



Cumann na nIarl
Oifigeach Coimisiunta

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 15
AUTUMN 2008

*Continuing the fellowship established during service
in the Permanent Defence Forces*

14th Annual Annual General Meeting – McKee Barracks

The 2008 Annual General Meeting of the Association (see Notice and Agenda opposite) will be held on Saturday 11th October 2008. Again we encourage members to attend and avail of the opportunity to meet with your Executive Committee and renew old friendships.

This year to facilitate members travelling to Dublin by train we are holding the AGM at Mc Kee Barracks which will make access from Heuston Station more convenient. A lunch with wine (gratis) will be provided after the meeting.

The ARCO Sword for Best Cadet was presented by the President to Lt Kevin O' Reilly at the Commissioning Ceremony held in the Gymnasium, DFTC, on 16th January 2008. Kevin, who hails from Ballincollig, Co. Cork, has a Degree in Civil Engineering from UCC and a Masters in Transportation Engineering from the University of Southampton. He has previous military experience as a Lt with the 31st RAR, RDF. The ARCO Sword for the Best Cadet in the Air Corps was presented to Lt Peter Smyth at the Commissioning Ceremony in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell, on 19th June 2008. Peter, who hails from Donaghmede, Co. Dublin, has a BSc from NUI Maynooth and an MSc from DCU. We wish Kevin and Peter every success in their careers in the Defence Forces. Members of the Executive Committee continued to represent ARCO at various State and Defence Forces events during 2008. As a result of a request to the General Staff ARCO now have observer status on the CAOGA Board of Management. It is hoped that in due course this will lead to full membership on the Board with voting rights.

As you are aware a Bereavement Booklet was produced and issued to all members with their Spring Newsletter. In March the DOD activated the deduction of the annual subscription from member's pensions where authorisation was given. A submission was made in May on the Green Paper on Pensions on behalf of our members. A formal meeting has been held with RACO as agreed last year. A courtesy meeting with the Minister for Defence has been requested with a date to be arranged. ARCO have commissioned a brass

plaque with the names of those officers who served in UNOGIL, the first UN Mission undertaken by the DF. The plaque will be presented to the United Nations Training School Ireland in October. A copy of the minutes of the 13th AGM is enclosed for your information.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The 14th Annual General Meeting of the Association of Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO) will be held in the Auditorium, Defence Forces School of Catering, McKee Barracks, Blackhorse Avenue, D 7, on Saturday 11th October 2008 at 11.30 hrs

AGENDA

1. Opening Address by President, ARCO
2. Minutes of 13th AGM – 6/10/07
3. President's Report
4. Report of the Hon. Secretary
5. Report of the Hon. Treasurer to include audited A/Cs
6. Report of the Hon. Membership Secretary
7. Elections to Executive Committee
8. Appointment of Auditor
9. Any other business

Ken Kelly, Lt Col Droum,
Hon Secretary Leap,
ARCO Skibereen,
Sep 2007 Co. Cork
Tel: 028-34769, email: kayteekay@eircom.net

Attending the AGM? Need lunch?

Coffee will be available in the Officer's Mess from 1030hrs. A light lunch with wine (gratis) will be served after the meeting. Those wishing to partake of lunch are requested to notify the Hon. Secretary on or before 29th September.

- Don't forget to bring your ID card to facilitate your entry to the Barracks •

Not attending?

Apologies from those unable to attend will be read out on the day. These can be conveyed to Lt Col Ken Kelly, contact details above.

