



**APR/2011**  
**103<sup>th</sup> Presidium Meeting, Stockholm - Sweden**

**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 maintains troops in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Lebanon.

There are some Military Observers in Iraq, Bosnia, Congo DR, Sudan and East- Timor as well as small groups of military advisors in several African countries in Technical Cooperation missions and agreements.

At the present moment, a Portuguese frigate is starting operations in the Gulf of Aden, integrating an EU fleet with the purpose of fighting piracy and to protect commercial ships. This EU fleet is under the command of a Portuguese Admiral.

Portugal is participating with some aircrafts in operations at the Mediterranean Sea, due to the Libyan situation, in patrol and humanitarian missions.

**1.2. Active duty concerns / Career issues:**

The long ago announced reestructuration of the Portuguese Armed Forces which already knew 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. On March 7 the Minister of Defence stated, during an audience with ANS, that Portuguese public opinion may not be in accordance with such restructuring process to occur now, due to the serious economical and financial restrictions we are facing.

That is not our opinion. Considering that Portuguese Armed Forces are facing a member's reduction process, the promotions and wages are freezed, we believe this is the right moment to proceed with a constructive and participated discussion about the future of the military careers.

Active duty servicemen are lacking of progressing in their careers, remaining long years in the same ranks. This issue is particularly noticed in the sergeants and corporals careers.

Rules respecting the young contracted servicemen were suddenly changed without their acknowledgement and against the promises made when they were enlisted and joined the forces, generating feelings of mistrust towards the government. These situations already lead to strong difficulties in the recruitment system, being noticeable the lack of volunteers to serve in the forces.

### **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.

After a period where, due to financial restrictions, the wages raise was always lower than the official inflation rate, Portuguese servicemen and their families are now facing new strong reductions in their payment which vary between 3,5% and 10%. Thus, the social conditions and income of servicemen and their dependents have been decreasing all over the last thirty years.

Retired personnel are facing severe difficulties mostly because of changes in health and social assistance system, but also because of the lack of implementation of pension rules and laws, causing the Portuguese state to owe 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 that they would be out of the drastic changes, once they were retired under different rules and laws.

## **2→ Your associations' main current concerns:**

**2.1.** The Portuguese Armed Forces wages system was reformulated since January 2010 in order to make it converge with public administration system. ANS strongly opposed to it since the beginning of this restructuring law, stating it would be necessary to correct all the discrepancies and injustices of the old system before the implementation of the transition to the new one. Neither the government nor the leadership wanted to hear our informed opinion, in which we stated that this new system would be impractical, would create even more injustices and involve huge amounts. Additionally, the government budget for 2010 established substantial cuts in staff costs, once again disregarding the warnings ANS issued about the effects that this sub budgeting would create with the new wage system.

**2.2.** Due to budgetary control mechanisms established in 2011, the government ordered an audit to the Portuguese Armed Forces financial departments performed by the Finances General Inspection Department. Preliminary reports of this audit were known through the press during last week, leaving politicians out of their responsibilities, it makes a manipulated

accusation towards the military of committing irregularities during the implementation process of the new wage system, concluding everyone will have to return the sums improperly received since January 2010. To the Portuguese public opinion this will create a negative image of its military corps and may cause a massive revolt within the military. ANS has already responded to this outrage through a national statement, but we face a very hard job to tackle the implications of this report on social conditions of the military and their families and about the image Portuguese citizens may have of their armed forces.

### **3 → Any other issue of importance:**

- Last month of March, Portuguese parliament was dissolved and Portugal has now a management government. General elections settled for June 5 will origin a new period of our democracy, overshadowed by the entry of foreign aid in our country. The professional associations ANS, AOFA and AP are preparing joint initiatives to be conducted during May, before the election campaign.
- ANS has elected its new Board last January. The elected list is a mix of new members together with more experienced elements. Now it is time for an internal organization effort, in order to prepare our association for the near future challenges. We Portuguese servicemen and -women, as in all other European countries, will face times of austerity and strong attacks to our social conditions and to our families. We must be organized, united and ready to fight for our rights.
- All Chiefs of the Portuguese Armed Forces have changed in late 2010. ANS solicited audiences to all new holders for greetings presentation and discussion of social and professional issues. So far we were received by the Navy Chief of Staff (January 25) and by the Army Chief of Staff (March 22). Additionally ANS also had meetings with the National Defence Committee of Portuguese Parliament (January 18) and with MoD, in the aforementioned audience. In all these instances, beyond the ceremonial greetings, ANS presented detailed issues and concerns about problems Portuguese Military Family is facing.

Lisboa, April 2011

ANS Board