SUBMISSION BY

THE IRISH MARITIME FORUM

To the

Department of the Taoiseach

31DEC19

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Submitted on behalf of The Irish Maritime Forum by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Irish Maritime Forum (TIMARFOR) is an independent and non-political collegiate of professionals who have a wide range of experience in the maritime domain. The vision of TIMARFOR is to increase awareness of the importance of Ireland’s Maritime Dimension in the national interest.

In pursuit of this vision TIMARFOR engages with Government on matters of maritime policy. We produced a paper for the Department of Defence prior to the publication of the White Paper on Defence. We produced a paper for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade prior to the publication of its policy statement “The Global Island”. We also produced a paper for the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on Marine Spatial Planning.

In 2016, to mark the hundredth anniversary of the Easter Rising, TIMARFOR held a Seminar in the National Maritime College of Ireland entitled “Revolution on an Island – The Maritime Aspects of the 1916 Rebellion”.

TIMARFOR welcomes the public consultation on the development of a National Security Strategy and is pleased to have the opportunity to make a submission. However the timeline between the invitation for submissions and the closing date for receipt of submissions is inordinately short especially for a group like ours which produces documents collectively.

In preparing to look into the future, TIMARFOR believes that our start point should be a backward glance to see what Ireland has done well and where she could have done better. To that end we propose to look at the White Paper on Defence 2015 and the Update on the White Paper 2019.
2. TIMARFOR SUBMISSION TO DEFENCE WP

Reproduced below in italics is the Executive Summary of the TIMARFOR submission to the Department of Defence in advance of the publication of the White Paper. The points made are largely relevant today. The entire document is available on our website www.theirishmaritimeforum.org

"The relationship between the various arms of the Irish Defence Forces was determined in the 1940s, at a time when Irish maritime jurisdiction was limited to three nautical miles from shore and the major threat was from interstate conflict in Europe. Irish defence policy was almost exclusively land-oriented.

While many advances, in terms of resources and capability, have been made in all Arms of the Defence Forces, the basic organisational structure is still rooted in the early part of the last century. It takes little account of Ireland’s island status or of the dramatic increases in Ireland's maritime, indeed oceanic, jurisdiction and responsibilities, which are now fully recognised in other fora, nationally and internationally. This has led to imbalances in Defence policy and decision making.

The security situation on land has improved and the threats presented by internal conflict and instability have diminished to a large degree. At the same time the challenges posed by an expanded maritime domain have correspondingly increased. This situation presents an opportunity to shift the emphasis from largely land-oriented defence and security to a more balanced posture, by increasing the emphasis on controlling our maritime domain.

There is an obvious and pressing need for a root-and-branch, open-minded approach to Irish defence planning and capability, based, not on minor adjustments to the 1940’s status quo, but on a recognition of the fundamentally changed circumstances of the 21st Century. It is to be hoped that the forthcoming White Paper will illustrate such an approach."
The Irish Maritime Forum urges:

a) That the opportunity presented by this White Paper be grasped to develop a holistic approach to Irish maritime defence and security.

b) That the balance between the elements of the Irish Defence Forces reflects the fact that we are an island nation, with a greatly enhanced maritime domain.

c) That the position of the Navy within the Defence organisation be upgraded to reflect international norms.

d) That the strength, composition and capabilities of the Navy be enhanced.

e) That Irish Naval assets participate in UN/EU sponsored missions to promote international maritime security and to operate ‘seamlessly’ alongside other EU Defence Forces, as recommended by the 2000 White Paper.

f) That affirmative action be taken to improve public knowledge and recognition of the tasks and capabilities of the current naval force, which should be entitled ‘The Irish Navy”, Cabhlach na h-Éireann”.

g) That the unique contribution of the Navy to national economic recovery be recognised and enhanced. "

TIMARFOR is of the opinion that not many of our recommendations were taken on board by the authors of the White Paper. We further point to Recommendation C above and call for more progress to be made on the review of the High Level Command and Control Structures of the Defence Forces.

It is worth examining the WP to see how its aims have progressed.