The Defence Forces in Chad

European Security and Defence Policy and Chad

The International Community is facing a large humanitarian emergency along the Chad-Sudan and Chad-Central African Republic (CAR) borders, caused principally by the long-lasting instability in Darfur. Relations between Chad and Sudan have been strained since 2003 when war broke out in Darfur, sending hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing across the Chadian border and sparking UN fears of a regional conflict. (See Comdt Bernard Markey's article in the Spring issue). The UN said recently that the death toll in Darfur from five years of war, famine and disease had reached 300,000. The Sudanese government in Khartoum says the toll is much lower. Eastern Chad and north-eastern CAR, is also the location of the Defence Forces latest overseas mission known by its French language designation, EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Chad is a large, remote, land-locked country in "the dead heart of Africa." Why are the Defence Forces deployed and what do we hope to achieve in this our first significant ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) mission? The story begins about ten years ago, when the European Union began to develop its Security and Defence Policy. War in Europe, unthinkable in the 1980s, was a grim reality in the 90s and resulted in NATO intervention, notably by the United States, to effectively address the crisis. Doubt and scepticism were expressed about Europe's ability to find the necessary resources, and to act effectively. The first step was to build a strategic command structure in Brussels, followed by the development of a European Security Strategy, and ultimately by developing military capabilities. ESDP is now a reality, with a series of successful missions and operations launched since 2003 from the Balkans to Afghanistan, and from Georgia to Congo.

Multidimensional Response

Like all Defence Forces deployments overseas, the Tchad/RCA mission is subject to the "triple lock". The Government and An Dáil approved the UN-mandated mission pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1778. This resolution authorises EUFOR to take "all necessary measures" to protect the estimated 400-500,000 refugees and IDPs in the area of operations that have fled violence affecting neighbouring Sudan's Darfur and parts of Chad over the past five years. The military force is authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Other actors in the region include UN agencies, the NGO community and UNAMID, the much larger hybrid UN-African Union mission in Darfur. The involvement of the UN Mission in Chad and Central African Republic (MINURCAT) and EU Commission funding of €13.1 million means it is a so-called "multidimensional model".

The planned 26,000-strong UN-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur is stalled because Sudan insists that African options must be fully explored before non-African contingents

can be considered and also - perhaps mainly - due to the hybrid force's internal problems.

Military Tasks

At time of writing, (mid-May 2008), eighteen countries provide personnel to EUFOR Tchad/RCA. The small EUFOR military force numbering 3,700 when fully deployed, "contributes within means and capabilities" to the development of a "safe and secure environment" enabling the UN, IOs and NGOs to operate in Chad and CAR. The military are tasked with "the protection of civilians, displaced persons and refugees; facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid and the protection of the UN personnel and facilities". The operation gives considerable assistance to MINURCAT, who are, or will be, co-located in EUFOR camps. MINURCAT when fully operational will have 300 instructors to train and mentor local police officers charged with securing the refugee camps. EUFOR therefore does not operate within the camps other than "in extremis".

On the Ground

The Defence Forces deployment follows a now familiar pattern; plans are developed and approved, Special Forces (ARW) are deployed, civilian engineers perform the initial site preparation, Irish military engineers, logisticians, CIS and other specialists build up a single military base before the main body of conventional forces deploys and commences operations. In addition to enabling conventional forces to deploy, Special Forces also play a critical role in preparing other stakeholders for the deployment of conventional forces. These stakeholders include the local population, the humanitarian community, and the IOs notably the big four, (UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and OCHA). UN organisations have developed procedures for practical co-operation with EUFOR; the same cannot be said for the more independent-minded of the thirty or so NGOs in the area who, it should be remembered, have a powerful political network. Some, such as Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) are reluctant to deal in any way with any military force, EUFOR included. Ironically, Dr Bernard Kouchner, the founder of MSF in the late 1960s, is currently the French Foreign Minister and a noted proponent of EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Kouchner was subsequently expelled from MSF and created another NGO, Medecins du Monde. From the humanitarian groups' perspective they must weigh up the level of co-operation with the military, too close and they risk compromising neutrality and impartiality, too far and they risk doing nothing. Perceptions that humanitarians have become affiliated with the military may impact negatively on the security of humanitarians. However, military security may be the only solution to provide humanitarian staff security.

The Deployment

The 97 Inf Bn will be joined by a small Dutch contingent with their Viking tracked vehicles. The Irish/Netherlands camp is located beside a dirt airstrip near the village of Goz Beida (pronounced Goz Bay-da) in the Dar Sila region, approximately



97th Infantry Battalion's Camp "Ciara" under construction.

