

## Women in the Defence Forces

In response to a request from the Irish Government for submissions on ways of increasing the participation of women in the Defence Forces, the IrFUW wrote to the Minister for Defence in December 2006.

Within a few weeks an article in one of our leading national newspapers [*Irish Times* 5 January 2007] referred in detail to our submission and quoted extensively from it. A case history of a woman officer was included, showing that one of our suggestions had been readily adopted.

The IrFUW submission prepared by Joan Morrison may be of use to other NFAs:

“Our Federation is a member of the University Women of Europe and, by coincidence, we had been attending their conference in The Hague in late September entitled “*Peace and Power*”. Two of the presentations by women – a major in the Dutch Navy with peacekeeping experience in northern Afghanistan and a police officer, who was UNPOL senior personal adviser in Kosovo, impressed on us the vital need for women in the peacekeeping missions.

They drew our attention to Resolution 1325 of the Security Council agreed in 2000. The subsequent study on - *women, peace and security* - completed in October 2002 is a compelling report on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. One of the actions proposed is that more women within military and police staff of the peacekeeping missions would facilitate contact and foster trust among the local population. Their experiences have shown how valuable their presence was in striving to achieve these goals.

To accomplish this aim we are pleased to hear that you would like to encourage more women to join the defence forces. Are there any targets proposed within a set timeframe?

At the moment women represent just 5.4% of the two forces – army and navy. However at cadet level, (entry at graduate or Leaving Cert. level) the proportion of women is nearly 20% in the Army and 43% in the Navy. The percentage of officers is just over 9% in both army and navy but at nco’s and ptes the figure drops from 5% to as low as 1.25%.

We would like to make the following suggestions to encourage more female recruitment :-

ADVERTISING (In newspapers and posters, radio and television)

- Maintain the graphics showing both male and female.
- Emphasize the peacekeeping and security role of the defence forces  
- the distinction of being a neutral country
- Explain the special role for women on missions, for example:-  
in facilitating contact with women, women’s groups and networks  
in fostering trust in local population.
- Show graphics of these situations.

- Build on the excitement and sense of adventure of young people (some of our members recall seeing some snappy British career adverts)
- Explain the training and professional approach of the services.
- Stress the opportunities for career advancement

#### WEB SITE

- Develop an attractive website with good action photos.

#### VISITS TO SCHOOLS

- Be more proactive and do not wait to be invited. Check out likely schools, which would yield results. Give a lively presentation by a uniformed woman who can tell her story of her experiences during peacekeeping operations.

#### RECRUITMENT FAIRS

- It is very desirable to continue present attendance.
- Seek to have a presence at third level colleges.

We hope that you might find some of these suggestions and ideas useful in your endeavour to recruit more female applicants, which we fully commend. We would be willing to have some representatives of our Federation meet with you should you find that useful as a follow-up to this letter. In the meantime we wish you every success in your efforts to achieve this very important and vital position.”