

# The South African National Defence Force and its involvement in the Defence Review process

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## Introduction

The development of the first South African Defence Review, after the democratic elections of 1994, was an important phase in the overall transformation of the South African defence function. It was the most dynamic phase of the process of change and, due to its consultative nature, made a very significant contribution to the building of a large degree of national consensus on defence in a democratic South Africa.

Defence transformation in South Africa, in the broadest sense, should be viewed against the background of the political transformation that occurred in the country during the late 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. The political transformation, steered by the visionary leadership of Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk, took place when the Cold War era was coming to an end. These conditions led to a process of negotiation for a relatively peaceful and stable political solution to one of the most complex socio-political realities in the modern world. The process allowed for the different armed forces, both statutory and non-statutory, to find settlement around the negotiating table rather than on the battlefield. The climate of negotiation had a strong influence on the open and transparent way in which defence transformation occurred in South Africa after 27 April 1994.

The transformation of the defence function of South Africa is a vast subject that includes:

- developments regarding the integration of the statutory and non-statutory forces into the new South African National Defence Force;
- the institution of political oversight and democratic control over the military;
- transformation of the fundamentals of defence policy and posture;
- the implementation of equal opportunity policies and affirmative action to ensure that the defence force is representative of the demographics of the country;
- the adoption of a new force design and structure;
- rationalisation and demobilisation; and
- the institution of a new management framework for the Department of Defence.

During the process of change, the defence debate was characterised by an openness and transparency that is considered unique in the modern world. The major role players in this process of change were the South African Parliament as represented by the Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD), Cabinet, the Defence Ministry, the Department of Defence (consisting of the Defence Secretariat and the Defence Force) and Civil Society Organisations concerned with defence and security.

This chapter describes the involvement of the South African National Defence Force in the Defence Review process. It also touches on some related aspects of the broader transformation of the Department of Defence where these had a direct influence on the development of the Defence Review. The Chapter starts with an overview of the origins of the Defence Review process as an extension of the White Paper on Defence. It describes the process for the development of the Defence Review and the approach to this process by the top management of the South African National Defence Force. It elaborates on the interaction between the military and the Parliamentary Defence Committees. In conclusion, the Chapter discusses the outcomes of the process and presents some lessons learned from the South African Defence Review experience.

## **Origins of the Defence Review process**

### **Background to defence policy development**

The South African Department of Defence (DOD), consisting of a Defence Secretariat and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), came into being on 27 April 1994 with the establishment of democratic government in South Africa. The SANDF was comprised of the integrated forces of the former South African Defence Force (SADF), the defence forces of the former independent states of Transkei, Boputhatswana, Venda and Ciskei, the guerrilla armies of the ANC—Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) and of the PAC—the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (APLA), and the KwaZulu Self-Protection Forces (KZSPF) of the Inkatha Freedom Party.

This integration of forces into a new defence force was preceded by the negotiations for the Interim Constitution of South Africa and the establishment of the Government of National Unity. In this period of change the negotiation of the Interim Constitution was the top priority in the country and became the focus of negotiations between the ANC and the then South African Government. The formulation of South Africa's future defence policy was a crucial issue during this period when the groundwork had to be done to shape both the future defence policy and the size and shape of the armed forces of the country.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1993 establishes the SANDF as the only defence force of South Africa and stipulates that the SANDF will be a balanced, modern and technologically advanced military force. The Constitution provides for the integration of forces into the SANDF and determines the fundamental policy framework on which further policy developments must be based. The most important of these are:

- Ensuring democratic (parliamentary) control over the military by the establishment of a Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD) and the provision that a Minister, responsible for defence, shall be accountable to Parliament for the national defence force.
- Adherence to the principles of international law regulating the use of force.
- Determining of the functions for which the SANDF may be employed.
- Determining that the SANDF shall have a primarily defensive orientation and posture.

This framework was an important starting point for defence planning but left many questions unanswered. In particular, the primarily defensive orientation and posture is not explained in any detail and this allowed for different interpretations as did the provision that the SANDF would be a balanced, modern and technologically advanced military force. At the start there was no clarity on the future size and shape (force structure)<sup>1</sup> of the SANDF. For the SANDF this matter of size and shape was the most crucial question, as it would fundamentally inform force development and force preparation.

The reason for this pre-occupation with determining the required capabilities and force design for the SANDF needs to be contextualised within the prevailing situation of the defence force at the time. There had been no renewal of main equipment in the SANDF for some years because of the political changes taking place in the country. Many major weapons systems were reaching the end of their life cycle and the term 'block obsolescence' was frequently applied to sections of the operational inventory of the SANDF. This was especially true for the South African Navy where many of its main systems (particularly the submarines and strike craft) were fast approaching obsolescence. In fact, at the time, the South African Navy had received a package—deal offer from the UK on submarines and corvettes and was trying hard to convince Parliament of the urgent need to start with the renewal of the Navy. Certain air force equipment, including the Alouette helicopters and Impala fighter trainers and the army's main battle tanks and anti-aircraft artillery were equally antiquated and urgently needed to be replaced or withdrawn from service. The defence force was reluctant to withdraw the equipment as it would be difficult and expensive to re-establish such capabilities. The ageing of equipment also had a detrimental effect on the morale and motivation of the SANDF, as the equipment the soldiers had to use became increasingly antiquated and unservice-

able. However, no political sanction for replacement was forthcoming—the politicians argued that these decisions could not be taken in an ad-hoc manner. Decisions to replace equipment and reinforce defence force capabilities needed to be taken within a clear and approved policy framework underpinned by a long-term defence plan. This situation emphasised the need to proceed with the development of a new defence policy for South Africa to align the DOD and SANDF with the new strategic environment.

