

DEFENCE POLICY PAPER
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Securing Ireland in an Uncertain World



YOUNG FINE GAEL



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Securing Ireland in an Uncertain World

YFG warmly welcomes the defence discussion document **“Defending Our Common European Home”** launched by our party’s four MEPs in Dublin in March 2018.

As the youth wing of the party, we have been calling for greater debate on Ireland’s defence policy for some time. YFG has always been a firm supporter of increased European defence and security integration. We have twice passed motions at our summer schools calling on the government to join NATO.

At our national conference in 2016 in Ballinasloe, we overwhelmingly passed two defence related motions which are both now official YFG policy. The first called for the removal of the triple-lock mechanism and its replacement with a double-lock mechanism requiring only Government and Dáil approval for the deployment of Irish troops overseas.

The second called for greater military support to be given by the Irish Government to France in the wake of the November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks. In YFG’s pre-budget submission to the Minister for Finance, we devoted an entire section to defence which called for a major increase in defence spending.

Most recently, at our national conference in March 2018 in Ballykisteon, we unanimously passed a motion calling on the Government to significantly increase pay for low-ranking Defence Forces personnel which is now also official YFG policy.

Building on that motion, YFG launched a major national campaign entitled **‘Pay Our Troops’** in August 2018 which called for full pay restoration for all defence forces personnel to pre-2008 levels.

As part of our campaign we gathered signatures for our petition which received over 11,400 signatures and was presented to Minister with Special Responsibility for Defence Paul Kehoe in October 2018.

We are delighted that prominent members of the senior party have now also made a similar contribution to the calls for a better resourced Irish defence policy.

We also believe one of its fundamental principles should be **defending our common European home**. We are further delighted that many of our MEPs suggestions have also previously been suggested by YFG, such as the removal of the triple-lock mechanism and improving pay and working conditions for our Defence Forces personnel.

In this document, we wish to show our complete agreement with all ten of our MEPs’ key proposals, by developing and expanding on them and emphasising what we believe should be the top priorities in a new, more ambitious Irish defence policy.

We also wish to argue that no defence policy will be effective unless the Government ends the current retention crisis in the Defence Forces by **fully restoring pay for all personnel to pre-2008 levels and improving working conditions in the force**.

Eoin Scarlett
Young Fine Gael Dublin Regional Organiser



How Ireland can support the emerging creation of a European Defence Union

YFG firmly believes that Ireland's place is within the emerging European Defence Union. The Government's decision to join PESCO was a huge step towards ensuring this. However, now that the Government has indicated a preference to be part of the emerging European Defence Union by joining PESCO, we must ensure that we participate to the fullest extent possible in this project. By doing so we can help shape it for the better.

The following are YFG's proposals for how Ireland can support the emerging creation of a European Defence Union.

1**OPT-INTO MORE CURRENT AND FUTURE PESCO PROJECTS**

The Government should opt into more of PESCO's current projects. Projects such as 'Euroartillery' which the state does not currently participate in are great initiatives which the Defence Forces would significantly benefit from. We should also join more future projects than we have for the first PESCO project cycle, especially as they are likely to be more ambitious.

2**INCREASE OUR COMMITMENT TO CSDP OVERSEAS MISSIONS**

The Government should endeavour to increase the Defence Forces' commitment to EU overseas operations and missions run under the common security and defence policy (CSDP). More troops should be provided to missions such as EUTM in Mali. The Government should also seriously consider deploying a Naval Service ship on the EU NAVFOR anti-piracy operation in Somalia, Operation Atalanta. If and when new, larger EUFOR overseas operations commence the Defence Forces should be allowed make a big contribution to them, as they did when they led the EUFOR Chad/CAR operation in 2008. This is especially relevant as increased EU overseas missions, especially EUFOR operations, are one of PESCO's key objectives. A potential cost saving measure for this could be to re-deploy some Irish troops to these CSDP missions from low intensity UN peacekeeping missions that our troops are currently deployed on.

3 WORK TO DEVELOP THE EU BATTLEGROUPS

Ireland can help the EU in its efforts to make the battlegroups a more effective and deployable force.

Firstly, we can provide a bigger commitment of troops to the battlegroups we are involved in, the Nordic battlegroup and the German-led battlegroup. More importantly, we should support the efforts of the commission to overcome the legal constraints that have prevented the battlegroups deploying so far. We must also be an advocate for the possible deployment of the battlegroups within the EU in a similar operation to NATO's 'Enhanced Forward Presence' which provides support to eastern European member states worried about increased Russian aggression. We should also advocate for the possible creation, through PESCO, of new types of EU Battlegroups, such as naval and air support battlegroups capable of standalone operations or supporting the traditional battlegroups.