Paragraph 2.2.3 Globalisation

"As a small open economy, Ireland benefits from globalisation, which continues apace and we are now more closely linked and inter-dependent on others than ever before. At the same time, Ireland is exposed to all of the dangers, uncertainties and challenges in the wider defence and security environment that accompany globalisation.

Ireland is highly dependent on external trade links and is reliant on the unimpeded movement of goods for our economic well being. Any disruption to this movement of goods or services is of concern as Irish businesses try to grow exports to new and emerging markets. As an island nation, Ireland is highly reliant on sea transport routes, particularly via the United Kingdom, for the import and export of goods and for essential supplies. The high reliance on these transport links presents a potential vulnerability that could be exploited."

Comment.

We are an island nation and we claim the largest maritime domain to landmass of any Northwest European State. **92% of Ireland is under water**. This domain contains natural resources with a potential value of several Trillion Euro including mineral deposits, marine life, fisheries and wind and wave energy. We are a small trading nation living on an island and 99% (by volume) of everything we import or export is transported by sea. The sea and air traffic between Northern Europe and the USA passes close to our shores and through or above waters over which we have jurisdiction or for which we have responsibility.
As an island nation and an open trading economy our national security cannot be seen in a domestic context only. Our security both benefits from and can be adversely effected by the acts and postures of other actors on the regional and international stage.

Any threat to Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) is a National Security threat and interesting to note that the Defence White Paper Update referred specifically to dependance on SLOCs in the context of Brexit (para 2.2.10). Any interruption to sea borne trade would cause an immediate crisis and while currently there may be a limited threat to the close sea routes, we need to be aware of the severe nature of effects from events further afield. Attacks may be from criminal, non-state or state actors and not even be specifically directed at Ireland but we may be collateral damage.

Maritime mine and IED counter-measures arose as a logical outcome of the threat to SLOCs. This is recognised in WP 2015 Project 29F

“Replace the two existing Coastal Patrol Vessels, the LÉ Ciara and LÉ Orla with similar vessels with counter-mine and counter-Improvised Explosive Device (IED) capabilities.”

We note that this project is “Paused”. It is our view that the capability can be delivered without any linkage to ship replacement.

**Paragraph 3.4.4 EU Maritime Security Strategy and EUMSS Action Plan**

"The EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) was adopted by Council in June 2014 and the Action Plan to implement the strategy was agreed in December 2014. The EUMSS was developed jointly by the Council, member states, the Commission and the High Representative and involved all relevant stakeholders and actors both at EU and at national level. It respects member states’ internal organisation and competences (regulated by national laws) as well
as EU and national policies and legislation and builds on initiatives by member states and relevant EU bodies and agencies. The Action Plan is made up of five workstrands; (1) External action; (2) Maritime awareness, Surveillance and information sharing; (3) Capability development; (4) Risk management, Protection of critical maritime Infrastructure and Crisis response; and, (5) Maritime security research and innovation, education and training. Given our geographic position and maritime interests, Ireland has a very significant stake in the matters comprehended by the EUMSS. The White Paper confirms Ireland’s strong support for the EUMSS and its Action Plan. Ireland will continue to support the internal as well as the external dimension of maritime security and will continue to stress the importance of the global aspect of the Action Plan."

Comment

Ireland as an EU Member State has agreed the overarching EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (2016), and the other EU Security Strategies – (inter alia Internal Security, Energy Security, Maritime Security etc.). Any National Security Strategy must reflect EU strategies. In TIMARFOR’s area of interest this is specifically the EU Maritime Security Strategy and policies, programmes and plans arising from it. Logically Ireland also needs to embrace the actual implementation of these Strategies within domestic policy making. The evidence is of limited commitment to such plans and policy at the implementation level. Ireland’s limited participation in PESCO projects (2 of 47) being a case in point.

The Defence WP Update 2019 at para 5.12 states that PESCO participation shows we are “…fully committed EU Member State”…. It is our view that the facts demonstrate that our commitment to EU security and defence is actually very limited and selective.