200 km south of the Force HQ in Abéché and 70 km west of the Sudan border. It will be home to approximately 400 Irish soldiers who will rotate after four months. The Defence Forces also contribute personnel to the Operational HQ in Paris, where Lt Gen Pat Nash is based, and to both the Force HQ in Abéché and the Rear HQ in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, 750 km west of Abéché. A small National Support Element and a National Intelligence Cell are also deployed but not under EUFOR command. The operating base at Goz Beida is close to several camps for refugees from Darfur and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Chad. These camps are home to about half of the 180,000 IDPs in Chad and a quarter of the 285,000 refugees from Darfur. The 97 Inf Bn will therefore be at the heart of EUFOR's efforts to create the conditions for the voluntary settlement of IDPs in Dar Sila.

About Chad

Chad is roughly the same area as France and Germany combined, or 15 times that of Ireland. It is a former French colony; France still retains a permanent military presence there. The area of operations in eastern Chad and CAR is three times the size of Ireland. In the mid-1980s French forces helped to counter an invasion by Libya; today France continues to provide certain logistical, medical and intelligence support to the Chadian Armed Forces. French and Chadian Arabic are the common languages. The area is a melting pot and a hot spot for many reasons, historical, weather and climate, ethnic differences, old and new economic issues, religious and cultural differences, armed political opposition, banditry and external influences. There are intertwining conflicts in Chad, the Sudan and the Central African Republic with a virtual spider's web of shifting alliances and relationships; the strongest identity is perhaps that of tribe. Politics here is a topsy-turvy world where former rebels are ministers and former ministers are rebels. On 23 April 08, President Déby signed a decree appointing 27 ministers and nine secretaries of state. Three former rebels are now part of the government as minister for tourism, state secretary for defence in charge of war victims, and deputy secretary general for the government in charge of relations with the parliament. Meanwhile, two of Déby's nephews, the Erdimi twins, Tom and Timane, former insiders, now lead a rebel faction currently on the retreat.

In an area with few job opportunities, fighting for any of the factions is a rational economic decision. It also means that factions can be induced to change sides or "rally" by an offer of money, position, power or an appeal to kinship.

Rebels and government soldiers alike are usually integrated with their families during the rainy season and resume fighting in the dry. Many of these families live in the camps and are regularly visited by the men folk, an additional source of tension within the camps. In what my colleague Comdt Sean Gavin calls "Robin Hood in reverse", those with power or authority frequently prey on the poor for cattle, camels, or their pitiful possessions. The prime suspects for thefts of cash, satellite phones and vehicles are often those in authority with prior or inside knowledge. Despite its poverty and weak governance, Chad has been remarkably receptive to refugees from Darfur, both of the Congos and CAR. Local populations in eastern Chad, despite often abject poverty, are highly accommodating. Ethnic, linguistic and other affinities appear to overcome many difficulties.

Toro Boro and Janjaweed

The Toro Boro and Janjaweed are sometimes referred to in media reports. In eastern Chad the term Toro Boro refers to both Sudanese rebel groups and Chadian self defence groups that have received support, training or sponsorship from Sudanese rebels. Toro Boro, so called because they established bases in the hills of northern Chad, are sometimes used as local mercenaries by the Chadian army. The Janjaweed are several armed militias manipulated by Khartoum. Since 2003, Janjaweed are one of the main players in the Darfur conflict that has pitted the largely nomadic Arab-identifying Muslim Sudanese against the sedentary non-Arab Muslim population in the region in a battle over resources and land. By early 2006, many Janjaweed had been absorbed into the Sudan armed forces; meanwhile the Janjaweed expanded to include some Arab-speaking tribes in eastern Darfur. The Janjaweed operate frequently in the tri-border area of Chad, Sudan and CAR. Both Toro Boro and Janjaweed militias pillage and rob seemingly at will.