4 REPLACEMENT WITH A DOUBLE-LOCK MECHANISM

We welcome one of the ten recommendations of our MEPs which was to remove the triple-lock. However, we think we need to go a step further and after removing the triple-lock replace it with a double-lock mechanism requiring only Government approval and a normal Dáil majority. It is also worth bearing in mind that the triple-lock currently only applies to the deployment of more than twelve personnel overseas, deployment of twelve or less personnel overseas requires Government approval only. We think this clause should be extended to the deployment of twenty or less personnel only requiring Government approval. This would enable the state to deploy specialised troops such as the Army Ranger Wing or intelligence personnel such as those from J2 more quickly to respond effectively to a rapidly evolving security incident. Most importantly, however, removal of the triple-lock would enable Ireland to better participate in CSDP overseas operations and would remove what YFG sees as an intolerable burden on our country's sovereignty.

5 ALLOCATE THE ROLE OF ACCOUNTING OFFICER OF THE DF TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF

The role of Accounting Officer is hugely important in any organisation as this person decides how the budget an organisation receives is spent. Currently the role of Accounting

Officer for the DF is assigned to the Secretary-General of the Department of Defence. This is in contrast to the Gardai where this role is assigned to the Garda Commissioner. We believe that in order to give the Defence Forces a greater say in defence policy in Ireland and shift the power balance between the Department of Defence and the DF, this role should be assigned to the Chief of Staff of the DF.

6 LOBBY FOR QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING (QMV) ON FOREIGN POLICY AT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The Irish Government should lobby within the EU for QMV on foreign policy decisions at the European Council. Several EU leaders including Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel and Sebastian Kurz have already called for this and the Irish Government should now do the same. QVM on foreign policy would allow the EU to undertake more CSDP overseas missions and allow EU member states who are keen to enhance defence co-operation to advance with their plans while those who do not wish to participate can opt-out.

7 GREATER INTEGRATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF DEFENCE

The present system for administering defence in Ireland is out of date and puts a disproportionate amount of the decision-making power in the hands of the civilian administration, the DoD, than in comparable Western countries. Greater integration and more shared decision making between the civilian and military defence administrators is therefore necessary. This can be achieved by DF personnel taking up roles within the DoD and DoD staff taking up roles within DFHQ. Retired DF officers could also have an opportunity to take up positions in some branches of the DoD. This would help break down barriers between the DF and DoD, increase efficiency and create a shared decision making process.

8 REVIEW THE 2012 RE-ORGANISATION OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

The Government should allow an independent expert review of the 2012 re-organisation be carried out. This would help respond to criticism from many retired personnel, PDFORRA and RACO of the 2012 re-organisation of the Army from a three brigade to a two-brigade structure. An independent expert review could issue its recommendation to the Government on what the most effective structure for the Army would be.



Spending priorities for a significantly increased national defence budget

In their discussion document, our MEPs state clearly that Ireland's national defence budget must be significantly increased.

We strongly agree with this. One of the best recommendations put forward in the discussion document is the creation of a National Security Council (NSC) which instead of the out of date ten-year white paper method, would meet bi-annually and would set out the national defence policy options to the Government and the Minister for Defence.

HOWEVER, in order for any more ambitious defence policy to be effectively implemented there will have to be a significant increase to the national defence budget. We welcome the funding allocated to defence in the Government's new ten-year capital investment plan, but unfortunately this does not go nearly far enough. Irish defence spending is still per capita the among the lowest in the EU.

For too long Irish defence policy and the Irish Defence Forces have been severely limited by chronic underinvestment. This changed during the Celtic Tiger years but recent severe cutbacks during the economic downturn risk a return to the underinvestment seen in preceding decades. Fine Gael as the party of law and order, and the party with by far the closest connection to the Irish Defence forces and most support among its members, must be the party which changes this. The following are our proposals for what the spending priorities of an increased national defence budget should be.

FULL PAY RESTORATION AND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

As of September 2018 there were 8,880 personnel in the Permanent Defence Forces (PDF), including approximately 600 personnel deployed overseas and a further 600 in training. This situation is putting our national security at serious risk. Numbers in the force are so low that the Defence Forces is struggling to carry out basic operational requirements. A bare minimum of 9,500 personnel in the PDF must be maintained and as our MEPs argue in their document this number should be increased to above 10,000 personnel given the current good economic climate.

