



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Defence Policy Review

2024

Adjusting and affirming our
Defence policy in an era of change

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Foreword



TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE

The publication of this Defence Policy Review comes at an important juncture not just for the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces but also in the context of the wider security and defence landscape in which the Department and the Defence Forces are operating.

The White Paper on Defence published in 2015 set out the Government intention to put in place a new fixed cycle of defence reviews. The first of these reviews, the White Paper Update, was published in 2019. This Defence Policy Review is the latest in the fixed cycle of reviews and lays out Government policy to 2028. This Review reaffirms and, where appropriate, revises Defence policy and the posture of the Defence Forces in response to the prevailing security environment and the wider national and international defence landscape. It is crucial that our Defence policy remains iterative and adaptive to the prevailing threat level and security environment and the fixed cycle of reviews supports this.

Ireland is sensitive to the fact that we find ourselves in an increasingly contested, dynamic and volatile international security environment. Inter-State war has returned to the continent of Europe and Ireland understands that our geographic position and policy of military neutrality can no longer moderate the security risks and threats posed by malign actors. We face similar threats and challenges as other states who support the rules-based international order. The global security context obliges us to take both our own security and our responsibility towards our like-minded partners more critically than ever. Ireland has a responsibility through our Defence policy to invest in the defence of the state, to protect our citizens, our values and our sovereign interests and to continue to contribute to international peace and security.

Central to the response to the defence and security challenges that Ireland is facing is our engagement with key bilateral and multilateral partners. Our Defence policy will continue to be shaped by our policy of military neutrality coupled with active and principled membership of the EU, the UN, and other international fora. This includes continuing our longstanding support

of the EU's Common, Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and active participation in the EU's civilian and military CSDP missions and operations, as well as continuing our participation in UN Peace Support Operations. The dedication and service of all of our Defence Forces personnel is appreciated and respected by Irish society and the wider international community and represents a tangible and effective output of Defence policy.

As well as affirming our commitment to deepening and broadening defence and security cooperation the Defence Policy Review highlights a number of key priorities. There is a clear focus on maritime security given the assessed threat level in the maritime domain, our geographic position, and our responsibility and commitment to support the security and defence of Europe. This will involve immediate action on military radar capabilities in the development of an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System for Air, Land and Sea for Ireland and the Department of Defence taking the lead on the future national Maritime Security Strategy in cooperation with national and international stakeholders.

At the same time of profound challenge in the security environment, the Defence Forces are in the process of considerable transformation and I have been clear that my 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 where self-worth and continuous professional development is actively promoted and where members are respected and reflective of a contemporary and diverse Irish society.

I look forward to working with the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff in progressing the ambition of this Defence Policy Review.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Micheál Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Micheál Martin, TD
Tánaiste and Minister for Defence



Executive Summary

STRATEGIC STATEMENT OF INTENT

Europe is in a period of intense security challenge. Ireland's national and international security environment reflects this and is accordingly undergoing a period of profound change. Inter-State war has returned to the continent of Europe and Ireland understands that our geographic position and policy of military neutrality in itself can no longer mitigate the security risks and threats posed by malign actors. Notwithstanding this external environment, Ireland's commitment to military neutrality remains central to our Defence policy. As a European Member State Ireland is required to act not just as a trusted security partner, but also as a responsible and good neighbour to like-minded nations who share our common values. Ireland has a responsibility through its Defence policy to invest in the defence of the state, to protect our citizens, our values and our sovereign interests and to continue to contribute to international peace and security.

Ireland is committed to increased levels of defence investment to enable the transformation of our Defence Forces and its capabilities across the five operational domains. The Government has already committed to increasing investment in the Defence Forces to €1.5 billion, in 2022 prices, by 2028, to be agreed via the annual estimates process, taking account of prevailing circumstances at that time, with consideration thereafter of a move to Level of Ambition 3 for the Defence Forces. Our Defence policy will remain iterative and adaptive to the threat environment and will continue to be subject to a fixed cycle of defence reviews and updates in coherence with the development of a National Security Strategy and the EU's Strategic Compass.

Ireland is committed to maximising both national and international security through bilateral and multilateral engagements with key strategic partners including the EU, UN and NATO. The Department of Defence and Defence Forces will lead on new forms of engagement with these strategic partners in the areas of Resilience and Civil Preparedness, Human Security and Climate Change Security, Cyber and Hybrid Threats and Maritime Security. Within these priorities there will be an immediate focus on our maritime domain and the protection of critical undersea infrastructure.

This Defence Policy Review is part of an ongoing cycle of defence reviews that keep Defence policy up to date with the prevailing security environment and to revise policy and the posture of the Defence Forces in response to the wider national and international defence landscape. We will remain alert to activities and be agile to address as required. The next formal Defence Policy Review will be initiated in 2025.

The main conclusions and actions on foot of this Defence Policy Review are:

Ireland's Security Environment is Undergoing a Period of Profound Change

- » Ireland's security environment is undergoing a period of profound change; our geographic position and policy of military neutrality no longer minimise threats posed by malign actors. We face similar threats and challenges as other states who support the rules-based international order.
- » Ireland as an outward looking country with an open economy based on international trade is vulnerable to current and emerging global threats. National defence and security are interdependent with our economic prosperity. Supporting a secure environment for sustainable economic growth requires continued investment in our security.
- » Ireland is increasingly susceptible to threats such as cyber-attacks, espionage, subversion of authority and attacks on critical infrastructure, emanating from state and non-state groups, as well as by motivated malign individuals.
- » It is assessed that future overseas missions will be increasingly executed and delivered by regional organisations.

Defence Policy must Adapt to Respond to these Changes

- » Ireland's overarching Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence is

"to defend Irish sovereignty, protect Irish Citizens and secure Irish interests in support of Irish society, the Irish economy, our collective well-being and our territorial integrity."
- » Ireland will continue to pursue its policy of military neutrality while playing an international security role in support of the multilateral system and in support of European defence and security. As a democratic and prosperous country Ireland will continue to play its part along with other Member States in supporting European defence and security.
- » To continue to defend Ireland's sovereign interests, support national resilience and contribute to international peace and security, requires an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces with planning and mitigation against the likelihood and impact of identified security threats and strategic risks fully in line with Defence policy.
- » Maritime security represents a priority action area for the Government. To support this, the Department of Defence will now lead on the development of the National Maritime Security Strategy and have a leading role in co-ordinating maritime security going forward.
- » Defence spending as a percentage of Exchequer spending remains behind similar states many of whom have increased defence spending on foot of the invasion of Ukraine. Government has committed to increases in Defence spending and continued increased investment will remain a critical and crucial enabler for the transformation of the Defence Forces and the reinforcement of Ireland's role as a trusted security partner and responsible neighbour.



- » The Government agreed increase in Defence funding to €1.5BN (in 2022 Prices) by 2028 to be agreed via the annual estimates process, taking account of prevailing circumstances at that time, will be maintained to enable the Government approved move to **Level of Ambition 2 (LOA 2) Enhanced Capability** for the Defence Forces defined as “*Building on current capabilities to address specific, priority gaps in our ability to deal with an assault on Irish sovereignty and to serve in higher intensity peace support, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations overseas*”. Consideration will then be given to move to **Level of Ambition 3 (LOA 3) Conventional Capability** for the Defence Forces defined as “*Developing full spectrum defence capabilities to protect Ireland and its people to an extent comparable to similar sized countries in Europe*”.
- » The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) Regeneration and Development Plan provides a roadmap to maximise the experience and expertise across the RDF, harnessing the public and private sector skills held by members of the RDF in support of Permanent Defence Force training and operations.
- » While we enhance our capabilities in all five operational domains for defence of the State there is an immediate focus on the development of an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System for air, land and sea domains for Ireland.
- » Achieving the most effective mix of capabilities within the resources available will require prioritisation across the three services. In setting priorities amongst competing demands the threats/risks identified in the Security Environment Assessment and the achievement of Government’s strategic ambition for defence and the LOA 2 for the Defence Forces will guide decision making.

Prioritising Specific Enhancements of our Capabilities in Response to the Environment

- » Our people are our greatest asset and cultural change in the Defence Forces, in support of all of our people, is the Government’s transformation priority.
- » An increased civilian staff work force will be a feature of the future Defence Forces in support of military personnel focusing on military operational tasks.
- » The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) Regeneration and Development Plan provides a roadmap to maximise the experience and expertise across the RDF, harnessing the public and private sector skills held by members of the RDF in support of Permanent Defence Force training and operations.

Forthcoming Changes in Command & Control and Governance of the Defence Forces will support the Transformation required.

- » The proposed changes to Command and Control and required governance and accountability are complex and sensitive but will give greater clarity in terms of the roles, responsibilities and functions of the Minister, the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff/ Chief of Defence.
- » Government have agreed to the preparation of necessary legislation to provide for the reform of high level Command and Control.
- » The new Command and Control structure will be introduced over time.

KEY POINTS

- » Maritime security represents a priority action area for the Government. The Department will lead on the development of the National Maritime Security Strategy.
- » Ireland will continue to play its part along with other Member States in supporting European defence and security.
- » Immediate focus will be on the development of an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System for air, land and sea domains for Ireland.
- » Changes to Command and Control and required governance and accountability are vital to the transformation of the Defence Forces.
- » Defence funding increases must be maintained as a critical and crucial enabler for the transformation of the Defence Forces and the reinforcement of Ireland's role as a trusted security partner and responsible neighbour.





1. Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

Defence of the State is a fundamental role of Government and this role is assigned to the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. Primary responsibility for the internal security of the State rests with the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána. The Defence Forces have a role in support of domestic security providers and during responses to large scale national emergencies. Defence policy supports Ireland's social, political, economic and cultural values in coherence with Ireland's overarching national security ambition.

This Defence Policy Review is part of a cycle of reviews set out in the Defence White Paper 2015. The first iteration of these reviews was the White Paper Update published in 2019. Defence reviews of this nature are common practice internationally and ensure that Defence policy remains relevant to changing security environment circumstances.

The Purpose of this Defence Policy Review is to reaffirm and, where appropriate, revise Defence policy and the posture of the Defence Forces in response to the prevailing security environment and the wider national and international defence landscape.

It reflects developments in the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and the ongoing Defence Forces transformation agenda. This ensures that defence remains agile and responsive to the current environment¹.

The Defence Policy Review is published in the context of recent Government decisions taken arising from the *Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces (CoDF)*, the *Independent Review Group (IRG) Report on dignity and equality issues in the Defence Forces*, and the *Strategic Framework* published in September 2023. The Strategic Framework brings together in one overarching document the immediate actions to be taken to support the transformation of the Defence Forces, including recommendations from both the CoDF Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) published in November 2023 and the IRG Report. The Strategic Framework sets out the actions to be delivered by the end of 2024, with a revised Strategic Framework to be published at the end of this year. This Defence Policy Review does not detail the wide range of Defence Forces Human Resources (HR) and cultural change initiatives and efforts underway – the policy positions on those matters are set out in the Strategic Framework and the CoDF DIP.

¹ This Defence Policy Review does not review the policy position relating to Civil Defence given the focus on defence and security policy. Civil Defence continues to fulfil important community-based roles as supported by the Government's implementation of '**Civil Defence – Towards 2030**'. This is a priority focus and includes actions that fall to both the Department of Defence and local authorities to progress. The volunteer ethos advocated by Civil Defence continues to demonstrate the very best of Irish society and the Government acknowledges the important work and contributions of Civil Defence volunteers across the country.



1.2 APPROACH

The first stage in the development of this Defence Policy Review was the completion of the Security Environment Assessment (SEA) undertaken by an interdepartmental and interagency working group. The SEA has regard to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and also covers the increased strategic competition between states, as well as cyber, hybrid, maritime security, critical infrastructure, espionage, space, terrorism, organised crime, civil unrest, climate, energy security, critical raw materials, emerging disruptive technology, arms control and the need for broader and deeper cooperation with partners. The implications of this SEA have been evaluated for policy requirements, associated tasks, capability development and the resourcing of defence provision in Ireland into the future.

The international security environment has changed significantly since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia with the return of large scale land warfare to Europe for the first time since the Second World War. In Ireland, Defence has traditionally been a niche topic involving national discussions within narrow parameters. That conversation is now changing with Government and the public beginning to engage more broadly and more proactively on defence matters, recognising the importance of protecting our national security, and therein our national prosperity and future well-being.

The Defence Policy Review has taken into consideration submissions made to both the Commission on the Defence Forces (2022) and the Consultative Forum on International Security (2023). These submissions were made by a broad range of stakeholders and organisations and cover a wide range and consideration of key defence and security matters. Engagement by members of the public through these consultative processes highlights the current interest and levels of concern associated with defence and security issues.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF REVIEW

The outcome of the Defence Policy Review is structured as follows:

Chapter One Introduction

Chapter Two The Security Environment Assessment

This chapter provides an overview of the assessment of the interdepartmental and interagency working group of the current security environment which provides the evidence base for Defence policy decisions.

Chapter Three The Defence Policy Response: National and International

This chapter set out how our Defence policy must adapt to respond to the changed security environment and reflecting Ireland's role in the multilateral system.

Chapter Four Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence and Roles of the Defence Forces

Based on the security environment assessment and Defence policy response, this chapter sets out Ireland's strategic Level of Ambition for defence, our immediate Level of Ambition for the Defence Forces (up to 2028) and reaffirmation of the Roles of the Defence Forces.

Chapter Five Defence Capabilities - Personnel

The people who work in defence are its most important asset and this chapter outlines the priority actions in this area.

Chapter Six Defence Capabilities - Development

Given competing demands, this chapter sets out the areas of immediate focus in line with the Defence policy response and how the Security Environment Assessment and how our strategic level of ambition for defence will guide decision making.

Chapter Seven Defence Forces Command, Control, Governance and Accountability

This chapter highlights the significant structural change of the Defence Forces that is underway and the requirement to ensure the Defence Forces Command and Control structure reflects best practice and enables a modern, agile and fit for purpose Defence Forces.

Chapter Eight Conclusions

Sets out the main conclusions to be drawn and highlights key areas of effort in the short to medium term.



2. The Security Environment Assessment

2.1 OVERVIEW

This Chapter provides an overview of the assessment of the interdepartmental and interagency working group of Ireland's current security environment, providing the evidence base for Defence policy decisions set out in Chapter 3.