Another Viewpoint

Criticism of EUFOR's effectiveness has been expressed by some NGOs. The "European Union force deployed in February is not protecting them as it should" reads a report by OCHA. "Bandits act with complete impunity and are becoming increasingly daring," asserts Jennifer Rowell, deputy national director of CARE in Chad. EUFOR "came prepared to carry out the wrong war," contends Alsy Burger, CARE's programme director. "For EUFOR to protect humanitarian workers and vulnerable populations against the real threat of banditry, it needs light arms and more men on the ground." Clearly, the security situation has changed since the initial planning was conducted in 2007. EUFOR is a military force that does not face a military threat. Banditry and lawlessness are endemic and flourish in a security vacuum. The governments of Chad and CAR have primary responsibility for law and order in their sovereign territory. EUFOR is not a Gendarmerie and cannot be in all places at all times.

(Cont'd over...)

Lebanon, Liberia, Kosovo and Chad - Some Personal Comments

Peace enforcement missions differ in many ways from UNIFIL-type peacekeeping missions. In Chad, the Bn will operate from a single base; there will not be any permanent platoon or company bases or bunkers. Check points are operated in Kosovo but are not a feature of operations in Chad. There is an increased emphasis in Chad, as in Liberia previously, on platoon and company sized operations, long-range patrolling, intelligence driven and intelligence led operations, and use of air assets, both helicopters and tactical fixed-wing aircraft. The deployment to Liberia demonstrated Defence Forces' capability to deploy to a coastal country in West Africa, and to successfully conduct robust peace enforcement operations as the FHQ's Quick Reaction Force.

These operations were executed by land, air and sea over long distances in a malarial area, under frequent deluges of equatorial rain and in soaring temperatures. Assets were recovered at end of mission and the Defence Forces left Liberia and Sierra Leone with an enhanced international reputation and increased military capability. The deployment to Kosovo continues to illustrate our capacity to operate Kosovo-wide and perform as framework nation with PfP colleagues in a task force. This operation is conducted in the critical period between NATO military operations against the Kosovar Serbs and the birth and early life of Europe's newest nation. Again climate is a challenge with temperatures dropping to minus 20C in winter. EUFOR Tchad/RCA poses unique challenges; the commonly used term is "a challenging environment". Chad is remote with long supply lines. Overland convoys – it is stretching the point to call them road convoys – are estimated in days or weeks, not measured in hours or kilometres. In the past four months the temperatures are regularly 50C or more in the open. Conditions initially are basic for all EUFOR troops throughout Chad and CAR. Thanks to Government investment in people, equipment and training, today's soldiers are better prepared than any previously. It is a source of satisfaction and pride to see a military camp grow from the swamps of Liberia or the baking sands of the Chadian Sahel. It's a far cry from Bra Shit in 1982. The engineers, logisticians and CIS are the heroes of the hour. It is a continuing battle because Chad is tough on people and equipment, faults or weaknesses are

eventually exposed. Sustaining forces in the field in adverse environmental and climatic conditions over the distances involved with the means available is a unique challenge. During the three-month rainy season, areas will be isolated; vehicle movement will be curtailed and mere survival will sap resources. Nor should the psychological challenge be underestimated. On a more positive note, Chapter VII peace enforcement operations in Kosovo and Liberia have resulted in far fewer casualties than peacekeeping operations in Lebanon. It is everybody's earnest desire that all our troops return home safely at end of mission with enhanced reputation and increased capability to a nation that understands and values the difficulties and sacrifices involved.

The Future

EUFOR Tchad/RCA is described as a bridging force; the mandate will expire in March 2009. Uniquely, the EUFOR operation has an end date rather than an end state. EUFOR's mandate allows an extension of the one-year mission if this is deemed necessary and if the host states agree. However, in my opinion, there is little appetite among EU countries to do so. European military commitments in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan mean that EU member governments are reluctant to provide forces for additional foreign deployments. The mid-mandate review should identify the follow-on force, but what countries will provide the resources necessary? The growing demand for more "Blue Beret" troops is straining resources with nearly 90,000 deployed world-wide already. This is 10 per cent up on 2007 and an almost threefold increase, in terms of cash and troops, since 2003. There are about fifteen current missions in the field and competing demands for Darfur, Somalia (27,000 troops) and elsewhere. Re-hatting elements of the force as UN may be considered by Government and the Defence Forces.

