

DEFENCE

FORCES

PAY AND CONDITIONS

SINN FÉIN

PROPOSALS

ELECTION

2020



Defence Forces Pay & Conditions

The Defence Forces' primary functions are to defend the State against armed aggression, provide maritime security and fishery protection, air ambulance and other cover, and has also been tasked with participating in multinational peace and humanitarian relief operations across the globe in support of the United Nations.

Sinn Féin commend the lifesaving work undertaken by our navy in the Mediterranean Sea. In government, we will ensure that the Irish navy play an active role in search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean and will support NGO efforts in this vital work as well.

Ireland has a long and proud tradition of constructive neutrality. Unfortunately, this bed rock of Irish foreign policy has been undermined by successive Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil led governments. Sinn Féin will ensure that our neutrality is restored and seek to have it enshrined in the Constitution, thus allowing our Defence Forces to continue its important role as peacekeepers across the globe.

In recent years, due to government cuts, there has been a decline in Defence Forces numbers, a marginalising of the Reserve Defence Forces, and a declining morale among members, due in no small measures to the lack of appropriate pay and conditions.

The untenable pay and conditions for current members of the Defence Forces must be addressed. Urgent action is required to ensure that Defence Forces personnel can fully carry out its allotted tasks and to do this they must receive fair pay to ensure the better retention of current members and new recruits and that they feel respected and are no longer required to sleep on ships to save rents or take out second jobs or personal loans to cover basic living requirements.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- » **Setting up a pay review commission on defence members pay in the first six months of a new Government tasked with establishing fair remuneration for the defence forces.**
- » **Roll out a plan for the implementation of the Organisation of Working Time Act (OWTA) for the Defence Forces**
- » **Giving Defence Forces unions the right to collectively bargain on pay, terms and conditions issues and affiliate to ICTU**
- » **Increasing member numbers year on year to rebuild the Defence Forces to a baseline figure of 9,500 members**
- » **Introducing a capital investment programme for upgrading of current barracks infrastructure prioritising living quarters from the outset**
- » **Allowing for a voluntary extension period of up to five years subject to a fitness to serve criteria allowing Defence Forces members to serve beyond the current age limit**
- » **Initiate a root and branch review of the current Department of Defence and instigate reforms to improve the working relationship between the Department and the defence forces structures and particularly around responsibility for budget spending**
- » **Immediately draw up a plan of action to help alleviate and address the ongoing health problems of Defence Forces personnel suffering as a result of being forced to take the anti-malaria drug Lariam.**
- » **Automatically granting a medical card to any Defence Forces member who has to leave the force due to a medical condition**