Poor pay levels are causing a retention of personnel crisis in the force as experienced personnel leave for the private sector. In the last 4 years, 30% of the Defence Forces' overall strength has left the force, 77% of which were early retirements. It is also leading to deteriorating working conditions as the lack of personnel means that other personnel are having to be re-deployed around the country at very short notice and for protracted times away from their home units to fill gaps in other units. The recent large recruitment campaigns have received an excellent reaction with large numbers of young people applying.

However, the fact that the Government is running one of the largest recruitment campaigns in the history of the state, with a highly positive uptake, and yet is still failing to merely retain the level of PDF personnel at 9,500, shows just how bad the situation is. This does not even consider the much-needed increase in personnel which our MEPs have rightly called for. Retention is more important than recruitment, as it does not matter how highly trained new recruits are, nothing can instantly replace the years of experience which are lost by personnel leaving the force.

A moral contract exists between the state and its Defence Forces. The basis of that is that the Defence Forces will carry out all duties assigned to them by the state as effectively as they can, such as helping to defend our common European home, and in return the state will look after personnel and their families. That moral contract has been broken by the state. We call directly on the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence to immediately renew that contract by **fully restoring pay for all personnel to pre-2008 levels and improving working conditions in the force. YFG also calls for full implementation of the EU working time directive for the Defence Forces.** The Government should also explore the possibility of, coupled with pay increases, providing welfare benefits such as medical cards to personnel and their families.

The following are YFG's priorities for spending on new equipment as outlined in our 2018 pre-budget submission. This was the work of three members of YFG, Eoin Scarlett, Domhnall Ryan and Jimmie Byrne.



Army



1 THE FORMATION OF A TIER 2 SPECIAL FORCES UNIT

Ireland should form another Special Forces unit, a Tier 2 unit which would be on hand to assist the Army Ranger Wing, and to carry out operations of its own if needed. This would be similar to the SAS Reserve. Countries such as the US and the UK have heavily invested in Tier 2 units, and we believe that Ireland needs such a unit in order to effectively respond to the threats posed by international terrorism, as well as to assist our units participating in operations overseas.

3 THE RBS 70 AIR-DEFENCE SYSTEM EITHER BE REPLACED, OR SUBSTANTIALLY UPGRADED

The RBS 70 air-defence system has been in service since 1981, and we no longer feel that it is fit for purpose. We agree with the White Paper's recommendation that it either be substantially upgraded or replaced, and we advocate that this take place as soon as possible.

4 FORMATION OF A GUARD SERVICE

Guard duty, while an integral part of military duty, is also wasting valuable personnel that would be far better utilised elsewhere. We propose that a new Guard Service be set up, composed of RDF and recently retired PDF personnel, thereby freeing up PDF personnel for training and operational purposes. Other countries such as the UK currently successfully operate a guard service.

5 MORE MRV AND CRV MOWAGS

The Medium Reconnaissance Variant of the MOWAG APC is currently the heaviest armour available to the Defence Forces. With the retirement of the Scorpion fleet, it is imperative that the PDF have sufficient firepower to be able carry out their overseas duties effectively. As well as this, more Close Reconnaissance Vehicles should be purchased to enlarge the armoured fleet, enabling more CRV MOWAGs be deployed overseas and used at home for training purposes. We also advocate that some of the Army's existing CRVs be fitted with the TOW missile system as they have the potential to do.

6 ENHANCEMENT OF DF'S ELECTRONIC WARFARE CAPABILITIES

As recent political events in America have proven, the growing threat of cyber warfare cannot be ignored. In order to combat this, the DF needs to expand its electronic warfare capabilities. This should be done through the Irish ISTAR task force embedded with the EU Battlegroups, as the integration with our European allies will enhance our capabilities significantly. The investment in cyber capability as outlined in the White Paper through the Computer Emergency Response Team must be continued.



Air Corps

1

PURCHASE AND OPERATION OF MILITARY STANDARD PRIMARY RADARS AS PER THE 2015 WHITE PAPER ON DEFENCE

The recent Russian bomber activity in Irish controlled airspace has brought the need for this capability into sharp relief, both from the perspectives of sovereignty and air safety.

We should be able to keep track, as practically every other European country does, of who exactly is using both our territorial airspace and that further out to sea for which we provide air traffic control services. The latter is of particular importance as aircraft with their transponders (devices that broadcast an aircraft's location, altitude and heading) turned off, as the Russian Air Force craft did, are invisible on civilian radar screens. Primary radars, as used by the military, do not rely on transponders and so can detect uncooperative aircraft that may otherwise pose a collision hazard or worse.