- » **Our Security Environment Today (2.2)**
 - » Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and the impact on European Security (2.2.1)
 - » Europe's neighbourhood, including the Middle East (2.2.2)
 - » An era of growing strategic competition (2.2.3)
- » **Ireland's International Security Role (2.3)**
 - » Maritime security and protecting critical infrastructure (2.3.1)
 - » Cyber (2.3.2)
 - » Hybrid (2.3.3)
 - » Space (2.3.4)
 - » Climate Change as a Security Threat (2.3.5)
 - » Energy Security (2.3.6)
 - » Espionage (2.3.7)
 - » Threat of Terrorism (2.3.8)
 - » The Impact of Organised Crime (2.3.9)
 - » Civil Unrest (2.3.10)
 - » Critical Raw Materials (2.3.11)
 - » Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (2.3.12)
 - » Arms Control (2.3.13)
- » **Security Environment Assessment Conclusions (2.4)**

2.2 OUR SECURITY ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Ireland's security interests are shaped by a number of important factors including our geographical location on Europe's western seaboard, our membership of the European Union (EU) and our policy of military neutrality. Moreover, we are also a highly globalised country, one of the most outward-looking countries in the world and a significant digital hub internationally.

At the same time as seeking to protect and promote our interests, Ireland remains resolutely committed to our core values, including our commitment to the multilateral system, with the United Nations (UN) Charter at its heart, and to the protection and promotion of Human Rights and International Law. These values will and must remain at the core of our foreign, defence and security policies.

Against this backdrop, Ireland's security environment is undergoing a period of profound change, with events overseas increasingly having a major impact on our country and our people. Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine, conflict and continuing instability in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, and the intensification of competition between states, including a more assertive China, mean that the geopolitical and international security context has deteriorated considerably.

As an EU Member State with close political, economic and cultural ties to our EU partners, as well as to the United States (U.S.) and the United Kingdom (U.K), Ireland faces similar threats and challenges to those states, finding ourselves more vulnerable than in the past to malign actors, many of which are increasingly willing to use hybrid tactics to exploit and undermine our security and democracy.

National defence and security are interdependent with our economic prosperity. Supporting a secure environment for sustainable economic growth in turn enables continued investment in our security.

2.2.1 Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the impact on European security

The unprovoked, unjustified and illegal Russian military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to the largest military conflict, refugee displacement and energy crisis in Europe since the end of the Second World War. In addition to the impact of these actions on millions of Ukrainians, the conflict has also presented enormous challenges affecting both global and European security, including our security here in Ireland. Russia's 'weaponisation' of information, energy and food supplies and its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric pose further threats in this regard. Closer to our own shores, Russian naval activity in the North Atlantic also points to the potential for maritime or hybrid attacks against critical infrastructure.

Across Europe, the return of interstate warfare to the European continent has led to an increased emphasis on defence and security, and in particular on deterrence and territorial defence. Finland and Sweden's decisions to seek and obtain NATO membership, Denmark's decision to join the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and commitments to increase Defence funding taken by states across Europe, provide further evidence of these trends.

At the EU level, the invasion of Ukraine has accelerated work in relation to CSDP and the EU Strategic Compass, which is the main policy document guiding the development of the EU's security and defence agenda in the medium to longer term. In supporting Ukraine the EU is also showing an exceptional resolve to restore peace in Europe and its immediate neighbourhood, in line with the principles of the UN Charter. In particular, the conflict has witnessed the unprecedented mobilisation of the European Peace Facility, with Member States having committed some €5.6 billion in military support for Ukraine in 2022 and 2023. This includes a contribution of over €122 million in non-lethal military assistance from Ireland.

However, the conflict has also placed significant pressure on an already limited and fragmented European defence industry, with a negative impact in turn on procurement and capability development across all EU Member States, including Ireland. As a result of this situation, there will be an increasing need for innovative and collaborative efforts to ensure defence and security capabilities are developed, sustained and maximised. This has resulted in the publication of the first ever EU Defence Industrial Strategy² in March 2024.

Ireland has always been of the view that a more capable EU can contribute positively to efforts to mitigate global threats and challenges. Ireland therefore remains a strong proponent of the role the EU can play in support of international peace and security and we will remain fully engaged in the development of CSDP.

2.2.2 Europe's neighbourhood, including the Middle East

As identified in the Strategic Compass, the EU finds itself faced with growing instability on many of its borders. Across the Middle East and beyond, war, conflict and insecurity, continue to impact on the security of Ireland and our fellow EU Member States.

The events of 7 October 2023, where Hamas massacred Israeli civilians, and the scale of the subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza, has brought renewed focus to the complexity of the region and the need for a comprehensive political solution. The region is also marked by the role taken by a number of key actors, including Iran, which is playing an increasingly influential role in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen. This is further compounded by the threat to sea lines of communication in the Red Sea posed by Iranian backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. The increasing availability of more advanced weapons systems to these and other malign forces is also noteworthy.

The future of Africa is also of strategic importance to the EU. Instability across the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, often resulting from poor governance, ongoing conflict and climate change, affects the security of all European states. In addition to the role played by non-state actors, the continent is also seeing a growing pattern of geopolitical competition by state actors, including the use of private military contractors, which is further fuelling instability and is impacting negatively on the EU's efforts in the area, most recently shown by the cessation of the EU's CSDP Mission in Mali and Niger.

² https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/edis-our-common-defence-industrial-strategy_en

2.2.3 An era of growing strategic competition

More broadly across the globe, the rules-based international order is under pressure and we are witnessing a return of power politics in an increasingly contested and multipolar world.

In this context, the role played by China will be pivotal, particularly as this highly significant global actor takes on a more assertive posture abroad and seeks to build alliances in pursuit of its interests. As the EU has set out, China can be seen as a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival. Going forward, the evolution of the relationship between the United States and China will also be central to these future trends as well as to the EU's own economic security. Ireland and our EU partners continue to seek a balanced, reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship with China.



2.3 IRELAND'S INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ROLE

Ireland continues to pursue a policy of military neutrality while playing an international security role in support of the multilateral system and European security and defence. In particular, Ireland has a longstanding contribution to UN Peace Support Operations (PSO), with significant numbers of Defence Forces personnel deployed largely in the Middle East and elsewhere. In an increasingly demanding PSO environment, Ireland can expect a continued international need for land, air and sea forces to contribute to peace support, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations. Given that the nature of UN and EU Peace Support and Crisis Management Operations are becoming ever more complex, in addition to the growing risks that Irish citizens are exposed to overseas (including in the context of collapsing/failed states, conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, and the activities of certain hostile states). These developments will require the Defence Forces to be resourced, trained and equipped for any such engagements.

Ireland's current international military contributions may evolve from longer-term deployments to missions with a more delineated timeline. The more robust future operational environment will necessitate adequate force protection and improved situational awareness and capabilities. Missions may involve niche contributions such as Special Operations Forces, Engineer or similar specialities along with the possible deployment of sea and air assets. However, the continued deployment of combined arms units centred on the Infantry Battalion at its core is necessary to support employed niche capabilities to mitigate challenges presented by more challenging and complex operational environments.

It is further anticipated that missions could be increasingly carried out by regional organisations, including the EU through its employment of CSDP missions and operations. Higher intensity future operational environments will also necessitate adequate force protection and improved situational awareness and capabilities. More broadly, it is worth noting that the increasingly fragmented UN Security Council has not approved a new PSO mission in over a decade. Against this backdrop, the Tánaiste has announced a process to amend the current legislation governing the deployment of Defence Forces personnel overseas and to modify the current “Triple Lock”³, which allows Security Council members to use their veto, or threat of same, to bind Ireland’s hands in its international engagement.

2.3.1 Maritime security and protecting critical infrastructure

Given the extensive sea and air lines of communication, fishery protection responsibilities, undersea cables and energy production capacity and infrastructure, maritime security represents a priority action area for the Government, not least given the increase in suspicious activity by foreign militaries in Ireland’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in recent times. The security of undersea fibre optic cables, which represent vital but vulnerable components of the international communications infrastructure are a particularly important feature in this regard, while the security of energy infrastructure is also of critical importance given Ireland’s island status and plans in relation to offshore renewables. The use of Ireland’s maritime domain as a conduit for illicit activities by organised crime groups also poses a risk in this domain.

The importance of maritime security and the increased risk has been reflected in the Tánaiste announcing the development by Government of a National Maritime Security Strategy (NMSS), with the necessary resourcing, accompanying legislation and decision-making systems in place. The Department of Defence propose leading on the development of the NMSS and providing a leading role in maritime security going forward.

³ The “Triple Lock” mechanism sets out the conditions for the deployment of Defence Forces personnel for PSO overseas. These include that the operation must be mandated by the UN (either by the Security Council or General Assembly), approved by the Government and, in situations where the size of the Defence Forces contribution is more than 12 personnel and is armed, that it must be approved by way of Dáil resolution.

2.3.2 Cyber

In the current security environment, outside of conventional military incursions, Ireland is also susceptible to threats such as cyber-attacks, espionage, subversion of authority and attacks on critical infrastructure, emanating from state and non-state groups, as well as by motivated malign individuals.

In May 2021, a cyber-attack using Conti ransomware was carried out against the Health Service Executive (HSE) by a Russian-based criminal gang. This high-profile, but by international standards deemed a low-scale intensity attack, highlighted the damage that the malicious use of technology can bring, with hundreds of thousands of patients and citizens impacted. Since 2021, the Government has therefore endeavoured incessantly to develop an effective national civilian cyber security defence capability, with significant additional resources and capabilities allocated to the National Cyber Security Centre within the framework of the National Cyber Security Strategy and the implementation of the Network and Information Security EU Directive.

However, nation state actors and cyber criminals continue to pose a threat to Irish citizens, businesses, our Government services and our overall national security. The war in Ukraine has also seen a number of significant cyber-attacks, with the Russian attack against the ViaSat commercial communications company providing a clear example of a state actor targeting critical infrastructure in concert with the deployment of conventional weaponry. Continued collaboration with international partners and organisations in developing national resilience and preparedness remains imperative to bolster the architectural apparatus of both national and organisational cyber defence.

2.3.3 Hybrid

The Hybrid Centre of Excellence in Helsinki⁴ defines hybrid threats as “actions conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by combining overt and covert military and non-military means”. Hybrid methods are used to blur the line between war and peace, attempting to sow doubt in the minds of target populations, while remaining below the threshold of detection and attribution. At a global level, broader hybrid tactics are also frequently used by state and non-state actors, or by proxies acting on their behalf, to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of a formally declared war.

This mixture of coercive and subversive activity as well as conventional and unconventional methods seeks to exploit vulnerabilities across the political, military, economic, social, informational and infrastructural spectrums. In the same vein, the continued integration of technology into everyday life and the prolific use of social media lends itself to potential misuse by individuals and non-state and state actors in order to create discord and division through the spread of misinformation and disinformation both internationally (including in countries where the Defence Forces may be deployed on overseas PSO) and domestically. The potential implications for Ireland from hybrid threats range from the fostering of distrust in Government bodies, to election interference, financial loss, and social unrest to the radicalisation of individuals and groups. Hybrid foreign interference can also target critical infrastructure, involve violations of airspace and territorial waters and the exploitation of proxies. In targeting Ireland directly, hybrid threats have also been deployed with a view to undermining the functioning or legitimacy of the EU. Enhanced national situational awareness and increased engagement with international partners will therefore continue to be critical in deterring such threats.

⁴ Ireland joined the Hybrid Centre of Excellence in 2023





2.3.4 Space

Space is an increasingly important domain given Ireland's reliance on space based infrastructure for communications, global positioning systems, weather, and climate observation technology, as well as state and departmental investment in equipment and hardware that relies on secure networks and communications. The National Space Strategy for Enterprise underpins the economic value of the space domain. Ireland is vulnerable to the threats that can disrupt these services, economic opportunity and the follow on societal impacts.

2.3.5 Climate Change as a security threat

At an international level, climate change will continue to be a key driver of instability due to environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, population displacement, and resource scarcity. As a consequence, crisis management, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations are becoming more ubiquitous, placing increasing demands on military organisations across the globe.

The Defence Forces can similarly expect more extreme conditions when deployed internationally. The increased demand for military support domestically will also require a flexible and agile Defence Forces that can support with the necessary capabilities, disaster relief responses, while balancing this response capacity against the requirement to meet the core assigned roles and tasks both at home and abroad. Acquiring this balance will be essential to simultaneously underpin national resilience and a credible defence posture in complex and competing operating environments.

While the nature of military operations will require air, land and maritime assets to operate in their respective domains, it is an imperative for Ireland to ensure our Green Defence Agenda is balanced to develop a long term sustainable solution in the modernisation of defence equipment and infrastructure and mitigate our operational environmental footprint.

In the domestic context, the Civil Defence and the Defence Forces, in close coordination with other State and voluntary agencies in a cross-government capacity, can expect to be required to continue operating in more extreme climate and weather conditions through the Major Emergency Management Framework to support Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA) operations.

2.3.6 Energy security

Energy security and energy efficiency are increasingly important elements of Europe's rapidly evolving defence and security environment. Russia's 'weaponisation' of energy supplies triggered a large energy price shock, catalysed a cost-of-living crisis and undermined global economic prospects. This further compounded the EU's prevailing/pre-existing energy insecurity with a high energy import dependency among its declining indigenous oil and gas production.

Ireland is one of the most energy import dependent countries in the EU and these risks are amplified by our geographic position and limited supply lines. The transition to a renewables-based energy system will lead to a further evolution in the threats we face as we consider significant infrastructure investments, in energy storage systems and increased interconnectors all of which will rely on cyber infrastructure, as well as access to critical raw materials. As Ireland moves toward increasing its green energy supplies and eventually producing excess energy which will need to be stored and transferred, the security of energy infrastructure, particularly in the littoral maritime zones will also pose new challenges in relation to the security of such infrastructure, as referenced above.

Given the particular threats to the energy sector the Department of Defence's Office of Emergency Planning (OEP) Branch engaged relevant stakeholders who conducted the first stress test of critical infrastructure in the energy sector earlier this year against man-made threats. It is envisaged, that together with the implementation of the EU Critical Entities Resilience (CER) Directive additional stress testing across the range of societal infrastructure and services will become a feature of resilience planning in the years to come. The result of the recent energy sector stress test is being shared with the European Commission, who will use it, along with other Member States' reports, to prepare an EU wide analysis of the risks to the wider European energy sector.

