



Representative Association of Commissioned Officers
Cromhlachas Ionadaitheach na nOifigeach Coimisiúnta



15 August 2018

Reference 'A': Correspondence from PSPC dated 09 August 2018.

Mr. Kevin Duffy,
Chairman
Public Service Pay Commission,
Stephens Green House,
Dublin 2

Dear chair,

1. The Association welcomes the Pay Commission initiative in conducting the 'Engage to Change' study of Defence Forces specialist staff streams. The Association is happy to assist in the communication of the study, and has communicated with all members, encouraging those relevant technical officers to engage fully.
2. As of yet, RACO has not been advised on the content of the Defence Sector Management's (Military and Dept of Defence) submission to the Commission. Based on the range of appointments targeted in the study (selected specialists only), the Association can only assume either that Defence Sector Management did not identify retention issues in the staffing of organisation "line appointments" or that the Pay Commission did not see merit in the case presented on behalf of this cohort of essential management.
3. In our latest submission to the Public Service Pay Commission, RACO clearly identified the range of ongoing challenges with respect to recruitment and retention of Defence Forces commissioned officers, to include Formation/Corps line and specialist appointments. RACO contends that inadequate "trained manning levels" are compromising the wellbeing of personnel while simultaneously increasing the risk in the conduct of operations, compromising optimal governance in unit command and administration while clearly forcing the continued exodus of experienced staff to more favourable employment in the public and private sectors.
4. In consideration of the Association's comprehensive submission, supported by recent survey publications (University of Limerick Climate Survey, the Association would like to stress that the recruitment and retention difficulties are not limited to those specialist streams identified in your target survey. The Association members contend that all Defence Forces streams and cohorts should be fully considered in the deliberations of the PSPC.
5. It is an indisputable fact that overall Defence Force numbers (line and specialist stream) continue to decline despite unprecedented efforts and allocated resources at recruitment in the face of the continued exodus of trained professionals. This statement is supported by data analytics both presented in our submissions and

available more recently from the Defence Sector. The result of the Defence Forces' inability to retain trained professionals is an organisation that is failing to maintain functional and safe manning levels. Where Management's sole focus continues to be on the function of recruitment and initiatives to increase numbers entering the Defence Forces, the deliberate failure to address retention is compromising the entire HR function, "No amount of water will fill a leaky bucket".

6. The Defence Sector's failed attempts to address the continued HR crisis have focused entirely on panicked recruitment of new entrants into military service. Retention of trained and serving line and specialist personnel has been largely ignored, despite the ongoing brain-drain at middle management level. Initiatives to reduce the established benchmarks of entry standards, training standards and timelines have been introduced. Removal of full security clearance measures by the Garda Síochána, the reduction in Recruit and Cadet basic training timelines and the recent dilution of psychometric testing requirements were also introduced with the objective of increasing numbers rapidly. *Recent replies to parliamentary questions indicate that these measures have had no medium or long-term impact other than to potentially expose the organisation to greater operational and organisational risk.*
7. The cycle of dysfunctional turnover of staff in the Defence Forces, as referenced by University of Limerick researchers in the Climate Survey Report, continues unabated. This holds true for both line and specialist streams. In its 2nd submission to the Commission, RACO clearly identified claims and recommendations for changes to military service conditions, all of which have proven successful in the recent past in retaining and maintaining essential and adequate staff levels (Annexes A-H). Many of these claims are assessed as 'cost neutral', particularly when the cost of failing to retain the relevant skillsets and experience is considered. RACO requests that the Commission fully considers the implications of the current "manning levels" across the Defence Forces while additionally addressing the cost benefit requirements of previously proven retention initiatives which factor the unique service conditions for Defence Force employees.
8. As the 'Engage to Change' study commences, RACO would welcome the opportunity to meet again with the Commission to discuss our submission (Feb 2018) and assist in the development of "fit for purpose" military recruitment and retention policies across all cohorts of the DF. *The Gleeson Commission Report on Defence Forces Pay (1990) is as relevant today as it was when first published to address similar circumstances.*

Yours sincerely,



P.P.

Lieutenant Colonel Earnán Naughton
RACO General Secretary