2

INCREASE FROM THREE TO FIVE THE NUMBER OF REPLACEMENTS PURCHASED FOR AIR CORPS' FIVE CURRENT CESSNA 172 LIGHT AIRCRAFT.

Purchase of requisite surveillance and reconnaissance equipment to ensure that the new type can play a useful role on overseas missions .

The Air Corps' 45-year-old Cessna fleet is currently up for replacement by three more capable aircraft. However, whilst this is a welcome move, and the new fleet is likely to have higher availability than the Cessnas, reducing the number purchased to three limits the potential applications of the new platform. An extra two aircraft will finally allow for the Air Corps to follow the two other services on deployments overseas by ensuring that two aircraft can be based abroad for long periods without compromising domestic duties and scheduled maintenance. Aircraft of this class have proved themselves to be very useful surveillance assets in such environments as the Middle East and Sub Saharan Africa where Irish troops have recently been or are currently deployed. They offer increased endurance, and lower acquisition and running costs than helicopters. In order to ensure that the surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities of the new type are a worthwhile addition to UN, EU or NATO missions, they must be equipped to a high standard with a variety of sensors (radar, infrared etc).

3 PROVISION FOR A RETENTION SCHEME FOR EXPERIENCED AIR CREWS AND GROUND PERSONNEL

This measure is imperative to avoid repeat of the situation on the night of the Rescue 116 tragedy where there were neither sufficient pilots nor air traffic controllers on hand to allow for the Air Corps to mount a top cover operation. Aircrew and ground personnel are the Air Corps' most important asset. However, many have left within the last number of years due in large part to salary cuts.

The increased number of new cadets entering flight training is a very welcome development. Nevertheless, they cannot immediately replace the large numbers of experienced personnel who have taken their experience to the private sector. Training a pilot costs approximately 1.5 million euros, whilst it may take ten years before a pilot is qualified to captain a large aircraft. It is thus especially important that it is a worth pilots' while to stay on once they complete their minimum 12 years in the service. Financial incentives for experienced personnel are a necessary part of the solution to this problem. This is imperative to maintaining a viable Air Corps into the future.

4 BECOME A MEMBER OF THE NATO HEAVY AIRLIFT WING

Based in Hungary, the wing operates three C-17 heavy transport aircraft on behalf of a consortium of 11 European nations and the US. New member states are welcome. Members comparable to Ireland such as Slovenia, Bulgaria and Finland have shares in the region of two to three percent. Membership would provide a cost effective heavy and outsized strategic airlift capability beyond the remit of the CASA replacements to Irish peacekeeping and peace support missions when necessary. Membership is politically viable, two of the participating nations, Sweden and Finland, are not NATO members, but rather, like Ireland, are members of the broader NATO Partnership for Peace group.

5 PURCHASE OF AN ADDITIONAL REPLACEMENT FOR THE CURRENT PAIR OF CASA 235 MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT

The current CASA aircraft, which entered service in 1994, have given sterling service to the point where one is the heaviest used airframe of its design anywhere in the world. The White Paper envisages their replacement by the end of the current decade with two larger aircraft capable of providing a more useful transport capability. A third aircraft would allow for improved maritime surveillance over Ireland's vast (doubled in size in 2007 to 480,000 square kilometres) exclusive economic zone. It would ensure that overseas transport and patrol missions placed less of a strain on domestic taskings. To save costs, the third aircraft need not be bought with an additional set of mission systems (search radar etc.) These systems may make up to 40% of unit cost. On modern types, modular systems installed on an aircraft scheduled for maintenance or transport duties can easily be removed and fitted to another airframe.





Naval Service



1 EQUIPMENT OF THE FORTHCOMING MULTI-ROLE VESSEL WITH AN ENHANCED DEFENSIVE/OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY

The Multi Role Vessel, which will replace the current Naval Service flagship LE Eithne and is intended to be used extensively on overseas missions, should be equipped to operate in increased threat areas. Recent fatal attacks using anti shipping missiles and suicide attack boats by Houthi rebels off Yemen have highlighted the dangers that may be posed at sea even by non- state actors. This vessel will be in service for at least thirty years. Investment in such systems as an air search radar, decoy system and a missile and/ or gunbased weapons system able to intercept incoming missiles would safeguard the crew.