2.3.7 Espionage

Acts of espionage by state actors in the form of influence, disruption and subversion activities also pose a threat to Ireland's national security, including those aimed at Government, the private sector and academic institutions. In the current geostrategic environment, access to dual-use goods, emerging and disruptive technology, and intellectual property can all be assessed as significant objectives of states seeking a competitive advantage. As a global centre for leading edge technology, and as a geographical hub for data centres and transatlantic fibre optic cables, Ireland will continue to present a valuable target for espionage activity and the political influence and information operations that facilitate it. Enhanced counter intelligence and cyber capabilities and cooperation with international partners will therefore be essential.

2.3.8 Threat of Terrorism

From an all-island perspective the threat of dissident groups to the State remains. Dissident factions may be expected to continue to capitalise on current political events to recruit supporters and further mobilise their respective movements. Elsewhere, while the manifestation of international terrorism and right and left-wing violent extremism has been less prominent in Ireland, we are not immune from the threat, not least given the links to online radicalisation and disinformation. The current threat level of an international terrorist attack in Ireland is assessed as moderate (an attack is possible but not likely). Nevertheless, experience in other states has shown that the threat level can escalate rapidly and the origin and intensity of the threat can be difficult to predict or identify.

2.3.9 The Impact of Organised Crime

Transnational organised crime groups represent a worldwide threat, including here in Ireland. International security trends show that cooperation and coordination between organised crime groups and state/non-state actors persists. There is a long established nexus between organised crime and terrorism. Conflict and instability create renewed opportunities for such groups to flourish through human, drug and weapons trafficking as well as cybercrime, financial fraud and money laundering. Use of Ireland's sea and air lines of communications to conduct these activities poses a threat to our sovereign integrity, national interests, and the security of our citizens.

2.3.10 Civil Unrest

The use of peaceful protest is an accepted norm in democratic societies and the Government is committed to the protection of freedom of assembly, consistent with obligations in the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. The trend for protests to become more confrontational and to develop into violence is on the rise internationally. Ireland, as a democratic state, is not immune from this trend.

2.3.11 Critical Raw Materials

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has forecast that the demand for global materials is set to more than double by 2060. In 2023, a fifth list of 34 Critical Raw Materials (CRM) was published by the EU. This list of CRMs will be used to inform the development of the European Critical Raw Materials Act to identify strategic projects along the entire value chain and to develop strategic reserves where supply risks have been identified. Ireland is a consumer of numerous CRMs used across a variety of industries and the control or limitation of supply and movement of these resources is of concern to Ireland both from a security and economic viewpoint.

2.3.12 Emerging and Disruptive Technologies

Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) such as Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, advanced propulsion, bio- and nano-technology and new materials and industrial capacities are re-shaping military affairs and defence markets and bring about both opportunities and risks. They are altering the character of conflict, acquiring greater strategic importance and becoming key arenas of global competition. At the same time, they can also have disruptive and unpredictable consequences and particularly so in the absence of regulation, ethical and legal frameworks.

Hostile states are not shying away from using emerging and disruptive technologies to take strategic advantages and to increase the effectiveness of their hybrid campaigns. Given the significant investment associated with developing and operationalising, and where appropriate countering military use EDT, Ireland will need to maximise the benefit of its existing and potential new partnership opportunities in this area. The emerging evidence and impacts of both rudimentary and highly sophisticated unmanned systems in all operating domains, brings into sharp focus the vulnerability of critical infrastructure, the requirement for responsive force protection and counter capabilities and the need to develop ethical policies and procedures for EDT.

2.3.13 Arms Control

Achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and promoting disarmament of conventional weapons and arms control are priorities for Ireland. Ireland has helped to shape the modern multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation infrastructure and it is imperative that this framework is maintained.

Ireland is a party to all major conventional weapons and arms control multilateral instruments including the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Cluster Munitions Convention (adopted in Dublin in 2008), and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Ireland continues to be a strong and vocal proponent of the need to address the humanitarian harm arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas

(EWIPA) leading negotiations on a Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of EWIPA and hosting the formal adoption conference in Dublin in 2022.

Over 12,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world. The UN Secretary General has warned that the risk of nuclear weapons use is higher now than at any time since the height of the Cold War. With Russia's suspension of its participation in New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), the only remaining arms-control treaty limiting U.S. and Russian nuclear forces and China's expanding nuclear arsenal, the future of arms control is ever more fraught.

2.4 SECURITY ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

Ireland finds itself in an increasingly contested, dynamic and volatile international security environment. The intensification of multi-polar strategic competition challenges the rules-based international order while the rapid advancement of technology has created new vulnerabilities that require careful consideration and a reassessment of previous assumptions about defence and security policies.

A national policy response (through enhancing our military capabilities and structures) to the prevailing security environment is now required by Ireland to meet the challenges posed by this new security environment to realign how this State manages risks to its defence and security, and how we play our role as a trusted partner and a supporter of the multilateral system. The prevalence and increasing criticality of risks in the maritime domain are a case in point. Moreover, given the complex and evolving security environment, Ireland will also need to broaden and deepen cooperation with our partners.

These commitments will need to be built upon in the ever changing and increasingly complex security environment to enable an agile, modern and fit for purpose Defence policy and Defence Forces that can defend State sovereignty and territorial integrity, whilst contributing to international peace and security.



KEY POINTS

- » Ireland's security environment is undergoing a period of profound change - we face similar threats and challenges as other states who support the rules-based international order. We are finding ourselves more vulnerable than in the past to malign state and non-state actors.
- » Given the complex and evolving security environment, Ireland will need to broaden and deepen cooperation with our partners.
- » Ireland continues to pursue a policy of military neutrality while playing an international security role in support of the multilateral system and in support of European defence and security.
- » Outside of conventional military incursions, Ireland is increasingly susceptible to threats such as cyber-attacks, espionage, subversion of authority and attacks on critical infrastructure, emanating from state and non-state groups, as well as by motivated malign individuals.
- » Maritime security represents a priority action area for the Government as Ireland has one of the largest Maritime Exclusive Economic Zones in the EU with extensive sea fishing, air traffic, sea lines, undersea cables and energy production capacity and infrastructure, and given the recognised increase in suspicious activity by foreign militaries.
- » A Defence policy response (through enhancing our military capabilities and structures) to the prevailing security environment is required to enable Ireland to meet the challenges posed by this new security environment and realign how this State manages risks to its national defence and security, and how we play our role as a trusted partner and supporter of the multilateral system.



3 The Defence Policy Response - National and International

This Chapter sets out

- » Defence Policy Context (section 3.1)
- » National Defence Policy Response (section 3.2)
- » International Defence Policy Response (section 3.3)

3.1 DEFENCE POLICY CONTEXT

Defence and Security of the State is a fundamental responsibility of Government who must ensure that there is appropriate defence planning capacity and military capability to deter and mitigate against the broad spectrum of identified national security threats. Defence of the State is a fundamental role of Government and this policy role is assigned to the Department of Defence and the operational role to the Defence Forces. Primary responsibility for the internal security of the State rests with the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána. The Defence Forces have a role in support of domestic security providers and during responses to large scale national emergencies. To defend Ireland's sovereign interests, support national resilience and contribute to international peace and security Ireland requires an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces operating fully in line with an agile Defence policy. This approach enables Ireland to deliver an effective and appropriate response to any threat that could adversely impact on our sovereignty, our economic interests, or the security and protection of our citizens. Our Defence policy supports Ireland's social, political, economic and cultural values within our overarching and developing national security architecture⁵. The implementation of Defence policy ambitions are enabled by appropriate resourcing and funding provisions⁶.

A broad spectrum of international partners, particularly in the European Union, have placed an increased emphasis on updating and reviewing their own defence policies following the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia. This has been coupled with significant increases in national levels of Defence funding and investment. There is an international trend away from counter insurgency style operations towards capability required for large scale combat operations. Even smaller nations are significantly increasing their conventional capabilities to ensure interoperability and standardisation of capabilities. The EU has accelerated focus and priorities under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) pillar, including the implementation and operationalisation of the EU Strategic Compass and heretofore unprecedented expenditure under the European Peace Facility.

⁵ Including the proposed Maritime Security Strategy and Aviation Security Strategy

⁶ The Irish Government has committed to increase Defence funding to €1.5bn (in 2022 prices) by 2028 to be agreed through the annual estimates process

Increased levels of engagement and ambition across the EU on defence and security matters place renewed demands and focus on Ireland's contribution and commitments to the EU defence and security environment. The EU Strategic Compass, for example, commits Member States to increase the readiness of their armed forces where it states *"Readiness and interoperability are crucial elements of our response to threats and strategic competition"*⁷. As participants to the operationalisation of the Strategic Compass, through our commitments to the Rapid Deployment Concept and EU Battlegroup, the Defence Forces are required to focus on interoperability, standardisation and operational readiness levels across each of the operational domains in those key threat areas as identified in the Security Environment Assessment (SEA) of Chapter Two. Ireland cannot rely on its position as a small state on the periphery of Europe with our geographic and political position limiting the threats to the state. We also have a responsibility to our neighbours and EU partners to contribute in key areas to the defence and security of Europe.

Ireland's Defence policy response is addressed in two areas – our National Defence policy and our International Defence policy.

3.2 NATIONAL DEFENCE POLICY RESPONSE

National Defence policy prioritises the military defence of the state and its contributions in support of national resilience through its assistance to other departments and state agencies. The national Defence policy response to our new security environment outlined in Chapter Two is detailed below.

3.2.1 Military Defence of the State

Military Defence of the State is a fundamental role of Government and the Government's vision is to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity, to protect the safety and wellbeing of our people, and to uphold the democratic institutions of the State and human rights and fundamental freedoms that underpin our society.

The Department and the Defence Forces shared high level goal, as stated in the 2023-2026 Statement of Strategy, 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"*.

⁷ The Strategic Compass makes commitments in four key areas – Act, Invest, Secure and Partner. 'Readiness' is detailed under Act, where Ireland, along with other MS commits to: *"We need to be able to act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts, with partners if possible and alone when necessary. To that end, we will: Strengthen our Command and Control structures, in particular the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, and increase our readiness and cooperation through enhancing military mobility and regular live exercises, in particular for the Rapid Deployment Capacity"*.



In the period since the publication of the Defence White Paper in 2015, it is assessed that Ireland's national security environment has changed significantly. We find ourselves more vulnerable collectively today than heretofore due to the changing nature of emerging threats. As set out in Chapter Two, it is clear that the strategic environment means that Ireland cannot rely on its status as a small neutral island state on the periphery of Europe, with our geographic and political positioning serving to limit the threats to the nation's sovereignty. While the threat of a land invasion remains low, we are as vulnerable as any other European state, particularly to hybrid and related threats that attack our security and our democracy and seek to exploit our globalised economy. Defence of the State, our citizens and territory relies on Ireland's military deterrence capability and our collective security arrangements through our engagements with international partners and organisations. In particular, the SEA highlights recognised maritime, cyber and hybrid risks to be of specific concern to Ireland's security. Therefore, our national focus and Defence policy response is particularly important in these areas.

Military Defence of the State requires a balanced military force across all five operational domains, whilst managing capability priorities against available resources, and considering, planning and mitigating against the likelihood and impact of identified security threats or strategic risks. Defence capability development concerns all three Defence Force services – the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service – with a future focus on the conduct of joint multi-domain operations and defence delivery across the various operational domains. Defence has prioritised the development of a military radar capability to enable an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System (IMSS) across the Maritime, Land and Air domains. The operationalisation of this IMSS will also support and inform the further development of particular future defence capabilities, structures, levels of required interoperability, and operational outcomes. This integrated approach to the military defence of the State, will be enabled by the Joint Force Command (JFC) proposed within the CoDF. Collectively this will greatly assist in securing Ireland's national interests including the protection of critical infrastructure, underpinning Ireland's sovereignty, and contributing to wider European common defence priorities.

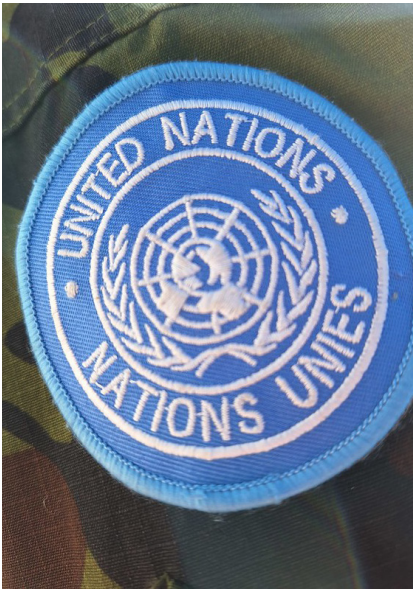


A new force design process⁸ is being undertaken to ensure that the Defence Forces is fit-for-purpose and has the required military capabilities and force structure necessary to ensure that we are postured to adapt and deter future and emerging risks and threats, and to defend our sovereignty. These new structures will be informed by developments under the CoDF Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) in relation to high level Command and Control which have been the subject of Government decision and which will lead to legislative changes .

In addition, strengthened international cooperation and partnerships with the EU, NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP), and other bilateral partners will be a key focus to enhance our defence capabilities and interoperability. Ireland's Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) with NATO 2024-2028 focuses on twenty-two partnership goals of mutual benefit and strategic value. A number of national capability goals have included other Government Departments⁹ as part of that process, enabling a whole-of-government approach for the first time. The ITPP framework presents Ireland with an opportunity to enhance cooperation in relevant areas of choice, including: cyber defence, critical infrastructure resilience, improving maritime situational awareness and climate change. The Department is also engaging with NATO through the PfP programme in the areas of national resilience, maritime security and subsea cables.

⁸ Force Design is discussed further in Chapter 5 - Defence Capabilities - Personnel.

⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs; Department of Environment, Climate and Communications [National Cyber Security Centre]



The key national Defence policy priorities and response relating to the military defence of the State across each of the military domains and Military Intelligence are the -

- » Maritime Domain - A Key Priority (section 3.2.1.1);
- » Cyber Domain (section 3.2.1.2);
- » Air Domain (section 3.2.1.3);
- » Land Domain (section 3.2.1.4);
- » Military Intelligence (section 3.2.1.5); and
- » Space Domain (section 3.2.1.6).