This article does not necessarily reflect Defence Forces or EUFOR views.

About the author: Lt Col Brendan Geraghty has extensive overseas experience on UN, PfP and ESDP missions. In the past five years alone, he has served in Afghanistan, Liberia, Kosovo and Chad/Central African Republic.

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Correction

The editor would like to point out that in the 2008 Spring Newsletter he ascribed a DSM in error to Comdt Michael Lynch which should in fact have been a MMG with Distinction. Comdt Lynch was awarded this prestigious decoration for gallantry shown while recovering the bodies of UNTSO colleagues, including Comdt Michael Nestor, who were killed in a landmine incident in the Lebanon in 1982 including .

Editor's Note

The Newsletter is issued in Spring and Autumn. Articles or items of interest are always welcome. If you have something to contribute please send it to the Editor at melucey@hotmail.com or by post to Col M.E Lucey (Retd) 228 Grange Rd., Rathfarnham, D16.

Welcome to ARCO's new members:

Col Rory Campion	Cdr (NS) Gerry O' Flynn
Col Colm Doyle	Lt Cdr (NS) Noel Lacey
Col Paddy Mc Nally	Lt Cdr (NS) John O' Halloran
Col Don O' Keefe	Comdt Robert Carroll
Col Dominic Timpson	Comdt Pat Healy
Lt Col Donal Bracken	Comdt Terence Mc Namara
Lt Col Myles Cassidy	Comdt Patrick Murphy
Lt Col Martin Egan	Comdt Pat O' Brien
Lt Col Aidan Flanagan	Capt Denis Cronin
Lt Col Sean Kennedy	Capt Martin Doyle
Lt Col John Kirke	Lt (NS) Adrian Hickey
Lt Col Pat Muldoon	Capt Martin Reidy
Cdr (NS) Patrick Mc Nulty	

Annual Subscription – Deduction from Pension

Those members who did not avail of this facility are requested to consider using it for paying their annual subscription. This facilitates the Hon Treasurer in his task of collecting and recording subscriptions. The Authorisation Form for Deduction can be found on the ARCO website www.iarco.info and returned by freepost to A.R.C.O. P.O. Box 10414 FREEPOST F4129, D6W.

Towards 2016

The final payment of 2.5% for the above agreement is due to be paid from 1 September 2008.

ACCO Bereavement Booklet

Current members of ARCO will have received a copy of the Bereavement Booklet enclosed with the Spring 2008 Newsletter and some were also forwarded to recently bereaved spouses.

In feedback that we have received to date, the document has been welcomed and appreciated. It was produced as part of one of our main objectives of providing support to the spouses and partners of Officers who have passed on.

Of necessity, given that ARCO is run by a voluntary Executive Committee, the Bereavement Booklet is of an advisory nature intended as a template of how bereaved relatives might proceed in the traumatic time preceding and following the demise of a loved one.

IN PARTICULAR, WE STONGLY ADVISE THAT, IN ALL MATTERS RELATING TO WILLS, POWERS OF ATTORNEY AND ASSIGNATION OF POWERS, COMPETENT AND APPROPRIATE LEGAL ADVICE IS OBTAINED BY MEMBERS, THEIR EXECUTORS, RELATIVES AND ALL OTHERS INVOLVED IN SUCH PROCESSES.

Official Launch of ARCO Bereavement Booklet in HQ 2nd Eastern Brigade



L-r: Comdt M. O'Byrne, Col R. Heaslip, Col J. Mortell, Brig Gen D. Murphy, GOC 2 E. Bde, Col M. Lucey, Comdt B. McDonnell, Lt Col J. Ahern.