Such systems are commonplace on similar foreign vessels. It would future proof the design, ensuring that large sums of money will not be spent on a vessel that is severely limited in its availability to deploy to the regions where it is needed most. It would also allow the Naval Service to once more provide a radar equipped air defence capability during such events as important state visits, which has not been the case since the decommissioning of the LE Eithne's air search radar in 2006. Installing missiles capable of attacking ground based and naval targets would also increase the DF's overall artillery capabilities and enable the Multi Role Vessel to respond to attacks.

2 INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SHIPS OPERATED BY THE NAVAL SERVICE FROM EIGHT TO NINE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Whilst the Naval Service has seen significant investment in recent years, the goal of a nine-ship Naval Service set out in the 2015 White Paper should be achieved and maintained following the entry into service of the fourth Samuel Beckett class patrol vessel next year. The extra expenditure proposed would ensure that it is not necessary to prematurely retire one of the current pair of Coastal Patrol Vessels to ensure that the new ship is fully crewed. A nineship service will ensure that frequent overseas deployments will not lead to capability gaps in Irish waters, which are under policed as it stands.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF A LONG ENDURANCE NAVAL REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT (RPA) CAPABILITY

The new Samuel Beckett class of patrol vessels is capable of operating remotely piloted aircraft (sometimes referred to as drones). The purchase of long endurance RPA systems would greatly increase the reach of the ships by enabling persistent surveillance of objects of interest, for example vessels suspected of smuggling, at stand-off ranges.

The deployment of a long-range RPA capability would be an important yet cost effective step towards fully realising the potential of the new ships.

If additional funding becomes available

- > Enhancement of helicopter and airlift capabilities should be prioritised.
- > Additional helicopters with close air support capabilities, such as H135Ms, should be purchased.
- > Larger, military transport helicopters, suitable for deployment and transport of troops overseas, should be obtained.
- > An artillery missile system (MLRS), such as the M270 operated in the UK should be purchased.
- > An extra, larger fixed-wing transport aircraft should be purchased. The primary role of this aircraft would be airlift of troops, supplies and equipment.



Conclusion

We hope that our party's four MEPs (Sean Kelly, Brian Hayes, Máiréad McGuinness, and Deirdre Clune) will read this document and give it their support. We hope it will be seen as adding to their effort to generate much needed debate on defence policy in this country. We also hope it will add to their call for Ireland to pursue a better resourced defence policy with **defending our common European home as its core principal**. We hope to have contributed greater detail to their recommendations, as well as our own proposals. Brian Hayes MEP will be especially aware of YFG's keen wish to see strong Irish participation in the emerging European Defence Union, as this was raised by many YFG members during a recent YFG event discussing how to reform the EU, which he kindly attended.

Lastly, we hope that both our Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Minister with special responsibility for Defence Paul Kehoe, will read this document, listen to our concerns and proposals, and seek to implement them as much as is possible in the current Dáil and Government makeup. **Fine Gael is the party of law and order**, it is the party which built the Defence Forces of this state and it must now be the party which reinvigorates them.



Members of the YFG National Executive presenting a copy of this document and the 'Pay Our Troops' campaign petition to Minister Paul Kehoe in October 2018 – (L. to R.) Daniel Lynch, Eoin Scarlett, Minister Paul Kehoe, Killian Foley-Walsh and Mark Kavanagh



Members of YFG and the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party attending the 'Parade for Respect and Loyalty' in September 2018 which called for full pay restoration for all Defence Forces personnel.

SIGN OUR PETITION TODAY



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YOUNG FINE GAEL

Young Fine Gael (YFG) is the youth wing of the Fine Gael party and always welcomes new members aged between 15 and 35. YFG is the only vehicle for young people to seek political change in this country. As an autonomous youth organisation, it has the advantage of embodying the values of the Fine Gael Party, while maintaining the independence to express views of young people.

Members of YFG can also be members of Fine Gael and take part fully in the party at all levels. YFG has its own President and National Executive.

YFG believes strongly in the ideal of the European Union and is a member of the Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP) an organisation of one and a half million members. YFG has been influenced by the ideas of Christian Democracy and Compassionate Centrism. This means that YFG, like Fine Gael, evaluates everything and tries to move on what it sees as the right thing to do in each given situation. Over the years, we have developed wide ranging policies at this level, and in recent years we have been at the forefront of YEPP, devising successful and important policy resolutions on topics like improving EU banking regulations or introducing an EU-wide vetting scheme for youth and children workers.

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