3.2.1.1 Maritime Domain - A Key Priority

The SEA has highlighted the importance of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) - and in particular of being able to address those threats to our national maritime security, in which we also have a responsibility to our neighbours and EU Member States. This includes extensive responsibility for maritime and air lines of communications, underwater critical infrastructure including digital cabling, energy infrastructure, and the continued monitoring and protection of sea-fishery zones and natural resources.

The Government has committed to develop a National Maritime Security Strategy, coherent with the EU's Maritime Security Strategy, which is a recommended action under the CoDF DIP. This will address how Ireland will exercise its national sovereignty and territorial integrity over its maritime domain, including resource provision, accompanying legislation, and the required decision-making systems.

The Naval Service, as the State's principal sea-going agency, is tasked with maritime defence of the State's sovereignty through the conduct of national Maritime Defence and Security Operations (MDSO). The Naval Service also routinely has a variety of other assigned roles which primarily includes the provision of a fishery protection service, maritime surveillance and deterrence, smuggling /contraband (narcotics & arms) interdiction duties in Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP), search and rescue operations, and contributions to regional and international peace and security operations.

The regeneration and growth of the Naval Service is a Defence policy response priority. In line with the CoDF DIP, a new Naval Service Development Office and a Naval Fleet Replacement Office have been established in order to develop, manage and maintain a modern and balanced fleet. Design teams will consider and advise on the requirements for surface and sub-surface capabilities to deliver national maritime defence operations and contribute to joint multi-domain operations as required. In the immediate-term, the provision of naval radar and sonar capability to generate a Recognised Maritime Picture (RMP) as part of an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System for the air, land and maritime domains is a national Defence policy response priority.



3.2.1.2 Cyber Domain

There is a recognition nationally that we collectively face new and emerging threats. We are increasingly aware of the havoc that can be wreaked by malicious actors in cyberspace, a reality brought home very powerfully by the cyberattack on the Health Service Executive in 2021. Our increased exposure to cyberspace threats, cloud computing and inter-connected technologies is a risk exposed by Ireland's economic and societal reliance on such enabling technologies. Cyber defence is increasingly crucial to the delivery of military operations. Cyber-attacks by malicious actors, both State and non-State, can exploit operational vulnerabilities, Command and Control systems and technological capabilities. Ireland's optimum method for dealing with cyber threats is by working with trusted partners and pooling information and expertise.

The response to cyber threats remains a whole-of-government challenge, with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) 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 the National Security Analysis Centre (NSAC).

Ireland published its inaugural National Cyber Security Strategy (NCSS) in 2015 and established the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) under the responsibility of DECC. The Department of Defence is represented on the Inter-Departmental Committee overseeing the implementation of the NCSS.

The National Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2024 has prioritised collaboration between the NCSC and the Defence Forces, focusing on technical skill development, information sharing, and joint exercises. The strategy commits the Defence Forces, under DECC's leadership, to further develop and enhance the State's cybersecurity capabilities. Ireland's Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) with NATO under our Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme assigns further capability goals both for the Defence Forces and the NCSC. A member of the Defence Forces is seconded to the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Estonia and the Defence Forces are also members of, or observers to, a number of EU cyber-related PESCO projects.

The creation of a Joint Cyber Defence Command will enhance military cyber defence capabilities. This will be underpinned by its national and international collaborations and partnerships to reinforce the Defence Forces Force protection, enable secure joint military communications and support national resilience efforts. The Defence Forces cyber security strategy is aligned to the EU's Cyber Defence policy Framework's¹⁰ priorities, which include the intent to prevent conflict, cooperate internationally and to stabilise cyberspace.

The ambition to digitally transform the Defence Forces is also underway and will include the establishment of a Digital Transformation Office. The Office's role is envisaged as including the creation, communication and delivery of an integrated vision for the technical transformation for the Joint Force (comprising all three military Services, including Cyber, Special Forces and Reserve elements).

3.2.1.3 Air Domain

As the State's principal military aviation agency the Air Corps is responsible for the delivery of military aviation capabilities. The land and maritime environment share with each other the cover of the air, through which the Air Corps are responsible for delivering air power capabilities. Given the extent of our land and EEZ areas combined, Air capability offers the State the ability to provide reach with both speed and flexibility, enhancing national situational awareness as well as an interdiction capability in conjunction with land and maritime partners.



The primary role of the Air Corps is defence of the State's airspace and to jointly support the Army and Naval Service operational delivery. Currently the Defence Forces have a very limited ability to monitor all aircraft operating in its territorial airspace, and limited capability for armed interception operations. In the immediate-term, the provision of a long-range persistent Air Surveillance and Control System (ASCS) capability to generate a Recognised Air Picture (RAP) as part of an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System for the air, land and maritime domains is a national Defence policy response priority.

A National Aviation Security Strategy (NASS) is a recommended action under the CoDF DIP. In conjunction with the Department of Transport, the Department of the Defence and the Defence Forces will contribute the appropriate expertise, resources and input to enable the development of that strategy in support of a whole-of-Government approach.

The Air Corps will continue to deliver Fishery Protection Patrols, a Ministerial Air Transport Service (MATS), and supports to AGS Air Support Unit (GASU) and to Heath Service Executive (HSE) outputs¹¹, while also providing a number of other air support operations in support of the civil authorities within means and capabilities.

Force Design and air fleet development processes will enable and inform future air capability requirements including planned additional fixed and rotary wing capacity, the development of counter-UAS capabilities, the further development of Remote Pilot Air Systems, the establishment of an Air Reserve component and a strategic development plan for Casement Aerodrome.

¹⁰ <https://www.european-cyber-defence-policy.com/>

¹¹ Emergency Aeromedical Support (EAS) service and the provision of an emergency inter-hospital air ambulance service.

3.2.1.4 Land Domain

The war in Ukraine has brought into sharp focus the fundamental importance of the land domain in safeguarding national sovereignty and has prompted a significant focus on the recapitalisation of Europe's Land Forces. The effective deterrence of potential adversaries, the holding of ground and the territorial integrity of states is dependent on the presence and persistence of capable and adaptable land forces.

The Army is the largest component of the Defence Forces and is of central importance in offering scalable and responsive options to Government in protecting Ireland's national interests. In addition to its primary role of national defence, the Army also provides the most significant contribution of Ireland's military capabilities and commitments to international peace and security operations and standby forces in support of EU CSDP objectives. Further to these roles, the Army provides domestic operational outputs to ATCP operations and support to the civil authorities (ATCA operations) within means and capabilities.

The CoDF highlighted a number of issues regarding the structures, sustainment and combat effectiveness of the Army. With that in mind, and in accordance with the Government decision to move to LOA 2 for the Defence Forces, a detailed force design process is ongoing in order to produce a more agile and flexible Army Force Structure, which is regionally balanced, modern, postured to defend the State and can meet current and future operational tasks.

This will include the proposed establishment of a new Army Headquarters in accordance with international standards and the development and augmentation of capabilities across the combat functions, in particular enhanced mobility, firepower, protection, sustainment, and Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition & Reconnaissance capabilities. In addition, development of Army components, including Ground-based Air-Defence as part of an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System for the air, land and maritime domains will be required, and is a national Defence policy response priority.

The goal is to develop an Army which is trained and equipped to best international standards, capable of generating, sustaining and applying effective land power to fulfil all roles assigned by Government, including deployments on higher intensity and robust overseas peace support operations.

3.2.1.5 Military Intelligence

Military Intelligence provides regular security assessments and critical cross domain situational awareness to the Minister for Defence, Department and Defence Force Headquarters in respect of state security and the safety and security of Defence Forces personnel deployed domestically and on overseas on peace support operations in support of international peace and security. It will also continue to liaise with An Garda Síochána (national civil power) as appropriate in relation to matters of common concern. In response to the persistent and emerging threats and challenges highlighted in the SEA, Military Intelligence will continue to develop, grow and enhance its capabilities, including counter-intelligence capabilities to support national resilience in cooperation with An Garda Síochána. Military Intelligence's primary purpose will remain to support the conduct of Defence Force operations and to protect and support the integrity of the organisation. Legislation will be required to underpin and enable the role of Military Intelligence.

3.2.1.6 Space Domain

Given military, civil and commercial reliance on space-based infrastructure for communications, global positioning systems, commerce, weather, and climate observation technology, Ireland must develop military capabilities to protect its space-reliant critical infrastructure and interoperability through international collaboration and partnerships to support military operations and contributions to National Resilience efforts.

3.2.2 National Resilience

The Department and the Defence Forces contribute to National Resilience efforts as a part of a whole of Government approach, by providing capabilities and support to other Government Lead Departments and Agencies. The national Defence policy response across the following areas is set out below:

- » Office of Emergency Planning (3.2.2.1);
- » Aid to the Civil Power and Aid to the Civil Authority (3.2.2.2); and
- » Joint Task Force on Drug Interdiction (3.2.2.3).

3.2.2.1 Office of Emergency Planning

The Office of Emergency Planning (OEP) is the focal point for the new European Critical Entities Resilience Directive, published in December 2022, which seeks to ensure Member States are enhancing the resilience of critical entities that provide services essential for vital societal functions or economic activities in the internal market.

This Directive creates a framework to support EU Member States in ensuring that critical entities are able to prevent, resist, absorb and recover from disruptive incidents, whether they are caused by natural hazards, accidents, terrorism, insider threats, or public health emergencies. Because of its role as a focal point for this new Directive, the OEP also ensures that information concerning the resilience of critical entities is communicated in appropriate ways to Government Departments and sectors of relevance. This includes advisories for the information of operators of essential services and critical infrastructure as and when required. Transposition of this Directive is well advanced with an initial consultation process on the implementing regulations carried out. Further bi-lateral consultations with those key stakeholders will inform the final implementation structure and reporting arrangements to allow this Directive to be fully implemented in 2024.

The ITPP that Ireland has agreed through the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme includes a Goal on resilience and civil preparedness. The Department of Defence is leading on the cross-government coordination required to achieve this Goal. This will include conducting an assessment of the state of National Resilience and civil preparedness and exploring ways of exchanging best practices for strengthening the resilience of critical infrastructure, including undersea digital cabling and energy supply infrastructure. This will further inform developments of military capabilities required to support National Resilience.

The OEP also plays an important role in the preparation and publication of Ireland's National Risk Assessment (NRA). The 2023 NRA was published by An Tánaiste in March 2024. The purpose of the NRA is to identify the key risks facing the State across a broad range of emergencies, to assess the likelihood and impact of these risks and to inform actions at a national level aimed at mitigating such risks. The process to produce this NRA was managed by the Government Task Force Subgroup on Risk as chaired by the Office of Emergency Planning, with the support of Dublin City University Business School, and the full participation of all Government Departments and Agencies.

The Department, the Defence Forces and Civil Defence all provide additional supports to Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) and Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA) through Major Emergency Management Frameworks, within means and capabilities to enhance National Resilience in times of crisis.

3.2.2.2 Aid to the Civil Power and Aid to the Civil Authority

The Defence Forces provide, on request, supports in ATCP of an ongoing and contingent nature. Main Defence Forces ATCP supports to An Garda Síochána include prisoner escorts, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Naval Diving, Engineer Specialist Search, Army cordon and search capabilities, and the Garda Air Support Unit. The Defence Forces carry out ATCA supports to other Government Departments and principal response agencies to address climate change challenges and extreme weather events, hybrid and cyber threats, pandemic and wider national emergency response and supports as well as the provision of certain aeromedical supports to the HSE.

As set out in the CoDF DIP, immediate focus is now underway in consultation with the relevant Government agencies to reduce and/or stand down a number of current Defence Forces ATCP tasks which are legacy supports and are no longer justified in the current domestic security environment. The Department will progress a review of the range of supports given to Civilian authorities in 2024 in line with the CoDF recommendations and to discontinue same where appropriate, subject to Government decision.

The Government is committed to the continued provision of these important supporting efforts and the Army, the Air Corps and Naval Service' capabilities will continue to be made available within means and capabilities, on request, to assist An Garda Síochána and Civil Authorities when appropriate.

Civil Defence and Reserve Defence Force (RDF) volunteers provide vital support in response to emergencies, as exemplified during the Covid 19 pandemic and other recent responses to extreme weather events and climate related challenges.

3.2.2.3 Joint Task Force on Drug Interdiction

The Joint Task Force on Drug Interdiction (JTF) was established in 1993 as a Government measure to improve law enforcement in relation to drugs and consists of members of An Garda Síochána, Revenue and the Defence Forces (primarily represented by the Naval Service). The JTF is brought together when the agencies with primary responsibility in this area, AGS and Revenue, review intelligence received and consider that a joint operation should be mounted.

The Defence Forces will continue to provide multi-domain capabilities as required in support of such multi-agency operations. The Defence Forces will also continue to support other departments and agencies with primary responsibility and lead in this area. The Defence Forces routinely provide important intelligence gathering capabilities as part of the JTF function. Ireland's membership of the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre-Narcotics (MAOC-N) will continue in support of the work of the JTF and drugs interdiction efforts within the EU.

3.3 INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLICY RESPONSE

Ireland's international Defence policy is predicated upon its foreign policy of military neutrality, its strong contributions to international peace and security, and engagement with international partners and organisations.

The international Defence policy response to our new security environment relates to the following areas:

- » Consultative Forum on International Security Policy (section 3.3.1);
- » Contributions to International Peace and Security (Overseas Deployments) (section 3.3.2);
- » Multilateralism and International Cooperation with Partners (section 3.3.3);
- » EU Common Security and Defence policy (section 3.3.4); and
- » NATO/Partnership for Peace (section 3.3.5).

3.3.1 Consultative Forum on International Security Policy

With the growing focus on security and defence issues across Europe and at national level, the Tánaiste as Minister for Defence and Minister for Foreign Affairs convened a national Consultative Forum on International Security Policy¹². The Forum took place in June 2023 over four days in Cork, Galway and Dublin, and witnessed over 80 panellists moderating or speaking with approximately 1,000 attendees. The Forum provided a strong evidence base as part of the overall considerations encompassed in this Defence Policy Review.

The report on the Forum by the Chair, Professor Dame Louise Richardson, highlighted a number of areas of agreement: pride in Ireland's global reputation in international affairs; the need for greater public expenditure on all three Defence Forces services, as well as on critical maritime infrastructure, and on defence against new threats such as cyberwarfare; the advantages to Ireland of multilateral engagement across a range of international institutions, and; the need for reform of the UN; and the absence of a popular mandate to drop the current policy of military neutrality.

