

Senator Maurice Cummins *Fine Gael*

Senator Maurice Cummins has a distinguished record of public service in the South East, serving as Mayor of Waterford and the chair of Waterford Port. He was elected to the Seanad in 2002 having narrowly lost out on a seat in 1997. In 2004 he was promoted by Enda Kenny to Fine Gael whip in the Seanad and Spokesperson on Justice and Law Reform. He was nominated by the Irish Conference of Professional Service Associations (ICPSA).

Senator Cummins was first interviewed by SIGNAL Magazine in 2002 where he said that he believed the Defence Forces needed a period of consolidation after a long series of cutbacks and that he believed that morale in the organisation needed to be improved.

"Today, I think the Defence Forces continue to grow as a capable and confident organisation. I believe international affairs have played a large part in an improvement in morale. The success of the mission in Liberia and the forthcoming lead nation status in the Kosovo mission reflects very positively on the achievements of the Defence Forces. There have also been some significant investments in equipment, which were long overdue. I believe their public standing has been boosted by successes such as these."

In Fine Gael's policy briefing on 'Ireland's role in European Security and Defence', the party says; "the time has come for Ireland to define the circumstances in which it would depart from neutrality and take part in an EU defence entity. However, instead of just accepting the terms of a defence arrangement negotiated at some point in the future, Fine Gael is advocating that Ireland takes a full and active role in the development of this defence arrangement. I have participated in several debates on topics relating to Irish defence and will continue to do so."

Echoing this, Senator Cummins says; "We have had incidences in the past when decisions on our own foreign policy have been vetoed by other nations. We strongly believe that our own foreign policy should not be dependant on foreign approval. Fine Gael do not believe that the current 'triple-lock' arrangement is in the best interests of Ireland's security and defence policies."

On the domestic front, the aid to the

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civil power (ATCP) arrangements currently undertaken by Irish personnel should also be either phased out or else their funding should be supplemented by far higher levels of finance from the private sector who

benefit from the security provided by the Defence Forces. "For instance, banks should be paying a lot more for the necessary security provided by Irish troops," he says.

Despite being initially opposed to the idea of last year's 1916 commemorative parade, Maurice Cummins now believes that it was a tremendous success and significantly boosted the appreciation of the general public of the achievements of the Irish military, achievements which he believes should be strongly recognised in the forthcoming benchmarking arrangements.

"The professionalism of professional service associations such as RACO makes them very supportive and informed sources of information for any politician. I have been proud to lobby on their behalf at Dail level and I look forward to maintain our strong mutual relationship in the next Seanad if elected."

