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14th May 2018

Ms Kathleen O'Toole
Chairperson
Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland

Dear Kathleen,

CHIEF OF STAFF'S WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO
THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF POLICING IN IRELAND

Introduction

As we continue to navigate the ever changing waters of today's threat environment, the requirement for a structured national security framework that would ensure an integrated, comprehensive and collaborative approach is now of paramount importance. The multi-faceted nature of the emerging risks, both domestic and external, include cyber attacks and espionage, sometimes state sponsored, organised criminal networks, violent extremism and international terrorism. In addition the evolving pressures of climate change, global population increase and wealth inequality contribute *inter alia* to mass migration bringing additional security pressures. Darwin's observation that "*in the long history of humankind those who have learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed*" is more relevant now than ever before.

When I last addressed the Commission I highlighted how Ireland's ability to counter the increasing range and variety of security threats could be further enhanced through a coordinated, 'whole of government' approach. I also underlined the importance of two cornerstones of any sound and fit-for-purpose national security capability;

- The development of a National Security Strategy, which would establish a broader, more holistic view of the security challenges affecting the State, and outline the ways, means and ends of ensuring the security of the State and of its citizens.
- The creation of a permanent and appropriately resourced National Security Architecture, which would provide cross-cutting leadership and governance and be capable of co-ordinating the various agencies with competence in, for example, security operations, intelligence fusion and threat assessments.

International Models





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In the course of recent engagements with a number of chiefs of defence each has emphasised the importance of having an effective national security strategy underpinned by an effective security architecture. They have also emphasised the requirement to have this architecture supported by a functional ‘battle rhythm’ or regularity of meetings, in which all of the key security stakeholders are implicated. This in turn creates a real-time intelligence and security picture and a proactive (as opposed to reactive) mindset. The UK security network had been managed on a more *ad hoc* basis in the past, but their security capabilities had been significantly enhanced by the scheduling of routine meetings at each level of their structure. This allowed for timely monitoring of ongoing issues and prudent planning for likely threats. It has also been emphasised to me the absolute necessity of having the national security architecture nested in the office of the Prime Minister, thereby reflecting the strategic importance of the framework and ensuring maximum situational awareness and unity of effort across all stakeholders.

In 2008 Australia successfully moved away from a one-dimensional national security system to a more ‘whole of government’, multi-agency approach, again led by the office of the Prime Minister. The publication of a National Security Statement recognised at the time the rapidly changing paradigm within the global security space, and the worrying threats that were increasingly evident. Ten years later, we have seen ample evidence of these new security threats across our own European neighbourhood, including on several occasions very recently in our nearest neighbour.

National Security Strategy

The management of national security risks is complex and requires a wide range of government agencies to work together in a structured and coordinated fashion towards a single common purpose. Significant progress has already been made in this regard with the recent establishment of Cabinet Committee ‘F’, and the Senior Officials Group. However, the development of an Irish National Security Strategy, similar to that published by the UK in 2015, is critical in order to set out our national priorities and underpin the work of the National Security Committee (NSC), Committee ‘F’ and all other security agencies in the State.

National Security Architecture

In addition to the requirement for a National Security Strategy, there is a pressing need to have a world class and fit-for-purpose national security architecture. The provision of timely and accurate national security assessments requires that a comprehensive framework for inter-agency collaboration be put in place. In that context it is my strongly held professional opinion that there is a requirement for a national intelligence fusion capability, which would collate and analyse inputs from a range of intelligence and security stakeholders (including *inter alia* An Garda Síochána, Military Intelligence, Customs, The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Department of Transport and others as well as selected foreign partners). This agency would be





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best placed to provide strategic intelligence and security assessments to the National Security Committee (NSC), to Cabinet Committee 'F' and ultimately to the Government. A recent requirement to prepare a security assessment in respect of suspected foreign state activities in Ireland and in the UK serves as a prime example of the type of task that could be undertaken by this body, along with more long-term, pre-emptive analysis and assessments.

In other jurisdictions, the existence of a permanent body of this type is seen as essential to state sovereignty and the generation and maintenance of an evidence-based and timely national intelligence picture. The bodies are used to inform decision making at the strategic level, adding clarity to the identification of national interests. If established, an Irish national intelligence fusion agency would act as a day-to-day working body for this purpose and facilitate multi-agency collaboration achieving congruence in effort, improving effectiveness, efficiency and building trust. In the UK, this function is overseen by the Joint Intelligence Committee, which is supported by a permanent secretariat of analysts and supporting staff.

Conclusion

We should never underestimate the added value gained when we work together in a planned, coherent and structured manner. It is no longer feasible to expect our security services to operate in a stove-piped manner if we wish to guarantee the best possible anticipation of and defence against current security threats. The evolution of 'hybrid threats' means that state security may be undermined in a co-ordinated manner. State sponsored hybrid threats may simultaneously target a variety of environments, land, air, maritime, cyber, and space from the tactical to the strategic with espionage, criminal, terrorist, military and other dimensions. The inability of a sectoral approach to security to read across the span of activities and 'join the dots' simply means that such an approach is no longer fit for purpose. While the detail of a National Security Strategy and a new security architecture would need to be carefully considered and approved at the highest political level, it is clear from best international practice that agreed approaches would need to be reflected in legislation, to ensure legal legitimacy and appropriate governance. Establishing and institutionalising a properly resourced national security architecture and governance structure is a fundamental requirement of our sovereignty.

Mark Mellett
Vice Admiral
Chief of Staff