The report also explored five contested areas; the "Triple Lock", with the prevailing view that it should be reconsidered; the link between Ireland's global reputation and its policy of military neutrality is probably more tenuous than is generally asserted; the proposals for a constitutional amendment, which could impair future governments' ability to respond effectively to a crisis; and NATO, where contrasting views were expressed. Finally, the Report states *"Ireland's conception of neutrality might more accurately be described as political alignment and military nonalignment. While Ireland's practice of neutrality does not conform to international norms, it remains popular in Ireland"*.

¹² <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/e2a6b-consultative-forum-on-international-security-policy/>

Following consideration of the Chair's Report, the Tánaiste instructed officials in the Department to prepare legislative proposals that would govern the future overseas deployments of our Defence Forces in the context of the "Triple Lock". Given the volatility in international security, the Government need in the future to be able to deploy the Defence Forces to Peace Support Operations and crisis response missions with speed and agility, whether they are led by the UN, the EU or another regional organisation without a veto from another State.

The Department of Defence are committed to engaging more broadly with the public on Defence matters and it is anticipated that undertakings such as the Consultative Forum will become a feature of the Department's medium term planning. The Consultative Forum has demonstrated to the Government, the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces that there is an appetite and requirement for public engagement on defence matters.

3.3.2 Contributions to International Peace and Security (Overseas Deployments)

The entry of Ireland into the UN in 1955 was a pivotal moment for the status of the country in terms of international engagement with the wider global community. It also had significant implications for the Defence Forces in that Ireland has maintained and sustained a continual and unbroken involvement in UN PSO since 1958. That commitment to the UN will remain at the heart of our foreign and Defence policy.

The global peace and security landscape is challenged by profound turbulence as the post-Cold War era is giving way to a new world order yet to be defined. Individuals, organizations and nations worldwide face a rapidly expanding array of challenges that are unprecedented in their scale and complexity, encompassing political, security, economic, informational, environmental, and health dimensions. The nature of conflict is changing; violent confrontations are not only becoming more prolonged but also more entrenched. There is

resurgence of interstate conflicts and warfare, while intrastate disputes, show no sign of abatement. There is little evidence to suggest that there will be less conflict in the foreseeable future. In this context, there is a pressing need for actions that promote peace, security, human rights and sustainable development. Efforts to address these urgent issues, however, are held back by an international community that is increasingly fragmented, polarised and frequently at odds. In addition, and partly in consequence, the complexities facing today's international peace support interventions, including UN large multidimensional peacekeeping missions, are mounting and add to the difficulties in providing an effective and impactful collective, multilateral strategy and response.

Some of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) are increasingly using their veto power, or threatening to use it, to prevent the UNSC from passing Council Resolutions, including those related to the PSO mandates. With no new peacekeeping missions have been approved by the UNSC since 2014, it is therefore assessed that future overseas missions will be increasingly executed and delivered by regional organisations. As a result, the UN has increasingly mandated regional organisations such as the EU, the African Union and NATO to manage military operations on its behalf and under its authority.

For a range of geopolitical and other reasons, the UNSC has closed and downscaled several missions over the last decade and the overall budget of UN peacekeeping has contracted by approximately 40% over the last decade. New thinking, options and models for future peace operations are needed. These will have to provide effective protection while factoring in current and potential political, security, financial, digital and other challenges ahead. The UN pact for the future is currently being negotiated and it is anticipated it will include a commitment to: *"Adapt peace operations and support peace enforcement to better respond to existing challenges and new realities."*



The future of overseas operations and Defence Forces contributions to international peace and security (PSO, CMO etc.) will increasingly be shaped by, international geopolitical developments and strategic sentiment from New York and Brussels. Specifically, PSO and CMO will be moulded by the commitments undertaken by states in view of the UN's "New Agenda for Peace" and the EU's "Strategic Compass". Increasingly, there is growing overlap between the UN and the EU on the approach to overseas PSO. Convergence of both is anticipated. Recognising the changing dynamics of conflict with a proliferation of new and emerging threats and technologies and increasing violent lethality, exacerbated by climate change, conflicts over energy security and illegal migration, future missions are trending towards "Chapter 7" type for semi- and non-permissive environments. Geographically, while not exclusive, this concerns the MENA region, Gulf of Guinea, the Indian Ocean and the European frontier with European Russia.

Congruent with these developments the Defence Forces contribution to overseas PSO/CMO while continuing to participate in UN mandated multilateral "Blue Hatted" missions will also see increased commitment to EU CSDP, Strategic Compass, CMO type missions. These missions, in line with the New A4P, will become instrumental in executing traditional UN missions where increased levels of capability and interoperability will be necessary. While Defence Forces continued participation in the UN mandated

Middle East missions will endure, there will be increasing anticipation that Ireland would continue its' participation in the EUBG and the Strategic Compass initiative of the Rapid Deployable Capability (RDC). This expectation will persist with an associated anticipation for enlargement in capability and capacity leading to a UN mandated EU led deployment. This EU response would subscribe to the "nimble, adaptable and effective" requirements of projected UN PSO.

The Commission on the Defence Forces identifies recommendation 10 that "Future Government decisions on Irelands' 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 defence and security policy objectives, level of ambition and defence budget". Continued participation in UN missions in the Middle East will require continued and increased investments in order to sustain commitments. While the Defence Forces will maintain current levels of troop deployments as committed and pledged to the UN and concurrently an EU Battlegroup (EUBG) commitment centred on a Company Group with its RDC commitment, both almost exclusively Army land forces, a level of ambition exists where assets (Ship or Aircraft) from both the Naval Service and Air Corps could also be deployed independently or as part of a joint force on PSO/CMO operations.

3.3.3 Multilateralism and International Cooperation with Partners

Ireland supports multilateralism, the rules-based international order and collective security engagement, with international partners and organisations through our commitment and participation in operations in support of international peace and security. As highlighted in the SEA, within the contested, dynamic and volatile security environment outlined, there is evidence of risks and threats to the multilateral rules-based international order.

No State acting alone can address the entirety of the contested, dynamic and volatile security challenges now facing us. In this context, there is a need for Ireland to deepen and broaden engagement with partner nations and organisations who support the rules-based international order including the UN, the EU, NATO's PfP programme and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and other international partners and organisations.

Ireland has strategic interests, including economic and trade interests, which depend on the rules-based international order, a stable and secure global economy, and the free flow of goods and services. In an increasingly unpredictable world, it is even more imperative that Ireland works together with like-minded partners to navigate the real and complex choices that we face. The CoDF recommended the creation of a Defence Forces Defence Attaché (DA) network to enhance defence and security bilateral relationships and significantly inform the overall strategic awareness of the shared defence and security environment, their associated risks and challenges and potential mitigation considerations. In addition, a Defence Forces DA network is also considered a key enabler in providing for routine and regular education and operational exchanges where appropriate to support bilateral and multilateral cooperation. This recommendation is being progressed.



As the outcomes and interventions at Ireland's 2023 Consultative Forum on Security and Defence have demonstrated, there is clear evidence of a growing public interest and discourse on national defence and security issues, including a deep appreciation of the benefit and value for Ireland in maintaining and enhancing close relationships with our international partners at the UN level, in the EU, and via NATO's PfP programme, particularly in areas such as cybersecurity, tackling hybrid threats and protecting undersea infrastructure. Ireland's policy of military neutrality, as practised by successive Governments over many decades, means that we do not participate in military alliances or common or mutual defence arrangements. This Government has no plans to alter that policy. However, this does not mean that we cannot and should not continue to discuss our international security policy and challenges, examine and analyse the choices we face, or seek to address identified areas of vulnerability.

3.3.4 EU Common Security and Defence Policy

Ireland reaffirms its participation in, and support of, the development of the EU CSDP initiatives, the operationalisation of the EU Global Strategy and the commitment to implement the Strategic Compass¹³. Our EU engagement is enabled by ongoing Defence Forces commitment to EU military missions. It includes historical mission and operations and our current participation with EUNAVFOR Med (Op IRINI), EUFOR BiH, the German-led EU Battlegroup in 2024/2025, and other EU led initiatives such as European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine. Ireland has recently significantly increased our levels of engagement with Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO) projects and we will continue to increase our ambitions for further PESCO project engagements.

The Department remain fully engaged in defence and security initiatives at the EU level negotiating and promoting Ireland's interests in accordance with policy, incorporating requested Defence Forces military advice and in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and other relevant government departments and agencies. Work will continue to build alliances with Member States in advancing common interests.

The continuing service of Department and Defence Forces Personnel in Brussels as staff support to the Irish Permanent Representative to the EU, in addition to military staff employed with the European Union Military Staff is a key component and reflection of our commitment and support to EU CSDP. This will be further evidenced when Ireland takes up the Chair of the EU Military Committee in May 2025.

The Department, acting as National Focal Points for the European Defence Fund (EDF) work closely with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment to assist Irish enterprise and research institutes to avail of the opportunities which the EDF presents.

The publication of the first ever European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) in March 2024 highlights the greater urgency and cohesiveness across the EU on defence and security matters. The State will engage intensively on the translation of the EDIS into regulation and to further define the role Ireland should play in this new context.

The EU response to the changed geopolitical context is continuing to take shape, and new proposals for initiatives to support a stronger and more integrated European defence are expected. This could include direct funding for defence expenditure through the EU Budget or supported by common debt issuance, and/or further financial support for the European defence industry, for example through EU institutions such as the European Investment Bank and the European Stability Mechanism. Such proposals would break new ground for the EU and Ireland will need to develop a strong and clear position in this regard.



3.3.5 NATO/Partnership for Peace

Ireland's relationship with NATO is set within the PfP framework, which Ireland joined in 1999. The aim of PfP is to enhance stability and security throughout Europe. Ireland's engagement with NATO remains within our policy of military neutrality, but reflects the potential benefits to Ireland of engaging in the wider military defence networks that NATO offer and other like-minded NATO PfP partners provide. Ireland and the ongoing Defence Forces engagement under the Planning and Review Process (PARP) and the Operational Capability Concept (OCC) are key enablers for attaining and maintaining standards of interoperability with NATO standards.

In November 2023, Ireland agreed its ITPP with NATO. The ITPP is a framework for cooperation, and it is voluntary in nature. The ITPP presents Ireland with an opportunity to enhance levels of cooperation

in relevant areas of capability development, including: combat capabilities, enhanced cyber defence, national critical infrastructure resilience, improved maritime situational awareness and countering climate change, as well as further pursuing our commitment to the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda.

Participation in the ITPP does not signal an intent to join NATO, nor does it change Ireland's position on military neutrality, but rather it is an important opportunity to increase our levels of engagement in areas of mutual cooperation and strategic benefit, both in terms of addressing challenges and vulnerabilities, but also in terms of enhancing the interoperability and of our Defence Forces to engage on and participate in future more robust peace support operations.

3.4 DEFENCE POLICY RESPONSE CONCLUSIONS

Ireland is no longer protected by its geographic position and history of military non-aggression. We are vulnerable to the same threats as our European neighbours and partners, particularly to hybrid threats which are not limited by geographic distance. The international security environment is contested, dynamic and volatile and there are challenges to the rules-based international order which supports a small open economy like Ireland. Advancements in technology have created new vulnerabilities that require a reassessment of previous assumptions about defence and security policies and the threat posed to Ireland.

In light of this, Ireland must reevaluate our Defence policy to ensure that it can provide the required direction and focus for our national defence and security requirements, whilst meeting our responsibilities as a trusted and reliable partner to other nations who share our values and support of the rules-based international order. Appropriate Defence Forces capabilities, structures and interoperability, including key enablers, particularly in the areas of Maritime, Monitoring and Surveillance, Cooperation with partners, and Hybrid, will underpin the provision of an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces postured to defend the State and to meet current and future operational tasks.

Ireland as an island nation with a large maritime area with expanding critical maritime infrastructure, and with one of the EU's largest EEZs, will prioritise the maritime domain. It is reasonably expected by partners that Ireland as a world-class economy and mature democracy will play its part in supporting European defence and security.

In the immediate term this will mean prioritising the development of a military radar capability to enable an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System (IMSS) across the Maritime, Land and Air domains for Ireland. In the medium to long term this will mean reaching LOA 2 for the Defence Forces and maintaining appropriate levels of investment in Defence.

The Government's foreign policy position confirms that Ireland will continue to maintain a policy of military neutrality which is characterised by non-membership of military alliances and non-participation in common or mutual defence arrangements with the UN Charter at the centre.

KEY POINTS

- » Ireland can no longer rely on its position as a small state on the periphery of Europe with our geographic and political position limiting the threats to the state. We also have a responsibility to our neighbours and EU partners to contribute in key areas to European defence and security.
- » To defend Ireland's sovereign interests, support national resilience and contribute to international peace and security, Ireland requires an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces fully in line with an agile Defence policy.
- » The increasing criticality of the maritime area has made this domain a priority for Ireland including the regeneration and growth of the Naval Service and is a Defence policy response priority.
- » Ireland prioritises the development of a military radar capability to enable an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System (IMSS) across the Maritime, Land and Air domains.
- » It is assessed that future overseas missions will be increasingly executed and delivered by regional organisations.
- » With the contested, dynamic and volatile security environment outlined, there is a need for Ireland to deepen and broaden engagement with partner nations and organisations who support the rules-based international order.



4 Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence and Roles of the Defence Forces

Irish Defence policy is informed by the implications of a rapidly changing security environment. Given the dynamic security landscape we now face, it is appropriate that Government sets out its Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence, reaffirm the target Level of Ambition for the Defence Forces and roles of the Defence Forces.

4.1 STRATEGIC LEVEL OF AMBITION FOR DEFENCE

The Government's overarching Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence is

To defend Irish sovereignty, protect Irish Citizens and secure Irish interests in support of Irish society, the Irish economy, our collective well-being and our territorial integrity.

To do so, Ireland requires an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces operating under and in accordance with Defence policy. In pursuit of this Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence Ireland will continue to support the multilateral system and to act as a trusted and reliable security partner to like-minded states.

4.2 LEVEL OF AMBITION 2¹⁴ FOR THE DEFENCE FORCES

The Government agreed increase in Defence funding to €1.5BN (in 2022 Prices) by 2028 to be agreed via the annual estimates process, taking account of prevailing circumstances at that time, will be maintained to enable the approved move to **Level of Ambition 2 Enhanced Capability (LOA 2)** for the Defence Forces, set out in the Report on Commission on the Defence Forces, defined as

"Building on current capabilities to address specific, priority gaps in our ability to deal with an assault on Irish sovereignty and to serve in high intensity peace support, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations overseas".