Defence Forces Assistance

ARCO would like to acknowledge the assistance received from the Defence Forces Printing Press in printing the Bereavement Booklet. The product and print quality was of a very high quality and complimented its content.

CAOGA – Change of Address

Retained Members of CAOGA are reminded to notify the Secretary of CAOGA should they change their home address.
(Secretary/Treasurer Comdt Michael Delaney,
DFHQ, Parkgate, D 8 Tel 01-8042785/6)

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-Anamacha Deceased Officers

Our condolences to the families and friends of those who passed away since our last Newsletter went to print:

Capt Henry Howard	6 March	2008
Col Jack Duggan	22 March	2008
Fr John Mahon CF	06 May	2008
Capt Tom Blennerhassett	13 May	2008
Comdt Jarlath Gibbons	24 May	2008
Comdt Joe O' Keefe	30 June	2008
Col Mort Buckley	01 July	2008
Lt Col Tom O' Boyle DSM	11 July	2008
Lt Col Daniel Delaney	31 July	2008
Col John Burke	11 August	2008

Spouses and children's Contributory Pension Scheme

This scheme, previously called Widows and Orphans Pension Scheme, was introduced for Officers of the PDF from 23 July 1968 to 31 December 1970. During that period all serving officers were permitted to join the scheme. Female Officers were afforded the opportunity to join during the period 1 July 1984 to 31 December 1984.

All male Officers commissioned after 1st January 1971, and female Officers commissioned after 1st January 1985, are automatically members of the scheme.

The scheme was amended in 1985 for two primary reasons;

1. To cover marriage after retirement.
2. To cover children born outside marriage.

An officer, who joined before the scheme became compulsory, will know they are members by the deductions from salary shown in your monthly cheque, while in service. Also most officers who are retired would have had a sum deducted from their gratuity to make up the balance of 40 years payments.

However, what is NOT obvious is whether an officer, who joined the scheme before it was amended in 1985, is in fact covered by the amendment. It would appear that a circular was sent to



each officer inviting them to opt into or out of the amended scheme. ARCO has not yet confirmed how this circular was distributed. It would appear, based on the information available to us at this time, that the only record of whether an officer who was in this scheme prior to the amendment in 1985 is in fact in the amended scheme, is a letter on each officer's file in Pay Section in Galway.

Under current practice if an officer marries after retirement, or has a child outside of marriage, and that officer is NOT in the amended scheme his surviving widow or qualified child would NOT receive a pension.

Therefore if you were commissioned before 1986 and are a member of this scheme and are concerned about either part of the ammendment, you should check with Pension Section in Galway to ensure your acceptance is on file. (Pension Section, DOD, Renmore, Galway. 091-743700).

The Wind of Change in the Pensions World

In the world of pensions the present generation of public service retirees are perhaps a privileged and disappearing cohort. In more austere times, before the arrival of free education, unprotected international trade and finally the Celtic Tiger, a permanent and pensionable job was the ambition of many fortunate enough to garner the necessary education to acquire such a 'Holy Grail'.

As less benign economic circumstances overtake us, the burden which pensions place on the productive sectors of society has come under close scrutiny. The reason is of course the increasingly older age profile of the Irish population brought about by longer life expectancy and lower birth rates. Heightened competition from low pay economies has made private sector employers less willing to accept the long-term liability of pension provision for their employees. Defined benefit schemes are becoming rarer and there is a shift towards defined contribution schemes in which the individual employee shares the investment risks with the employer and the final rewards depend on the level of contribution and the vagaries of the stock market. There has also been a growing stream of critical commentary from employer organisations and others of what they regard as the unjustifiably favourable terms of

defined benefit public service pension schemes. The Government have been taking steps to cope with the impending increase in pension liabilities for some years and in 2001 they established the National Pensions Reserve to help provide for social welfare and public service pensions. The funding for this comes directly from taxation and probably increases the animus of the private sector towards public sector pensions.