Paragraph 7.1 Policy Context

"The successful delivery of defence outputs in today’s world depends on a range of issues, but the most fundamental
requirement and a critical factor for success is well-trained, motivated, experienced and capable personnel with a wide range of skills and experience in order to successfully deliver government requirements. In the medium term, a review of civil and military roles/functions will be undertaken to determine the optimum mix of civil service, civilian and military personnel required to address both operational and support roles within the Defence Organisation. In addition, a gap analysis of skill-sets within the PDF will be conducted to identify the frequency of such gaps and to identify appropriate measures to address them."

Paragraph 7.3.1 Defence Forces Recruitment

"Continuous recruitment is the lifeblood of the Defence Forces providing young, motivated and enthusiastic personnel to replenish military formations for operational deployments. Over the course of the White Paper the Government are committed to maintaining a PDF establishment of at least 9,500 serving personnel. To this end, the Defence Forces will review and develop rolling medium term manpower planning requirements so as to deliver an effective and efficient workforce mix in terms of age profile, skills, competencies and experience, and current personnel policies to support this will be further developed and implemented."

In the 2019 Update to the White Paper on Defence at Annex E Programme for a Partnership Government – Department of Defence led Commitments the following point is included

"Ensure at least 9,500 Permanent Defence Forces personnel and a full-strength reserve."

The 2019 Update further states,

"The Defence Forces are below their establishment, significantly so in the case of the Air Corps and Naval Service and it remains a key priority to turn this around."

Comment.
The response of Government and the Department of Defence to the current personnel crisis gives the lie to the repeatedly stated aspirations for full strength Defence Forces as two naval ships remain tied up due to lack of crews. There is little evidence that "it remains a key priority to turn this around". Indeed there are press reports this morning (30DEC) that more money is spent feeding a prisoner in our jails than is spent feeding a serving member of the Defence Forces. It is the constant drip feed of evidence that the State does not value soldiers, sailors and aircrew that has driven morale to its current abysmal level, leading to the loss of expensively trained and educated personnel.

**Paragraph10.2.6 Defence Forces Senior Management Arrangements**

"The Defence Forces, in common with most military forces internationally are organised into their land, air, and maritime elements with appropriate support structures. A significant requirement in military management, including command and control, is the requirement to achieve appropriate "jointness" between the different services comprehending the forces for land, air and sea operations. This was a theme that occurred through the White Paper consultation process, especially in the international engagement and is common the world-over. Issues arise in relation to best planning, optimal organisation and management of joint operations.

Arrangements exist for joint operations, and the Defence Forces execute these very successfully, although the circumstances in which these are required on a large scale tend to be limited. However, the requirement for joint operations is likely to increase in the future, especially in the overseas domain. In recognition of this trend, and based on lessons learned from the White Paper process, it is proposed to consider the scope to enhance "jointness" across the military organisation. This was not dealt
with as part of the more recent re-organisation of military structures. **As outlined in Chapter 6, the Government have decided that the Secretary General and Chief of Staff will jointly undertake a review of the current high level command and control structures in the Defence Forces having regard to international best practice on military command and control and drawing upon external expertise. This will include a review of structures for managing joint operations and intelligence. Recommendations for change will be brought forward to the Minister for Defence for consideration.**

The 2019 Update states, "In terms of the review of progress with the ongoing high level Command and Control project (number 26), **the Secretary General and Chief of Staff emphasised the major significance of this project** given its potential implications for other projects and also wider policy developments, including those arising from implementation of the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland."

**Comment**

Other than stating that the Review of the High Level Command and Control Structures of the DF is "of major significance" and that the project is Underway, there is no evidence in the 2019 Update of any progress being made.
4. Conclusion

The Irish Maritime Forum supports the fleet replacement programme which has seen the addition of four new Offshore Patrol Vessels to replace three which had more than reached the end of their notional life-span.

TIMARFOR notes that only 42 of 95 White Paper projects have been initiated and only 15 closed. There is a need for urgency particularly in relation to personnel strength and a high level command structure which reflect our status as an island nation

TIMARFOR would like to add two further recommendations to those listed in Section 2 above.

- That any rational National Security Strategy must be compatible with and be nested within the EU Security Strategies to which Ireland as a member state is committed.

- That the outstanding projects arising from the White Paper on Defence 2015 as reviewed in 2019 be expedited to action and delivery.