Government have agreed subsequently to give consideration to a move to **Level of Ambition 3 Conventional Capability (LOA3)** for the Defence Forces defined as

"Developing a fully spectrum defence capabilities to protect Ireland and its people to an extent comparable to similar sized countries in Europe".

¹⁴ As specified in the Report of Commission on the Defence Forces.



4.3 DEFENCE FORCES VISION 2030

This is in line with the recently published Defence Forces Vision 2030, as approved by An Tánaiste, which states:

- » Óglaigh Na hÉireann will be a joint, agile and fit-for-purpose military force, postured to defend our sovereignty, protect Irish citizens, and secure Ireland's interests.

We will do this by:

- » Transforming our culture;
- » Modernising our force to have the capability to deter threats across multi-domain operational environments; and
- » Valuing and respecting our personnel's dignity, empowering them to 'Be More', and delivering exciting and fulfilling careers for all who serve.

4.4 ROLES OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

In response to the complex and challenging security and defence environment, and the Defence policy response, a review of Defence Forces roles is planned in the next Defence Review following full analysis, including stakeholder engagement. In the interim, Defence Forces roles have been categorised hereunder whilst remaining completely consistent with Defence Forces roles as outlined in the 2015 White Paper on Defence as directed by the Minister for Defence:

- » **To provide for the Military Defence of the State's sovereignty and territorial integrity.**
 - » To provide for the military Defence of the State from armed aggression;
- » **To contribute to regional and international peace and security operations.**
 - » To participate in multi-national peace support, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations in accordance with Government direction and legislative provision;

- » **To contribute to national resilience and whole-of-government security objectives.**
 - » To aid the civil power – meaning in practice to assist, when requested, An Garda Síochána, who have primary responsibility for law and order, including the protection of the internal security of the State;
 - » To contribute to maritime security encompassing the delivery of a fishery protection service and the operation of the State’s Fishery Monitoring Centre, and in co-operation with other agencies with responsibilities in the maritime domain, to contribute to a shared common maritime operational picture;
 - » To participate in the Joint Taskforce on Drugs interdiction;
 - » To contribute to national resilience through the provision of specified Defence Aid to the Civil Authority supports to lead agencies in response to major emergencies, including cyber security emergencies, and in the maintenance of essential services, as set out in MOUs and SLAs agreed by the Department of Defence;
 - » To provide a range of other supports to government departments and agencies in line with MOUs and SLAs agreed by the Department of Defence e.g. search and rescue and air ambulance services;
 - » To contribute to Ireland’s economic well-being through engagement with industry, research and development and job initiatives, in support of government policy;
- » **To fulfil any other tasks that Government may assign from time to time.**
 - » To provide a Ministerial air transport service (MATS);
 - » To provide ceremonial services on behalf of Government.
- » **Roles of the Reserve Defence Force (RDF):**
 - » To augment the Permanent Defence Force in crisis situations;
 - » To contribute to state ceremonial events.

KEY POINTS

- » Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence: To defend Irish sovereignty, protect Irish Citizens and secure Irish interests in support of Irish society, the Irish economy, our collective well-being and our territorial integrity.
- » To do so, Ireland requires an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces.
- » In pursuit of this Strategic LOA for Defence, Ireland will also continue to support the multilateral system and to act as a trusted and reliable security partner to like-minded states.





5 Defence Capabilities – Personnel

The single greatest asset that the Defence Forces has are its personnel, military and civilian. The Government and the people of Ireland value the contribution and commitment of every member of the Defence Forces. We remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of the State on domestic framework operations and on overseas missions in support of international peace and security.

The Defence Forces are undergoing a significant transformation programme to implement the Government approved recommendations of the 2022 Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces and the 2023 Report of the Independent Review Group on Dignity and Equality (IRG). The immediate short term transformation of the Defence Forces is articulated clearly in the Strategic Framework, as published in September 2023. In the Strategic Framework the Minister defines the priority for the transformation of the Defence Forces as cultural change above all else. The strategic objective of cultural change is to ensure that the Defence Forces is an equal opportunities employer, providing a safe work environment where self-worth and continuous professional development is actively promoted and where members are respected and reflective of a contemporary and diverse Irish society. This means providing a safe workplace where self-worth is actively promoted, where mutual respect becomes a dominant feature, where all members are treated with dignity, and the organisation is one that continuously evolves to deliver positive change.

Work is ongoing to progress cultural change and in parallel the Defence Forces continue to develop the capabilities and skills required to counter the prevailing security environment threats.

This chapter sets out actions relating to

- » Recruitment and retention (section 5.1);
- » The Military Force Design process (section 5.2);
- » The civilianisation of certain Defence Forces roles (section 5.3); and
- » The future role and utility of the Reserve Defence Force (RDF) to support the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) (section 5.4).

5.1 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The immediate focus for Government is to stabilise the current strength of the Defence Forces and to plan and facilitate capacity requirements to enable further increases in line with the ambition to realise an organisation establishment of 11,500. This intent is prioritised under the Strategic Framework.

Recruitment and retention of both General Service Recruits and specialist roles across all three services is a policy imperative to sustain operational outputs and the delivery of Government assigned tasks and to ensure a fit-for-purpose Defence Forces. In prioritising the stabilisation of numbers there is a firm focus on the Naval Service given the existing specialist gaps arising from the impact of retention stresses on sea-going capability in a relatively small service, given the importance placed on the maritime domain in the Security Environment Assessment and the wider global focus on the maritime domain capabilities and threats. This will also inform the future balance of the Defence Forces across the three services. Recruitment and retention challenges, driven by a full employment labour market in Ireland, are being addressed through the implementation of a strategic recruitment and retention strategy by the Defence Forces.

Talented people are the life blood of any organisation and no less so for the Defence Forces. A continual influx and retention of talented women and men is essential to rejuvenate and bring fresh thinking and ideas that are essential in the rapidly changing world we find ourselves in today. It is also important that the Defence Forces reflects the diverse society from which we recruit. This ambition has been facilitated by a Government approved decision to increase the maximum induction age to 39 years across all streams and applies to General Service Recruits, Cadets, and certain specialist roles.

The military recruitment application process has been streamlined, whilst ensuring talent quality, including ongoing reviews of entry fitness assessments, medical screening, psychometric testing and security vetting procedures and processes. The establishment of a centralised Joint Induction Training Centre in Gormanston Camp will add significant value and coherence to recruitment ambitions. In addition to ongoing re-entry schemes and General Service recruitment, recruitment for cadets and direct entry specialists is being expanded in 2024.

External expertise will validate and advise on recruitment process improvement into the Permanent Defence Force (PDF), with an initial focus on the Naval Service, with the intention of taking the lessons learned and implementing improvements across the PDF.

To enable retention, the Defence Forces have a number of initiatives in place with a view to increasing capacity and providing increased certainty for serving members. For example, the Government legislated in 2024 to increase the maximum retirement age for Permanent Defence Force personnel to 60 across all rank streams; an increased Patrol Duty Allowance was introduced to drive sea-going initiatives; and significant capital expenditure projects are approved to provide for enhanced accommodation and training facilities.



5.2 MILITARY FORCE DESIGN

As part of the CoDF Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) there are three work packages examining Army, Air Corps and Naval Service development which will be heavily influenced by planned high level Command and Control reforms, including the redesign of Strategic Headquarters with the necessary governance structures.

These work packages are to complete their design phase in 2025 where the focus on 'Jointness' will be a key element of all stages including all three services working cooperatively together with an overarching Defence Force perspective.

5.3 CIVILIANISATION OF NON-OPERATIONAL APPOINTMENTS

There is a long established cadre of civilian employees who support the Defence Force operations in installations and barracks across the country. While these were traditionally in the crafts and technical support, the ambition is now to encompass a wider variety of functions, including data analysts, cyber defence specialists, academic instructor staffs and medical, nursing and allied professionals.

The CoDF identified the potential for greater civilianisation as part of a modern Defence Forces organisation. An increased civilian staff work force will ensure that military personnel can be released from office based employment to focus exclusively on military training, operational tasks and specific areas where military skills and expertise is a critical requisite. It is envisaged that additional civilian staff competences could be utilised to provide a wide range of administrative, technical and industrial support services to include such areas as clerical support and financial management functions, human resource management, cyber, communication and information services, audit, procurement, instructor supports, research and data analysis, and legal and health services.



A civilianisation strategy identifying areas and appointments for greater civilianisation is being developed by the Defence Forces for approval. In this context, the cohort of civilians working as part of the Defence Forces will grow over the next number of years. This is a pragmatic and internationally accepted approach in support of effective delivery of tasks directly related to operations and of putting military expertise to best use.

This civilianisation strategy will be a key enabler of Defence Forces operational effectiveness out to 2028 and beyond. The civilianisation of certain Defence Force appointments will also have a positive impact on the gender balance and diversity ambitions of the Future Force. Future identified civilian establishments will expand from the establishment prior to the CoDF as part of the overall approved Defence Force establishment of 11,500.

5.4 REINVIGORATION OF THE RESERVE

Ireland has retained a Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) in one form or another since the foundation of the State. The Government recognise the important role that the First Line Reserve, Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve have played in contributing to Ireland's defence capability. This capability will be enhanced by the ambition to establish an Air Reserve component. The Government appreciate the service of the members of the RDF and recognises, as part of the regeneration of the RDF, the value in harnessing the skills of former members of the PDF as members of the First Line Reserve to support delivery of Defence outputs.

The strategic objective for the RDF is to create a reserve force that can seamlessly train, operate and deploy to support the PDF, nationally and internationally, as and when determined by the Chief of Staff that it is in the best interests of the PDF to do so.

The Office of Reserve Affairs (ORA) was established in 2023 by the Defence Forces and the immediate strategic focus was on the development of a Reserve Regeneration and Development Plan. The Government has committed to an increased investment and funding for the RDF in 2024 and is committed to maintaining this level of spending over the next 4 years out to 2028.

Work on the RDF Regeneration and Development Plan is complete and the Plan provides an accessible and achievable roadmap for the reinvigoration of the RDF over the next 3-6 years. The RDF Regeneration and Development Plan has been approved by Government and was recently published.

The RDF Regeneration and Development Plan examines and addresses solutions to the key issues facing the Reserve and RDF Units on a local level. This RDF Regeneration and Development Plan provides a roadmap of how the PDF plan to maximise the experience and expertise across the RDF, including identifying key areas where public and private sector skills held by members of the RDF can support training and operations in ordinary situations for the PDF.

5.5 DEFENCE PERSONNEL - CONCLUSIONS

The single greatest asset that the Defence Forces has are its personnel, military and civilian. The Defence Forces are undergoing a significant transformation programme to implement the Government approved recommendations of the CoDF and IRG Reports. In the immediate-short term, Defence Forces transformation as articulated in the Strategic Framework prioritises the area of cultural change. The immediate focus for Government, the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces is to stabilise the current strength of the Defence Forces and to plan and facilitate capacity requirements to enable further increases in line with the ambition to realise an organisation establishment of 11,500.

Given the importance placed on the maritime domain, in prioritising the stabilisation of numbers there is a firm recruitment and retention focus on the Naval Service. The development of a civilianisation strategy, identifying areas and appointments for greater civilianisation, is being developed by the Defence Forces for policy decision as a key enabler of Defence Forces operational effectiveness out to 2028 and beyond.

Complementing these initiatives, is the revitalisation and regeneration of the RDF as a reserve force that can seamlessly support the PDF, nationally and internationally.

KEY POINTS

- » Our people are our greatest asset and cultural change in support of all of our people is the Government's transformation priority.
- » Recruitment and retention of both General Service Recruits and specialist roles across all three services is a key priority, particularly in the Naval Service.
- » An increased civilian staff work force will be a feature of the future Defence Forces in support of military personnel focusing on military operational tasks.
- » The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) Regeneration and Development Plan provides a roadmap of how the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) plan to maximise the experience and expertise across the RDF, including identifying key areas where public and private sector skills held by members of the RDF can support training and operations in ordinary situations for the PDF.





6 Defence Capabilities – Development

This Chapter sets out

- » The current context in which military capability development will operate (section 6.1)
- » How these military capabilities will be developed (section 6.2)
- » The current capability development focus (section 6.3)
- » Ireland’s defence capabilities priorities across all domains and threats identified in the SEA (section 6.4)
- » Defence Infrastructure (section 6.5)
- » Commission on the Defence Forces Recommendations (section 6.6)
- » How co-operating with partners will support this capability development process (section 6.7)

6.1 CURRENT CONTEXT FOR MILITARY CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

As set out in Chapter Two, the Security Environment Assessment (SEA) has illustrated that the nature of conflict has evolved significantly since the White Paper 2015. Defence and security events in any corner of the globe today have the potential to directly or indirectly affect Ireland and our strategic interests. It is evaluated that this trend will continue to evolve and present new and emerging defence and security challenges into the future.

The wider spectrum of conflict has advanced considerably over recent decades transitioning from the kinetic battlefield to also incorporate the operationalisation of computing technology, the targeting of critical infrastructure, hybrid warfare, extremist fundamentalism and public disinformation and influence campaigns etc. This defence reality is collectively termed as the ‘weaponisation of everything’. The operational environment is increasingly contested, dynamic and volatile. Defence capabilities must therefore be developed and maintained to meet these challenges across a wide spectrum of operations within the relevant operational domains of maritime, land, air, cyber and space. Internationally, capability development planning processes are recognised as a key tool required to address these challenges.

The war in Ukraine has placed significant pressure on an already limited and fragmented European defence industry, with a resulting negative impact on procurement and capability development across most EU Member States, including Ireland, in terms of cost, timelines and equipment availability and supply. The development of the first ever European Defence Industrial Strategy by the European Commission in March 2024 highlights the ambition at an EU level to progress a collaborative approach to defence capability development and procurement. Ireland recognises that there will be an increasing need for innovative and collaborative efforts to ensure our defence and security capabilities are developed and sustained.

6.2 CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Military capability can be defined as the ability to attain operational success for a given mission/task/scenario, while achieving the desired effects under specified standards and conditions through a combination of 'ways and means'. The 'ways and means' utilised to create that effect is achieved through the employment of an integrated set of aspects categorised as DOTMLPFI¹⁵ (doctrine, organisation, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities and interoperability).