Last year the Government published the Green Paper on Pensions with a view to adapting the pensions system to modern conditions. The paper concerns itself with setting out issues related to the adequacy, and sustainability of the Irish pension system in the context of demographic change and changes in the labour market. An adequate pension is considered to be around 50% of retirement income. Nearly half the workforce has made inadequate or no private pension provision and a major objective of the Green Paper is to stimulate discussion on methods of extending pension provision through voluntary or mandatory schemes.

Sustainability is a dominant feature of the chapter in the Green Paper devoted to the Public Service and it makes a number of suggestions for reducing the overall cost of pensions including the raising of retirement ages, increasing the rate of pension contributions and removing fast accrual terms. The proposal which would modify the 'pay parity' basis for post-retirement

Presentation of ARCO Sword at Army Commissioning



L-r: Lt Gen D. Earley, COS, Mr Willie O'Dea T.D., Minister for Defence, Col M. Lucey, President, Lt Col Joe Mulligan, Commandant Cadet School, Lt Kevin O'Reilly.

Presentation of ARCO Sword at Air Corps Commissioning



L-r: Lt Peter Smyth, Lt Gen D. Earley, COS, Brig Gen R. James, GOC AC, Mr Willie O' Dea T.D., Minister for Defence, Col M. Lucey, President.

(Pensions World Article cont'd . . .)

increases in pensions is the one which might have the most immediate and detrimental effect on the incomes of existing pensioners. The direct linkage between pensions and pay is the surest method of maintaining the income levels of retired officers and the importance of the retaining of this arrangement is heavily emphasised in the ARCO submission on the Green Paper.

The changed approach in Government circles to public service pensions was also marked by the direction given to the Public Service Benchmarking Body and the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Service to consider the benefit conferred by the superannuation arrangements available to public servants in the course of their deliberations. Both Bodies responded by reducing the recommended salaries of those under their remit to take account of the higher value of public service pensions over their private sector equivalents.

The pension conditions which applied to commissioned Permanent Defence Forces Officers were unique in the manner in which they were calculated and in the relatively young ages at which payment could commence. A commissioned officer could start collecting the full pension for his rank at retirement after twenty years service. However, legislation enacted in 2004 brought the terms of Defence Force Officers' pensions closer to those prevailing in the public service generally. A minimum age of fifty has been set at which pensions may be paid to new entrants, accrual takes place on annual basis and entitlement to full pension is reached after thirty years service.

The Green Paper describes the current pension system as a tripartite arrangement between State, employers and individuals. The role of these stake holders is the stuff of the debate that is now taking place. While the Green Paper commits the Government to providing public servants with good quality pension arrangements, some of the reforms which they have introduced to date indicate a preference to follow the private sector in shifting a greater deal of the responsibility for pension provision to the individual.

Note: The ARCO submission on the Green Paper on Pensions may be accessed at <http://www.pensionsgreenpaper.ie/>
Lt Col J. Ahern (Retd)

DEFENCE FORCES Annual Gala Concert

**Saturday 18th October,
8 P.M.**

Featuring

**Bands of the Defence Forces and
The Carlow Young Artists Choir
*in aid of***

**Defence Forces Benevolent Fund
& Soldiers Aid Fund**

Tickets: €25

BOOKINGS:

National Concert Hall:

Tel. 01 417 0000 /

Fax. 01 475 1507

Website: www.nch.ie

Cathal Brugha

Booking Office: Tel. 01 8046296

**(Opening Monday
22nd September)**

Medical Matters . . .



Prostate Disease

I am always a little amused by the term "Men's Health", which we all know is a euphemism for "Be aware of the signs of prostate disease" This, of course, is very good advice to all middle aged men. Being aware of the early symptoms and being prepared to follow up on them promptly is undoubtedly the best way to minimise months or years of silent anxiety and worry and to give your medical advisers the best chance of achieving an optimal cure.

The normal Prostate Gland is about one inch in diameter and it is located just below the bladder in males. The urethra, or water passage, from the bladder out through the penis, flows through it. The gland itself is part of the male genital structure. It secretes prostatic fluid which provides most of the volume of semen.

