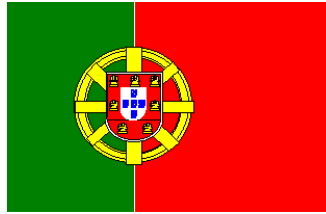




Associação
Nacional de
Sargentos
ANS - Portugal



OCT/2011 104th 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 since 1991 in Peace Keeping, Peace Enforcement and Humanitarian missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Lebanon. There are some Military Observers in Bosnia, Congo DR, Uganda and East-Timor as well as small groups of military advisors in several African countries in Technical Cooperation missions and agreements.

The Portuguese command of EUNAVFOR (and a frigate) was relieved last August. Portugal has another frigate, in the NATO Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) fleet, at operation 'Ocean Shield', until the end of DEC11.

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

Portugal has a total of 753 military personnel engaged in all these missions.

All of these missions will experience severe reductions in 2012, as actual MOD recently stated, due to austerity measures.

1.2. Active duty concerns / Career issues:

A career project is still missing, even in the plans of the new Government, due to the long last project of restructuration of the Portuguese Armed Forces. Two governments, three different working groups, during several years and several projects afterwards, and the process is far from ending. For the first time in ANS history all the Military Leaders granted us audiences, this along with the new Parliament and Government in functions, that also received us, kept the issue *career restructuration* on ANS agenda during the last six months.

Last MOD said that Portuguese public opinion might not be in accordance with such restructuring process occurring now, due to the serious economical and financial restrictions we are facing. Aware of this problem, the Armed Forces Chiefs did nothing but *protesting*. With no power of decision to really command and manage Portuguese Armed Forces, they and all the servicemen -women face austerity, member's reduction processes, "frozen" promotions and wages. The new MOD received ANS Board but said nothing about that

matter, even though he assumed that the issue is important. We still believe this is the right moment to proceed with a constructive and participated discussion about the future of the military careers. Doing it now would allow a useful base to gradually solve the problems of training, progression, wages and recognition of the Armed Forces role within the Public Portuguese Services and Missions. Not doing it is to continue living under a really sad scenario. Just a generic glance, with three major problems:

- Active duty servicemen are lacking career progress, remaining long years in the same ranks. This issue is particularly noticed in the sergeants and caporals careers;
- Rules respecting the young contracted servicemen were suddenly changed without their acknowledgement and against the contracts signed 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;
- A recent inspective audit report led to a joint order from both the Defence and Finance Ministers suggesting a fallback to the salaries of 2009, in order to recover 26M € in budget expenditure on personnel in 2010. The problem remains and will be repeated in 2011 due to bad legislation and under-budgeting (see also 2.1).

1.3. Social concerns

In addition to the social problems directly related to careers, other social issues are still unsolved or have been worsened:

- 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 when wages raised but always below the official inflation rate, due to financial restrictions, Portuguese servicemen and their families are now facing new strong reductions in their wages which vary between 3,5% and 10%. Thus, the social conditions and income of servicemen and their families have been decreasing 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;
- To all of the above, Portuguese citizens in uniform should now also add to their concerns the austerity cuts in public administration wages (we will earn only 12 salaries per year, instead of the common 14). A greater number of military families are now facing difficulties in their domestic economies and some of them are even

facing severe difficulties having no income to deal with all of their expenses. (see also point 2.3)

2→ Your associations' main current concerns:

2.1. The Portuguese Armed Forces wages system was reformulated in January 2010 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 military leaders heard our informed opinion, in which we stated that this new system would be impractical, would create even more injustices and involve a huge expense increase. Additionally, the government budget for 2010 established substantial cuts in staff costs, once again disregarding the warnings ANS issued about the effects that this under-budgeting would create with the new wage system.

2.2. Due to budgetary control mechanisms established in 2011, the government ordered the audit to the Portuguese Armed Forces financial departments performed by the General Inspectorate of Finance, as we mentioned in our last April 11 report. That audit reached a final conclusion which led to a joint MOD and Finance Minister Order. Although blaming the Law (and the previous Executive and their legislators) it claimed false and defamatory accusations towards the military accusing them of committing irregularities during the implementation process of the new wage system, concluding that everyone would have to return the amounts improperly received since January 2010. To the Portuguese public opinion this created a negative image of its military corps and may cause a massive revolt within the military. ANS has already answered 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.

2.3. Portuguese People are facing a political and social changing in their lives. *The crisis* and its consequent austerity measures worsened the Portuguese quality of life, thus strongly affecting the Military Family (see also 1.3). This reality does not fit with the Government's institutional point of view of the Armed Forces; on the other hand, every day the *media* pass an Armed Force's image of waste, uselessness, and even the indignity of illegal procedures to maintain a privileged treatment among the Portuguese citizens. This causes an outrageous feeling of injustice within the troops. ANS concerns about that, and as a pioneer in the fight for Military Condition dignity, conducts a daily, active and hard combat against this wrong ideas about Armed Forces in order to recover their essential role in Portuguese society.

2.4. Taken the above mentioned, ANS in partnership with the other two professional associations of military, AOFA and AP, just carried out on last Saturday OCT22 a National Meeting, so that military of all branches, ranks and situations can revert both their social conditions and their public and institutional image. In this recent meeting, with around 2000 participants, Portuguese military men and women decided to hold a protest demonstration in the central streets of Lisboa, to be held on November 12.

3 → Any other issue of importance

3.1 Issued by Minho University's investigators, a recent study concerning PTSD, among 113 individuals that fought in Afghanistan, concluded the incidence of that syndrome is higher than those verified between soldiers of USA and United Kingdom. It has not been published yet (we know it by the internet), but ANS will manage to know this work in detail, not only because of this matter of importance, but also to bring its information and conclusions to the EUROMIL knowledge and/or initiatives.

3.2 A new Government came out from the general elections of June 5, but the shadow of foreign aid remains in our country and raised the hopeless situation we had since six months ago. The outlines of the economic and social policy defined in the "Budget Strategy Document for 2012-2014" and the 2012 Budget proposal (now under debate in Parliament) point to new restrictions: additional cuts in health and wages, increase in transport fares, energy and water prices, new labour legislation, raising unemployment, etc. This is strangling the Portuguese and its economy. The military emanate from the People and suffer the same problems. This same People the Armed Forces serve and so, the professional associations ANS, AOFA and AP are working together, leading joint initiatives to be conducted during ... the time needed, in order to, side by side with all the Portuguese that the military sworn to defend, overcome this bad period of our recent history.

3.3 ANS requested audiences to all political authorities and military leadership for discussion of this emergency social state and professional issues. We were received by all of them: Parliamentary Groups, MOD, military Chiefs of Staff of all branches. However, using the *crisis* excuse, none of these pointed out until now a satisfactory solution for the Military Family problems. We have no other solution: we must keep fighting!

Lisboa, October 2011

ANS Board