, the implementation of other recommendations of the HLAP (beyond those set out in Table 1) are of the interest to the Body.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AC	Air Corps
AGS	An Garda Síochána
AR	Army Reserve
ARW	Army Ranger Wing
ATCA	Aid to the Civil Authority
ATCP	Aid to the Civil Power
C&A	Conciliation and Arbitration
C2	Command and Control
CARD	Co-ordinated Annual Review on Defence
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiation and Nuclear
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CHOD	Chief of Defence
CoDF	Commission on the Defence Forces
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSSO	Chief State Solicitor's Office
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs
DF	Defence Forces
DFDTT	Defence Forces Drugs Testing Team
DFHQ	Defence Forces Headquarters
DFPPB	Defence Forces Personnel Policy Branch
DFTC	Defence Forces Training Centre
DFWN	Defence Forces Women's Network
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
DOD	Department of Defence

EAS	Emergency Aeromedical Support
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDF	European Defence Fund
EDP	Equipment Development Plan
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
EPF	European Peace Facility
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Union Force
EUMS	European Union Military Staff
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
FLR	First Line Reserve
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GTF	Government Task Force
HLAP	High Level Action Plan
HLPPG	High Level Planning and Procurement Group
HQ	Headquarters
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IDP	Infrastructure Development Plan
IGEES	Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service
IRG	Independent Review Group
ISTAR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
IUNVA	Irish United Nations Veterans Association

J1	Human Resources Branch (DF)
JTF	Joint Task Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LMDS	Leadership, Management and Defence Studies
LOA	Level of Ambition
MATS	Ministerial Air Transport Service
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSPC	Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NCSC	National Cyber Security Centre
NECC	National Emergency Coordination Centre
NECG	National Emergency Coordination Group
NS	Naval Service
NSAC	National Security and Analysis Centre
NSR	Naval Service Reserve
ODF	Ombudsman for the Defence Forces
OEP	Office of Emergency Planning
OGCIO	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
OGP	Office of Government Procurement
ONE	Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann
OPW	Office of Public Works
ORA	Office of Reserve Affairs
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PDF	Permanent Defence Force
PDFORRA	Permanent Defence Forces Other Ranks Representative Association
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PfP	Partnership for Peace
POTUS	President of the United States
RACO	Representative Association of Commissioned Officers
RDF	Reserve Defence Forces
RDFRA	Reserve Defence Force Representative Association
RFT	Request for Tender
RhIB	Rigid-hulled inflatable boats
RoW	Redress of Wrongs
RTI	Research, Technology and Innovation
SCA	State Claims Agency
SDR	Software Defined Radio
SDR	Strategic Defence Review
SFPA	Sea Fisheries Protection Authority
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SMC	Strategic Management Committee
TTS	Trainee Technician Scheme
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation
WTE	Whole Time Equivalent

Notes



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Department of Defence