There are three kinds of problems that may occur with the prostate gland, Prostatitis, Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BHP) and Prostate Cancer.

Prostatitis means inflammation of the prostate and this is almost always caused by a bacterial infection. It may be acute or chronic and the source of the infection may be a sexually transmitted disease, such as Chlamydia or Gonorrhoea, or it may be caused by bacteria, such as E coli, which have entered the urethra from the skin or bowel. The symptoms of prostatitis are generally pain at the base of the penis, pain with ejaculation, burning passing water, passing water frequently and/or a discharge from the tip of the penis. Once the appropriate tests have been done and diagnosis is made, treatment is simple enough, usually a course of antibiotics that is likely to last for four to six weeks.

Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy is a swelling of the prostate, resulting from an increase

in the size of all the cells of the gland under the influence of the male hormone, testosterone. The condition occurs mostly in men over 50 years of age and it is the commonest form of prostate disease. As the gland swells there is increasing pressure on the water-passage and its bore may become progressively narrowed and ultimately obstructed. Symptoms of BPH are usually difficulty starting to pass water, diminished power of the stream, dribbling afterwards, not being able to empty the bladder properly, a resulting feeling of wanting to pass water frequently and having to get up several times a night. Essential first steps are to avoid large volume drinks such as beer, coffee (because caffeine is a diuretic) and drinking fluids late in the evening. Decongestants and antihistamines may aggravate the symptoms as they can increase the tone of the bladder wall. Many cases can be managed with medicines that reduce the tone of the bladder wall and others that slowly reduce the size of the prostate cells. In more severe cases surgical treatment by removal of the prostate gland, either through the water passage or by open operation through the lower abdominal wall. Complications of the surgery that are of concern to most patients are:

- Retrograde ejaculation, in about 75% of cases, (whereby the ejaculate passes back into the bladder, resulting in "dry ejaculation" and loss of fertility).
- Loss of complete bladder control, leaking urine especially when there is increased pressure with lifting or sneezing, occurs in about 5% of cases.
- Impotence, or erectile dysfunction (ED), which may not be helped by medicines developed for ED.
- The need for repeat surgery at some later date.

Prostate Cancer is the commonest form of cancer in men. It will affect about 1 in 15 men at some time in their lives. It is uncommon under 50 years of age and its cause is unknown, though there is a slightly increased incidence among male relatives of sufferers. The symptoms are similar to those of BPH.

Col M. Collins M.D., (Retd)

Diagnosis is initiated by performing a Prostatic Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test and a manual examination of the prostate. This may be followed by a needle biopsy and diagnostic imaging by specialists.

The progress of prostate cancer can be variable. It may be aggressive in some cases and is often very slow, especially in older patients. Treatment in slowly progressive cases is generally limited to hormone therapy to reduce the effects of testosterone, as this is sufficient to further delay the progress of the disease so that it does not affect normal life expectancy. More aggressive prostate cancer may require surgery, radiotherapy or hormone therapy, or combinations of these treatments. A recently published report on a trial using a new drug that shrinks prostate tumours, conducted by the UK Institute of Cancer Research, is very promising for the addition of a new treatment to those currently available, though much bigger studies will now have to be undertaken.

The use of PSA screening for prostate cancer in men has been controversial for some years. It is not an ideal screening test because, despite its name, it is not specific. It does not give a diagnostic, or "Yes or No", answer and results above or below the "normal" level can give false positive and false negative results. The great value of the PSA level is when it changes significantly. It is the policy of the DF Medical Corps to check PSA levels at the Annual Medical examination in all males over 40 years, thus providing a baseline figure for each individual and, of course, monitoring for change on an annual basis. It would be the advice of this writer that members of ARCO should ask their GP to continue to conduct this simple blood test annually. It may ultimately result in your having some further tests which prove to be a false alarm - but better to catch the commonest male cancer as early as possible!



Should you suffer from any of the above conditions you are advised to consult your G.P.



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