April 2021

Duncan Smith, T.D.,

Dáil Éireann,

Leinster House,

Dublin 2.

Duncan.Smith@oireachtas.ie

RE: Parliamentary Question 200 of 13th October 2020

Dear Deputy Smith,

I refer to the above-referenced Parliamentary Question and my original reply stating that it was not possible to provide the required information within the timeframe available. I am now in a position to do so.

The table below shows the number of personnel inducted in each of the years 2012 to 2019 and as at 30th September for 2020, for the Army, Air Corps, Naval Service and Reserve Defence Force (RDF): -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Army** | **Air Corps** | **Naval Service** | **RDF** |
| **2012** | Total 721\* | 344 |
| **2013** | Total 445\* | 1 |
| **2014** | 401 | 24 | 83 | 157 |
| **2015** | 275 | 35 | 95 | 341 |
| **2016** | 574 | 12 | 104 | 86 |
| **2017** | 630 | 31 | 90 | 154 |
| **2018** | 485 | 25 | 102 | 142 |
| **2019** | 460 | 33 | 112 | 144 |
| **2020\*\*** | 269 | 35 | 36 | 57 |

\*The military authorities advise that the breakdown of PDF induction figures by branch are not available for years 2012 & 2013.

\*\*As at 30th September 2020.

The table below shows the number of soldiers discharged in each of the years 2012 to 2019 and as at 30th September for 2020, for the Army, Air Corps and Reserve Defence Force (RDF). Total discharges in each branch include those that discharged during training.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **Army** | **Air Corps** | **Naval Service** | **RDF** |
|   | **Total** | **Discharged during training** | **Total** | **Discharged during training** | **Total** | **Discharged during training** | **Total** |
| **2012** | 657 | 93 | 61 | 11 | 85 | 22 | 861 |
| **2013** | 366 | 86 | 33 | 0 | 74 | 20 | 1047 |
| **2014** | 379 | 105 | 43 | 1 | 59 | 19 | 903 |
| **2015** | 438 | 62 | 59 | 3 | 74 | 18 | 449 |
| **2016** | 525 | 137 | 51 | 4 | 103 | 30 | 338 |
| **2017** | 588 | 167 | 58 | 6 | 96 | 36 | 347 |
| **2018** | 529 | 110 | 63 | 4 | 148 | 25 | 302 |
| **2019** | 655 | 157 | 88 | 7 | 139 | 22 | 152 |
| **2020\*** | 331 | 75 | 32 | 2 | 70 | 16 | 117 |

\* As at 30th September 2020.

In 2020, as of 31st December 2020, a total of 547 personnel were inducted to the Permanent Defence Force (PDF), with 636 discharged (190 exited prior to completion of their initial training). The RDF recorded 69 inductions and 143 discharges for that same period.

Within the PDF, the term 'discharges' encompasses personnel who left for a variety of reasons including on age grounds, at end of contract and voluntary discharges and, as can be seen in the above table, also includes a number of trainees who exited prior to completion of their initial training.

I accept that there are on-going difficulties in the Defence Forces, and these have been well-documented.

While the restoration of capacity in the Defence Forces will take time, the PSPC report on recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces made several recommendations with a view to addressing recruitment and retention issues and these have been progressed.

In addition, the Commission on the Defence Forces is tasked with examining a range of issues, including recruitment and retention.  There is also a commitment to establish a pay review body for the Defence Forces when the Commission has completed its work.

Yours sincerely

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Simon Coveney TD

Minister for Defence and

Minister for Foreign Affairs