Capability Development is concerned with the management of current capability and the identification of future capability needs. The aim of Capability Development is to acquire and maintain the most operationally effective and cost-efficient mix of capabilities in order to achieve the Government's desired strategic objectives. NATO is the accepted standard-setting organisation for modern military forces. EU member states, aligned and non-aligned, routinely utilise NATO standards, procedures and capability codes to define capability developments. The Defence Forces accept NATO standards as the International Organisation for Standardisation of military capability development in order to enable force interoperability.

Delivering on the Government's strategic ambition for Defence, vision for the Future Defence Forces and Level of Ambition 2 for the Defence Forces, as outlined in Chapter 4 requires the development and maintenance of a broad range of military capabilities to deliver a wide spectrum of defence services and other outputs, domestically and overseas.

A key recommendation made by the Commission on the Defence Forces called for the immediate establishment of a top-down Capability Development Planning Process through the creation of a new permanent civil-military capability development structure. In response, the Department has formally established a new permanent civil-military Capability Development Unit. This will expand in number and subject matter competence over the lifetime of this

Defence Policy Review with the objective to enable a new Capability Development Planning Process to achieve full optimisation by 2026. The establishment of the Capability Development Unit clearly articulates the ambition and requirement for longer-term investment planning and efficient procurement processes in order to enable and optimise Government investment in Defence provision, delivering an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces.

The new Capability Development Unit will introduce an effective defence investment strategy based on defined capability priorities, as identified through a strategic 'top-down' planning process across the short, medium and longer term. It will deliver, for the first time, an integrated 12 year Capability Development Programme that identifies Ireland's defence capability needs based on policy requirements, trends and evidence. This Capability Development Programme will commence with the delivery of an initial four-year Capability Development Plan that will guide a future prioritised schedule for implementation.

Current and ongoing Defence capital programmes/projects will primarily encompass Defence Forces equipment and infrastructural requirements that are planned and prioritised through the strategic Equipment Development Plan (EDP) and Infrastructural Development Plan (IDP). Defence capital investment is atypical and multi-annual, with long lead-in times. The EDP will provide for a comprehensive list of equipment projects to be progressed over an initial five-year horizon. The EDP and IDP are live documents, subjected to regular reviews and updates, while remaining cognisant of funding availability and provision, organisational and security priorities, and procurement delivery timelines. The EDP and IDP will continue to be progressed under the High Level Planning and Procurement Group until the Capability Development Planning Process is fully in place.

¹⁵ CSDP defence capabilities development, EU Policy Department for External Relations, January 2020.



6.3 CURRENT CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Over recent years, procurement across the three military services have included: a new fixed wing military transport and maritime patrol aircraft; an upgraded Armoured fleet and simulated training capabilities; next generation Software Defined Radios; and naval Inshore Patrol Vessels. These acquisitions provide a solid foundation for subsequent military capability development and enhancement.

As detailed in Chapter Three, action is required in the short to medium term. Addressing current and emerging threats and risks in the maritime and cyber domains, including Hybrid threats, is prioritised as the most urgent requirement in our approach to defence capability development ambitions. Ultimately, Ireland's Level of Ambition (LOA) for the Defence Forces, seeks to build on our current capabilities and to address priority gaps in our ability to deter assaults on Irish sovereignty, while continuing to deploy on higher intensity peace support, crisis management, and humanitarian relief operations overseas.

The CoDF DIP outlines a number of areas for development including:

- » A military radar capability¹⁶ to enable an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System (IMSS) across the Maritime, Land and Air domains;
- » Subsea awareness capability;
- » Enhanced Cyber Defence capability;
- » Enhanced strategic level Command and Control levers;

¹⁶ Ground Based Air Defence; Recognised Air Picture; Recognised Maritime Picture



6.4 IRELAND'S DEFENCE CAPABILITY PRIORITIES

Ireland's key capability development priorities will be focused across the military domains and other wider defence and security areas.

6.4.1 Military Radar capabilities

The SEA underlines the critical requirement for Ireland to enhance its situational awareness across the air, land and maritime domains. A joint civil-military project team has been established and work has commenced on procurement of an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System (IMSS). This project will initially be focused on providing a Recognised Air Picture (RAP) through the procurement of a number of radar sensors, including Naval Air Surveillance Radar (ASR) and Army Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD). These systems will be connected by an appropriate network and air Command and Control system in order to monitor our airspace and identify military and non-military activities that may pose a threat to Irish sovereignty or interests. This is a key capability to strengthen Ireland's national defence and security capabilities.

6.4.2 Maritime Domain

In the maritime domain, Defence will prioritise the development of Naval ASR to enable military radar and sonar capability to support a Defence Forces IMSS. In addition, capability development prioritisation will also focus on sub-sea, littoral and Critical Maritime Infrastructure to enhance maritime defence and security operational capability, and enable the operationalisation of the newly acquired Inshore Patrol Vessel squadron.

The new Naval Service Development and Fleet Management Offices will be key to designing a balanced, sustainable naval fleet with surface and sub-surface capabilities. This will include the ambition to develop an East Coast Base of Operations and the progression of the Multi-Role Vessel Project in accordance with the National Development Plan (2023-2027).

- » Army Force Design, and Service Development;
- » A regenerated Reserve Defence Force;
- » Anti-Drone / Unmanned Aerial Defence Systems; Remote Piloted Aerial Systems;
- » Armoured Fleet Replacement;
- » Naval Fleet Management and replacement; and
- » Replacement of existing Medium Lift Helicopter Fleet.

Achieving the most effective mix of capabilities within the resources available will require prioritisation across the three services. In setting priorities, amongst competing demands, the threats and risks identified in the SEA and the achievement of the Strategic Level of ambition for Defence, and Level of Ambition 2 (LOA) for the Defence Forces will guide decision making.

6.4.3 Land Domain

In the land domain, Defence will prioritise the development of a GBAD and Counter-UAS capability to enable an IMSS. In addition, there is a critical imperative for the land component to modernise and augment existing capabilities while also developing new capabilities. This will include, inter alia, enhanced mobility, firepower, protection, sustainment, ISTAR capabilities across a spectrum of operational levels and diverse terrains. This will ensure that the land component is an adaptable and agile force, thereby enhancing its strategic utility to government.

The new Army Force Design Office is conducting a detailed force design process to produce a more agile and flexible Army Force Structure which is regionally balanced, modern, postured to defend the State and can meet current and future operational tasks. This process will also advise and inform Capability Development Unit plans to develop key land capability requirements under the capability development process.

6.4.4 Air Domain

In the air domain, Defence will prioritise the development of a long-range persistent Air Surveillance and Control System (ASCS) capability in order to generate a Recognised Air Picture (RAP) as a component part of the proposed IMSS. In addition, there is a key requirement to determine how Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) capabilities can enhance Defence Forces capabilities in ISTAR and Force Protection roles on operations nationally and overseas. Aligned with this rationale, is the requirement to develop joint Counter-UAS capabilities to ensure resilience of Defence Forces operational military outputs and infrastructure.

The future force design and air fleet development processes will advise and inform the Capability Development Unit on air capability requirements under the capability development process, including planned CoDF DIP fixed and rotary wing capacity; the further development of Remote Piloted Air Systems (RPAS); the establishment of an Air Reserve component; and a strategic development plan for Casement Aerodrome.

6.4.5 Cyber Domain

The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces are committed, under the leadership of Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, to deliver measures to improve the wider cyber security ambitions of the State. The Defence Forces' primary cyber security role concerns the cyber security and defence of its own networks and IT systems.

The CoDF identified the cyber domain as a dynamic, complex and rapidly evolving military area of operations and recommended the creation of a new Joint Cyber Defence Command. That recommendation was accepted in principle by the Government. Further analysis to consider and to advise on the optimal approach regarding structures and staffing required to achieve the intent of the Commission is being advanced by the newly established Cyber Development Planning Office. Structures developed across the cyber domain will include considerations for the management of Defence Forces Information Technology and Communication and Information Services.

6.4.6 Hybrid¹⁷

Hybrid threats, will present new complex challenges that will require knowledge and skill development and will impact all aspects of capability development. The Department works closely on Hybrid issues with the Department of Foreign Affairs who are the lead Department on EU and international policy engagement in this area.

Ireland joined the Hybrid Centre of Excellence based in Helsinki in 2023 and enhanced situational awareness and increased engagement with international partners will continue to be critical in deterring such threats.

¹⁷ The Hybrid Centre of Excellence in Helsinki, which Ireland joined in January 2023, defines hybrid threats as "actions conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by combining overt and covert military and non-military means".

6.4.7 Space Domain

Given military, civil and commercial reliance on space-based infrastructure for communications, global positioning systems, commerce, weather, and climate observation technology, Ireland must develop military capabilities to protect its space-reliant critical infrastructure and interoperability through international collaboration and partnerships to support its military operations and its National Resilience contributions.

The joint civil-military capability development process will consider and advise on the impacts of the Space Domain from a military perspective, as the Space Domain is and will remain a significant enabler for Defence Forces force protection, interoperability and effective and ethical rules of engagement. The Department of Defence and Defence Forces will align with overall Government policy in this area.

6.4.8 Emerging Disruptive Technology

The Capability Development Unit (including the Research, Technology and Innovation Unit) will consider and advise on the enabling and inhibiting impacts of the Emerging Disruptive Technology (EDT) from a military perspective, particularly on Defence Force force protection, interoperability and effective and ethical rules of engagement.

In maximising the benefit of its existing and potential new partnership opportunities in this area, Ireland and the Defence Forces will engage with the European Defence Agency's Action Plan on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies and NATO's EDT Roadmap, which provides solid foundations from which to foster synergies between civilian, defence and space research and innovation.

6.4.9 Critical infrastructure, energy security, critical raw materials

Given Ireland's geographic position and limited supply lines, Defence will be required to support the cross government approach to national resilience in respect of energy security, critical raw materials and associated critical infrastructure. Critical Infrastructure, particularly maritime and littoral, alongside critical raw materials supply and strategic reserves, where supply risks have been identified, will need to be monitored and protected in conjunction with commercial operators.

The Defence Forces will provide the intelligence, situational awareness and response capabilities, within means, required to secure Ireland's strategic interests with respect to critical infrastructure, energy security and security of critical raw materials.

6.4.10 Climate

Climate change will continue to be a key driver of instability due to environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, population displacement, and resource scarcity. As a consequence, in the domestic context, the Defence Forces and Civil Defence, in close coordination with other State and voluntary agencies in a cross-government capacity, can expect to continue operating in more extreme climate and weather conditions nationally through ATCA and through Major Emergency Management Frameworks. The Defence Forces can similarly expect more extreme conditions when deployed internationally. As such, the joint civil-military Capability Development Unit (including the Research, Technology and Innovation Unit) will consider and advise on the impacts of the climate change from a military perspective.

In maximising the benefit of its existing and potential new partnership opportunities in this area, the European Defence Agency works to foster European defence cooperation to reduce the carbon footprint of military operations and missions and to mitigate against adverse effects to the climate and ecology, while remaining committed to strengthening defence and crisis management capabilities. The term ‘military green’ is utilised as an umbrella term for fostering responsible and more effective capabilities for the future. While the nature of military operations will require air, land and maritime assets to operate in their respective domains, it is an imperative for Ireland to ensure that our Green Defence Agenda is holistically balanced to develop a long term sustainable solution regarding the modernisation of defence equipment and infrastructure and the mitigation of our operational environmental footprint.

6.4.11 Espionage, organised crime, civil unrest and terrorism

Primary responsibility for domestic security lies with the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána with support to be provided as required by the Defence Forces. Given Ireland’s value as a target for espionage activity, the persistent threat of dissident groups, organised crime, and the potential manifestation of international terrorism and violent extremism, an enhanced Defence Forces military intelligence service and capability, including cooperation with national and international partners, remains essential. There are commitments in the Strategic Framework and CoDF DIP on the role and functions of Military Intelligence within the context of the national intelligence architecture.



6.5 DEFENCE INFRASTRUCTURE

In January 2020, the first ever 5-year Defence Forces Infrastructure Programme was published. This Infrastructure Programme focusses on ensuring that the Defence Forces have the necessary infrastructure to operate effectively, and reflects the complex environment in which the Defence Forces operate, by addressing the corresponding need for appropriate infrastructure to provide for accommodation and training of personnel, as well as the maintenance and storage of equipment for land, sea and airborne operations.

The capital allocation for Defence infrastructural projects for 2024 is €45 million, representing the highest allocation in over two decades. This increased allocation will allow significant investment, with currently over €147m worth of projects underway at different stages of development. Particularly noteworthy projects include infrastructure supporting Military Intelligence, Special Operating Forces, Medical Services, Communications and Information Services, Personnel accommodation and Health and Welfare facilities.

In order to further accelerate the delivery of military infrastructure, a new process of Master Planning, aligned with wider Defence Forces capability developments for LOA 2 for the Defence Forces has now commenced. The first of these Plans involves an assessment of the requirements for Casement Aerodrome and preparing a fully worked-up infrastructure programme to modernise and ensure the optimal use and development of existing and new facilities.

6.6 COOPERATION WITH PARTNERS

No nation acting alone can address all of the current complex and dynamic security challenges affecting global and regional defence and security. Ireland accepts this practical reality and appreciates the need to broaden and deepen our levels of engagement on defence issues internationally. In this context, increased collaborative procurement and capability development with partners will also be a feature of Irish defence capability planning to increase our knowledge, subject matter expertise and skills. This approach will serve to improve our defence interoperability, to harness and enhance efficient value-for-money procurement and capability development at the EU level.

While Ireland needs to retain our right to chart an independent course of action, this cannot be at the expense of maintaining the vital network of bilateral and multilateral partnerships, particularly as an EU Member State, that we currently enjoy. These relationships, and the flexibility needed to maintain them within our policy of military neutrality, are necessary to keep our country safe and our people secure.



6.7 COMMISSION ON THE DEFENCE FORCES RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the CoDF report (2022), which included a wide range of recommendations in relation to capabilities and funding, the Government approved a move to 'Level of Ambition 2 (LOA 2)' for the Defence Forces, as set out in the capability framework devised by the Commission. This LOA 2 set out a number of capabilities that are captured in the CoDF DIP noting that the achievement of LOA 2 is identified as a future stepping stone to LOA 3, subject to Government approval.

