

Air Power and Africa's Asymmetrical Threats In The 21st Century.

1. Deputy Minister of Defence, Secretary for Defence, Chief of South African National Defence Force, visiting Chiefs all protocol observed distinguish guest ladies and gentlemen.

2. The difficult challenge entrusted upon me in this conference is to close this conference. My task to present closing remarks in this conference is itself asymmetrical, because there could be no sufficient closing remarks on the issues presented here in this conference. Therefore, my closing deliberations in this conference are focused in opening further areas of exploration and debate on the theme of this conference. I therefore, hope my introduction will generate enough confusion to this audience because it is my belief that we need to get more familiar with chaos if we are to tackle issues associated with air power and asymmetric threats in the 21st Century.

3. The focus will be on harmonizing the diverse issues that have been presented, highlight areas of major concern and to try to summarize by addressing the question: Did this conference deliberations succeed in shedding the light regarding the theme: Air power and Africa's Asymmetric threats in the 21st Century.

4. The opening address pointed out that in this day and age we cannot afford to allow asymmetric threats to occupy a back seat in our military strategic appreciation and planning. Given the

obvious limited resources demonstrated by dwindling national defence budgets in most of Africa, we have been further challenged to be more creative in shaping our air assets to meet the continuous asymmetric challenges. This conference has, through the presentations of various speakers, confirmed that asymmetry threats are as old as war itself. However, today like an irritated African cobra, these threats have raised their heads and are unleashing deadly strikes against us. I equally concur with our distinguished speakers that asymmetrical warfare has been a predominant factor in the African conflict scenario. However, as the schooled custodians of the African Military, we need a self-introspection: Why do we need 9/11 barometer for us to begin to focus immensely on the air power and asymmetric threats debates? In my view, there could be no matching comparison between the 1994 Rwandan genocide and 9/11 in the USA, in terms of scale, callousness and especially the International Community reaction to both events. If there should be a graduate school on asymmetric warfare – the African Military should be leaders in that school due to our own experiences and expertise. Ladies and gentlemen, we need to be the leaders in this debate and not followers!

5. What is asymmetric warfare and what are asymmetric threats? In defining asymmetric threats, as correctly described, it employs the power of innovation against conventional sources of power and authority. According to the deliberations in this conference, asymmetric threats facing African states and

continental multinational organisations include terrorism in all its manifestations, internal threats to legitimate authority in the form of warlord, rebel movements and criminality both national and trans-national, involving violence of a military nature.

6. The reasons why Africa has become conducive to these threats is that many governments in the continent do not have adequate political and military capacity to monitor, control and prevent the escalation of these threats. However, it can be argued that 9/11 was planned and executed in a highly industrialised and first class world. The message therefore today is: like death, these asymmetric threats could affect everyone, rich or poor, without any distinction. These threats have forced a security mutual co-operation and collaboration between the richest and the marginalized lot. This leaves a question mark: Should we propose a toast to this long-over due marriage?

7. Whilst air power possesses a wide range of advantages against asymmetrical threats, we have been warned of its inherent disadvantages. These include amongst other things, shoulder launch missiles against landing/departing aircraft, presence of suicide bombers amongst air and ground crews, sabotage activities against approach and navigation infrastructure, targeting of overland supply routes, especially aviation fuel deliveries. Given this background, it is essential that we take a good focus on developing and adjusting our air power doctrine to the emerging security environment. To realise our security objectives, the

situation requires a new kind of airman-soldier who has the mental strength and agility to cope with chaos and complexity, not just a techno-super-warrior. Developing such a soldier requires a pool of resources beyond the military confines, not excluding an air power minded community. Certainly air power is an essential element of military power and needs to be conceptualised, developed and employed correctly and judiciously in support of other forms of military and political power.

8. Fresh in the memories of our air-travelled guests present in this conference is security checks that they have been subjected to at various departing/landing airports. We have been equally refreshed in deliberations here as to the extent of the asymmetrical threats to civil aviation. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to date has conducted many conventions related to civil aviation security in an attempt to curb planned disasters. The possible solutions against these asymmetric threats, as the speakers have indicated, lie in the co-operation and collaboration of all international partners both civilian and military who have a stake in the air power business.

9. Air power is a technological instrument and its development is inseparable from technological advancement. Faced with the ever-increasing asymmetrical threats, there exists a tendency from the innovative aviators to disappear into a science laboratory to find a solution. Many air power experts (civil and military) have a propensity to believe that innovative technology in new weapons

can deliver us from the current security crisis. Without taking away the merit of this approach, we need to ponder the following: Do we want to fight the fight that fits our weapons or do we want to make the weapons that fit our fight? We should be mindful of the fact that when we put weapons first, then followed by tactics, the evolution of weapons has a decisive constraining effect on the evolution of tactics.

10. Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder; similarly definition of terms can be very elusive and complex. The theme of this conference has brought to the fore many diverse terms such as terrorism, asymmetry, irrational actor, non-state actor, legitimate activities, etc. Over the years terms that relate to conflict and war have undergone diverse interpretation, depending on who calls the tune. It is important therefore, for us to pay heed to Warren Buffett's warning: "Bad terminology is the enemy of good thinking". We are not only expected to be good soldiers, but may be eloquent linguist and interpreters too.

11. Our distinguished speakers presented a wide range of issues that relates to the conference theme. The air power and asymmetric threats issues discussed here have proved that in dealing with these matters there is no one size fits all solution. In summarising the conference deliberations, the concluding remarks by the previous speakers captures the theme such as the following:

"The argument between spending on the military and on

development is as old as civilisation itself and there will be many that argue against spending on any form of military capabilities, including air power. However NEPAD emphasises the prerequisite of security for development. Security and development are therefore clearly two sides of the same coin, and the one is impossible without the other. It is to my mind a waste of time to argue, which comes first, as in the case of chicken and egg. Security and development need our simultaneous commitment to build a future for our continent and its people. If air power is to play its rightful role in the future, it needs to get the attention that it deserves”

I THANK YOU!