



NOV/2009

100th Presidium Meeting, Brussels-Belgium

National Report of ANS (Portugal)

1 → Current main concerns of soldiers in our country:

1.1. Operations:

Portuguese Armed Forces contingents are participating in Peace Keeping, Peace Enforcement and Humanitarian missions since 1991.

At the present moment Portugal has troops in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

There are some Military Observers in East-Timor.

There are small groups of military advisors in some African countries (mainly former portuguese colonies) in Technical Cooperation missions and development agreements.

At this moment, another Portuguese frigate is being prepared to start operations in the Golf of Aden, integrating a NATO fleet with the purpose of fighting against piracy and protecting commercial ships.

1.2. Active duty concerns / Career issues:

The long ago announced reestructuration of the Portuguese Armed Forces which already met three different working groups during several years, and several projects afterwards, is far from ending. However, the results of these working groups are still to be known, leading to a great deal of uncertainty among troops (and relatives) concerning their future.

Active duty servicemen don't progress in their careers, remaining long years in the same ranks. This issue is particularly noticed in the sergeants and corporals careers.

A reduction of 1300 servicemen is foreseen until 2013. A law was presented, approved and published by the former government before last September elections.

Along with this law, another one was produced concerning the new wages system. Besides all complaints we have about the application of these new laws, we have to inform that, the right of participation, the right to be consulted, the right to have something to say in social and professional matters, once again, was not respected by the Portuguese authorities.

1.3. Social concerns

Portuguese servicemen and their dependents are facing drastic changes in retirement systems, as well as in their social and health care assistance services and systems.

Meanwhile, due to financial restrictions, the wages raise is always lower than the official inflation rate. Thus, the social conditions, the purchasing power of servicemen and their dependents have been decreasing during the last thirty years.

Retired personnel are facing severe difficulties due to changes in health and social assistance system, due to the lack of implementation of the pension rules and laws, causing the Portuguese state owing them hundreds of thousands of euros, and because most of the implemented changes are now being applied to the retired personnel, when it was supposed they would be out of the drastic changes, since they were retired under different rules and laws.

The new Board of Directors of the Armed Forces Social Care Institute (an institute fed, paid and maintained mainly by the military) is doing a big effort, along with the professional associations, in order to recover the social assistance service to more acceptable levels, and to put this institute performing the job it was created for: to promote and provide social care and assistance to the servicemen and their relatives.

2 ➔ Your associations' main current concerns:

2.1. In spite of the existing national laws approved at the national parliament in August 2001, recognizing the right of association for military personnel, and the different recommendations from several european bodies, Portuguese military professional associations are not being involved in a truthful social dialogue with the governments and the military leadership, in matters concerning the social and professional aspects of their careers and welfare.

On the other hand, the lack of accomplishment of several laws and regulations concerning the military, by the current and previous governments, created a situation where the portuguese state raised a crescent debt over one thousand million euros to the military family.

Board members of the associations, who are just calling the attention so the law can be respected and reinforced, are facing disciplinary procedures, endangering their careers and their future. Their military records and their military and professional behaviour are outstanding. They are being punished by political reasons.

2.2. The disciplinary procedures referred in the previous point, aim to install the fear and demotivation among the supporting members of the associations, trying to silence the uncomfortable voices claiming for law and rights.

In addition, the fact of not reinforcing the existing laws, not recognizing the rights of association board members, not implementing the European directives and recommendations is bringing more difficulties to the regular work of the board members. Thus, it is more difficult to meet with the members in order to recruit new members.

Finally, not having a very well defined board member statute brings more difficulties in order to combine the daily work in the military installations and the necessary work as board members at the association office or in the field, among the members.

3 ➔ Any other issue of importance:

- Last 27th September we held national elections. The ruling Socialist party lost their parliamentary majority but won the elections. The Socialist party leader, José Socrates is, once again, the Prime-Minister. The MoD has changed as well as the Defence Secretary of State (acting deputy MoD). The new MoD is the former minister of Parliamentary Affairs and the new Portuguese government started its functions during last week. Our association is preparing a document to deliver to the new MoD as the ANS contribution to the XVIII Constitutional Government.

- Following the last year ANS announcement of a project of Amnesty to the servicemen punished due to association matters and the public presentation of this project last March, our association is still conducting a movement to gather support by subscribing a document that will be delivered to the National Parliament, after gathering some thousands of signatures from citizens in general. Besides the delivery of this document to the National Parliament the document will be presented as well to the different political parties, Military Chiefs of Staff, MoD and to the Military House of the President of the Republic.

Lisboa, November 2009

ANS Board