6.8 DEFENCE CAPABILITY CONCLUSIONS

Delivering on the Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence and vision for the Future Defence Forces (Chapter 3) requires the development and maintenance of a broad range of military capabilities to deliver a wide spectrum of defence services and other outputs, domestically and overseas. The establishment of the Capability Development Unit clearly articulates the ambition and requirement for longer-term investment planning and efficient procurement processes in order to enable and optimise Government investment in Defence provision, delivering an agile, modern and fit-for-purpose Defence Forces.

A military radar capability (i.e. Ground Based Air Defence; Recognised Air Picture; Recognised Maritime Picture) to enable an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System (IMSS) across the Maritime, Land and Air domains is a national priority. In addition, capability development prioritisation will also focus on sub-sea, littoral and Critical Maritime Infrastructure to enhance maritime defence and security operational capability. The new Army Force Design Office is conducting a detailed force design process to produce a more agile and flexible Army Force Structure which is regionally balanced, modern, postured to defend the State and can meet current and future operational tasks. The establishment of Cyber Development Planning will commence the planning required to inform decision-making for Defence Forces force design and capability development processes across the cyber domain, and the creation of a Joint Cyber Defence Command.

As part of the CoDF DIP there is a commitment to undertake a capacity and capability assessment in 2027 to inform the military capability requirements for a decision on a move to LOA 3 for the Defence Forces.

KEY POINTS

- » The changing security environment set out in Chapter 2 requires the development and maintenance of a broad range of military capabilities to deliver a wide spectrum of defence services and other outputs, domestically and overseas.
- » The new Capability Development Unit will facilitate longer term defence planning through a strategic 'top-down' planning process across the short, medium and longer term.
- » The development of radar capabilities to develop an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System for Air, Land and Sea domains for Ireland is a Government priority.
- » In response to the SEA prioritisation of the maritime domain in capability development will be a feature of Irish defence planning; this includes air surveillance as well as the sea.
- » Achieving the most effective mix of capabilities within the resources available will require prioritisation across the three services. These will be informed by the threats/risks identified in the SEA.
- » A new process of Master Planning to plan for Level of Ambition 2 for the Defence Forces infrastructure requirements has now commenced, commencing with Casement Aerodrome.
- » Hybrid threats including cyber will present new complex challenges that will require knowledge and skill development and will impact all aspects of capability development.
- » Increased collaborative procurement and capability development with partners will also be a feature of Irish defence planning.





7 Defence Command, Control, Governance and Accountability

7.1 CURRENT POSITION

The Constitution of Ireland vests the right to raise and maintain military or armed forces exclusively in the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) and expressly prohibits the raising and maintenance of any other military or armed force for any purpose whatsoever. It vests supreme command of the Defence Forces in the President of Ireland and also provides that the exercise of such command shall be regulated by law. The governing legislation is contained in the Defence Acts 1954-2015, which provide that military command of, and all executive and administrative powers in relation to, the Defence Forces, including the power to delegate command and authority, shall be exercisable by the Government and through and by the Minister for Defence. This position shall remain unchanged with the role of the Minister for Defence at the centre of Defence provision in the State.

By law, the Minister for Defence is also the head of the Department of Defence while the Secretary General is the “principal officer” of the Department and is also appointed by the Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform as the Accounting Officer for all defence expenditure. Defence Forces Headquarters (DFHQ) is the military element of the Department of Defence, which is headed by the Chief of Staff, who is the Minister’s principal military adviser. The respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff may be subject to amendment once reform of Command and Control (C2), detailed below, has been legislated for.

In light of Government decisions taken following the publication of the report by the Commission on the Defence Forces (CoDF) and the Independent Review Group on dignity and equality issues in the Defence Forces, a number of key reporting lines and oversight structures have been put in place to support the effective transformation of the Defence Forces, namely: a quarterly Strategic Framework Review Meeting between the Minister, the Secretary General and the Chief of Staff; the Implementation Oversight Group and a High Level Steering Board driving progress on CoDF Government accepted recommendations, and; the establishment of an External Oversight Body on Dignity and Equality issues in the Defence Forces.

In tandem with these new and additional governance and oversight structures, existing joint Civil-Military governance and oversight arrangements such as the Strategic Management Committee and the High Level Planning and Procurement Group, continue to operate effectively in support of Defence provision.

7.2 REFORM OF HIGH LEVEL COMMAND AND CONTROL (C2)

The issue of high level Command and Control in the Defence Forces has been a topic for debate since the foundation of the State. Currently military command is delegated from the Minister for Defence (on behalf of the Government) to five separate high ranking military Officers commanding Army Brigade units, the Naval Service and Air Corps (all Brigadier General rank). In that respect, military command is not divested in legislative provision under the Defence Act to the appointment of the Chief of Staff.

The CoDF made four recommendations in relation to Command and Control. The recommendations relate to proposed changes to the Defence Forces' structures and, in particular, the reform of high level Command and Control of the Defence Forces through the creation of a post of Chief of Defence (CHOD), to replace the current formal title and appointment of Chief of Staff. The Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces stated "The key recommendations involve the creation of a Chief of Defence (CHOD) with the appropriate military Command and Control authority of the Defence Forces at the strategic level." With the publication of the High Level Action Plan for the Report on the Commission on the Defence Forces by Government, Government stated that these four recommendations should be subject to further evaluation prior to reverting to Government for decision.

In view of the fundamental significance, including the possible constitutional implications, of the recommendations concerning high-level Command and Control, there was a requirement for the Minister to seek the advice of the Attorney General before he brought forward proposals to Government regarding these recommendations. The Attorney General has advised that there is no constitutional impediment as long as the President (Uachtaráin na hÉireann) remains as the Supreme Commander.

The CoDF's recommendation that military command should be vested in the Chief of Staff requires a radical policy change in the current legislative provisions concerning command of the Defence Forces, as well as the governance and accountability structures associated with Defence provision in the State.

Significant work has been undertaken in the Department to address the requirement to design the structure for governance, accountability and reporting required in a scenario whereby the Minister vests military command of the entire Defence Forces in the proposed position of CHOD. This is a significant, complex and sensitive task involving a fundamental review of the current regulatory framework governing the relationship between the Minister and the Defence Forces. Government has given approval to move to drafting legislation on the changes to high level Command and Control.

The proposed changes will give greater clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, Secretary General and Chief of Staff/CHOD. It will bring the Irish Defence Forces structure closer to that utilised in similar like-minded partner nations, in that it will provide a single military voice to enable the operation of joint Command and Control and optimising efficiency, effectiveness, unity of command and economy through a cross service perspective.



7.3 LEGISLATION FOR GOVERNMENT ON COMMAND AND CONTROL REFORM

To give any reform of High Level Command and Control and associated revised governance structure and lines of accountability statutory effect, there is a requirement to prepare legislation to underpin these new governance arrangements for the Defence Forces and, in particular, to remove the prohibition in Section 17 of the Defence Act 1954 on the delegation of Command and Control of the Defence Forces to one individual officer other than during a period of emergency. Government have agreed to the preparation of necessary legislation to provide for the reform of high level Command and Control, in view of the significant nature of the amendments to the Defence Acts, the legislation that will be required to implement the recommendation will be complex and will require extensive consideration and analysis. Significant interaction with other relevant stakeholders will also be required.

Upon completion, the Minister for Defence will bring forward proposals for the approval of Government on the legislative amendments required to give effect to such an approach.

7.4 EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT BODY

Following the publication of the Report of the Independent Review Group (IRG) on Dignity and Equality issues in the Defence Forces in March 2023 one of the first actions taken was the establishment of an External Oversight Body (EOB), initially on a non-statutory basis. The EOB, led by an independent chair, has been established to enhance transparency and accountability in the Defence Forces and to bring about necessary changes to workplace culture and behaviour. The EOB reports periodically to the Minister for Defence on, amongst other things, the performance and progress of the Defence Forces concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the IRG Report and the management of human resources procedures, practices and policies generally which are critical to driving the necessary culture change throughout the Defence Forces. The Defence (Amendment) Act 2024 has provided for the establishment of the Body on a statutory basis.



KEY POINTS

- » A number of key reporting lines and oversight structures have been put in place to support the effective transformation of the Defence Forces.
- » Command and Control reform will bring Ireland in line with best international practice and lead to greater clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, the Secretary General and the Chief of Defence. Along with Governance changes to support this.
- » The role of the External Oversight Body is central to ensuring transformation of the Defence Forces.



8 Defence Policy Review Conclusions

The international security environment and the Defence landscape in which the Defence Forces are operating have changed considerably since the 2015 White Paper, and since the Commission on the Defence Forces (CoDF) Report. While the immediate actions for ongoing transformation of the Defence Forces are detailed in the Strategic Framework, it is important at this juncture to affirm Government policy in respect of Defence and the changed space in which Defence as a national effort finds itself. As evidenced in the Security Environment Assessment (SEA), undertaken as part of this Defence Policy Review, Ireland is not immune to the type of threats facing partners and other nations who support the rules-based international order. Government Defence policy must therefore respond to this dynamic situation.

The SEA highlights the fact that today's threats are not purely conventional in nature, and in Ireland's context are predominately pointed towards the maritime and cyber domains, as well as other Hybrid activities. Ireland's maritime domain is one of the largest in Europe and our current Defence posture and military force design do not reflect this. The capability priorities in respect of maritime and air directly arise from the SEA and require immediate investment in specific areas of both domains. There is a genuine and pressing requirement for Ireland and the Defence Forces to acquire a comprehensive military radar capability¹⁸ to enable an Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance System (IMSS) across the Maritime, Land and Air domains as a national priority.

It is worth noting that conflict in Ukraine, Gaza and the Sahel have shown there is still potential for largescale land based conflict and that a requirement remains for capability developments in the land domain. This context will inform the Army Force Design Office's considerations on a detailed force design process to produce a more agile and flexible Army Force Structure which is regionally balanced, modern, postured to defend the State and can meet current and future operational tasks. These recommendations will be the subject of internal

Department of Defence and Defence Forces discussions given capability priorities identified in the maritime and air domains.

Ireland will remain militarily neutral but internationally engaged; non-aligned but a proactive part of the multilateral system, especially as a member of the EU and the UN. In the current climate, where the UN Security Council (UNSC) has not approved a new mission in a decade, there is scope for Ireland to further explore opportunities for bi-lateral engagements and to continue to engage with the EU Battlegroup (EUBG) and future EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC). The SEA also makes clear that no state acting alone can unilaterally address all of the threats facing modern society. Accordingly, Ireland will continue to broaden and deepen our military cooperation with partners, through multilateral organisations and on a bi-lateral basis, with a focus on developing and validating interoperable capabilities. This broader and deeper cooperation will include involvement in the EU's Permanently Structured Cooperation (PESCO) process.

Future international military deployments will likely require flexible and interoperable capabilities across all three services, and across all domains, with international partners. The prospect of higher intensity operations in more complex and challenging operational environments means that the Defence Forces will be operating as part of over-arching multilateral missions. Interoperability is a key enabler and also ensures Ireland is a trusted partner and that we can continue to engage in our important overseas role, promoting and enforcing peace in line with the UN Charter.

The Defence Forces role in support of National Resilience (in Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) and Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA)) is currently under review on foot of the Defence policy response to CoDF recommendations. Potential changes to the type and volume of ATCP and ATCA operations that the Defence Forces undertakes will have implications for future military capability development.

¹⁸ Ground Based Air Defence; Recognised Air Picture; Recognised Maritime Picture

As well as informing capability developments, the SEA impacts future force design considerations. The prioritisation of the maritime area along with the increase in Defence Forces numbers, which was agreed by Government on foot of the CoDF, will mean growth in the overall establishment of the Defence Force, particularly with regard to the number of Naval Service and Air Corps personnel in order to rebalance the future force across the three services. This rebalancing of the force will further enable the delivery of maritime operations and the joint approach. The establishments of Joint Cyber Defence Command, a growing Special Operations Force capability and Military Intelligence Service will also be important aspects of future force design. Over the lifetime of the Defence Policy Review, 'Jointness' will be a key consideration in informing capability development and the work of the civil-military Capability Development Unit. A further consideration and analysis for a move to LOA 3 for the Defence Forces capabilities, as set out in the CoDF, will be required in the future given the commitment in the Detailed Implementation Plan.

Defence policy depends on the people delivering these capabilities. People remain the Defence Force's most valuable asset and as such, should feel safe, valued and respected in the workplace. The Minister has been very clear that cultural change is a critical component and priority that enables the successful transformation and modernisation of the Defence Forces. Over the lifetime of this Defence Policy Review the Defence Forces will continue to strive to be an employer of choice in a congested labour market, with a focus on increasing female and minority participation.

A civilianisation strategy is being developed by the Defence Forces for policy decision in order to identify areas and appointments for greater inclusion of civilian staffs to support the effective delivery of tasks directly related to operations while releasing military expertise to focus on delivery of military specific tasks. It is expected that civilianisation in the Defence Forces will increase over the lifetime of this Defence Policy Review.

The reform of high level Command and Control has been supported by Government decisions during 2024. These decisions will inform forward looking Defence Forces Command and Control processes, associated governance structures and the required legislative changes. Any changes will ensure that the necessary governance and oversight processes are put in place to maintain the primacy of the role of Minister in respect of Defence and to enact the reforms agreed by Government.

The reinvigoration of the Reserve Defence Force (RDF) will offer additional capability to the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) that should be of particular support where there are specialist gaps. The RDF Regeneration Plan provides a roadmap for the reinvigoration of the RDF in the short to medium term.

The Department of Defence are committed to engaging more broadly with the public on Defence matters and it is anticipated that undertakings such as the Consultative Forum will become a feature of the Department of Defence medium term planning. The Consultative Forum has demonstrated to the Department and the Defence Forces that there is an appetite and requirement for public engagement on defence matters.

Collectively, the Defence Policy Review sets out in the context of the CoDF (2022) and the Security Environment Assessment, a National Defence policy that ensures Ireland can achieve the long term Strategic Level of Ambition for Defence in developing defence capabilities with a modern, agile, fit for purpose Defence Forces operating fully in line with Defence policy in order to defend Irish sovereignty, protect Irish Citizens and secure Irish interests in support of Irish society, the Irish economy, our collective well-being and our territorial integrity.

