

Statement of Concern from the Association of Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO) on the serious deterioration of conditions of service and the depletion of strategic defence capabilities in the Defence Forces.

The Association of Retired Commissioned Officers feels obliged to express its deep concern at the progressive deterioration of the conditions of service of members of the Defence Forces, and its dramatic impact on depleting the strategic capabilities required to deliver the Government's taskings, in the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service.

The Permanent Defence Force is currently struggling to cope with the continuous exodus of trained and experienced personnel of all ranks. The resulting depletion of leadership echelons and corporate military knowledge, is leading to a further strategic deterioration of defence capabilities, caused by the inability to retain personnel across all ranks having the necessary skills and competencies, and the challenges encountered with attracting appropriate personnel to the Defence Forces.

It is regrettable that the loyalty, commitment, contribution and immense personal sacrifices made by personnel in implementing the strategic downsizing and reorganization of the Defence Forces, is undermined and negated by the lack of meaningful Government action in providing appropriate remuneration and enduring conditions of service for personnel of Óglaigh na hÉireann.

For many who served in the years that led to the establishment of the Gleeson Commission, it is extraordinary that we are witnessing a return to a similar set of circumstances by way of active protest undertaken by retired personnel, and the families of serving personnel, highlighting unsatisfactory Defence Forces remuneration and conditions of service.

ARCO is calling on the Minister to ensure there is a meaningful engagement between the Department of Defence, the Military Authorities and Representative Associations to identify and develop policies that will address, without delay, the serious retention and remuneration issues that are undermining the Defence Forces operational readiness, coupled with the morale and well-being of its personnel.

Issued 16 September 2018