To somewhat complicate matters during this time of change and uncertainty, the newly established Defence Secretariat was just getting off the ground and was being staffed with civilians (mostly ex-MK and ex-SADF members) and seconded officers from the new SANDF. There was no real clarity or agreement about the respective roles of the Secretariat and the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) staff and this led to uncertainty and in-fighting. The inevitable result was that there was much duplication of duties on the one hand and failure to perform certain functions on the other, resulting in significant delays in decision making.

Due to the perceived urgency of getting Parliamentary approval for the force design and the initiation of capital acquisition projects for the SANDF, the military staff at DHQ wrote a Draft White Paper on National Defence by late 1994. This draft concentrated on defence strategy and force structure and paid little attention to other important normative policy matters such as civil-military relations, democratic control, the racial and gender composition of the force, language and religious policy and arms control amongst others. The draft was presented to the Defence Secretariat where it was substantially changed to a Green Paper discussing only the envisaged ends (objectives) and ways (strategic and operational concepts) of defence, excluding the means or force design. It envisaged a second Green Paper to elaborate on defence capabilities, funding and resources once principle approval of the first paper was obtained. It also paid little attention to the mentioned normative defence policy matters. However, when this Green Paper was to be presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Defence, and it became known that it had not yet been cleared by the Minister of Defence at his Council on Defence it was withdrawn and declared a 'non-paper'.

Both these papers had good points. They focused on a strategic defence appreciation in order to reach clarity on the future size and shape of the SANDF and the required budget. They were, however, both rejected as they had not been broadly consultative. They also lacked focus on the important normative matters that were of great concern to the politicians and the wider electorate.

## The Defence White Paper

By early 1995, the Minister of Defence, knowing the urgent requirement to formulate new and appropriate defence policy for South Africa, instructed the

Deputy Minister to attend to the development of a Defence White Paper personally and with all haste. The target date set for the White Paper was May 1996. The deputy minister then tasked Laurie Nathan of the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town to draft the appropriate White Paper. Nathan, a member of the Military Research Group of the ANC, and the author of the publication *The Changing of the Guard* used his background and understanding of the political imperatives for defence policy and the inputs from the aforementioned attempt at papers by the DOD to draw up a draft White Paper by June 1995. The concepts of national security and defence in a democracy, civil-military relations and the normative policy issues relating to human resources, arms control and environmental issues were emphasised in the draft. It also took the policy position that South Africa needed to maintain core conventional defence capabilities although these capabilities were not defined. This position was formulated based on inputs given by the SANDF.

The initial attitude of the SANDF to the White Paper drawn up by a civilian and perceived anti-militarist was negative and they were hypercritical of all drafts and position papers produced by Nathan. This went as far as criticism by the SANDF of positions that were in fact previous inputs from the SANDF itself. Eventually, the Minister and Deputy Minister of Defence had to provide political guidance and to make choices from the different policy positions.

The draft paper of 21 June 1995 was distributed for public comment. Over ninety written submissions were received and scrutinised during a three-day session convened by Nathan, members of the Secretariat and the SANDF, as well as members from the Institute for Security Studies. There was concern with the lack of detail on such matters as force design, specific capabilities and armament types, personnel numbers and budget. As it was not possible to finalise all these matters in the time-scale for the completion of the White Paper, these inputs were postponed for an already envisaged follow up 'Defence Review'. Otherwise the inputs were, to the greatest extent possible, incorporated into the final draft of the White Paper.

Finally three special sessions of the Joint Standing Committee on Defence were held during which the final draft was scrutinised before the White Paper (sub-titled 'Defence in a Democracy') was approved by Cabinet and finally by Parliament in May 1996.

Due to the immensity of the changes that occurred in South Africa and in the regional and international strategic situation, the complexity of the task at hand and the priorities of the Government of the day, the White Paper could not cover the full spectrum of defence transformation. The focus of the White Paper was therefore to position the DOD and the SANDF in the new South African democracy and in the new world reality. This meant a particular focus on civil-military relations and other normative policy matters. The White

Paper established a broad policy framework and the main principles of defence in the country. It was, however, clear at an early stage that the White Paper would have to be followed by a much more comprehensive Defence Review in order to provide detail regarding:

- the size and shape of the SANDF;
- the implications for strategy and doctrine regarding the 'primarily defensive posture' of the SANDF;
- the future defence budget;
- efficiency improvements; and
- the use of reserves etc.

## **The development of the Defence Review**

### **Initiation**

As early as July 1995 the Deputy Minister of Defence instructed the DOD to commence with work on a comprehensive defence review. The first Defence Review Work Group (DRWG) was constituted and consisted of members of the Defence Secretariat, the SANDF and the two Ministerial Advisors. The Director Strategy of the SANDF (the author) acted as convener for this work group which met for the first time on 16 August 1995. The DRWG had as its aim to draw up a draft defence review for discussion with the JSCD. The work of this group culminated in the first consultative conference that was held in the parliamentary buildings in Cape Town on 12 and 13 February 1996.

After this consultative conference the Deputy Minister of Defence expanded the DRWG to include three representatives from the JSCD, representatives from the academic community and defence related non-government organisations (NGOs), a representative from the defence industry and a representative from the National Part Time Force Council as well as Nathan, who drafted the White Paper on Defence. The Deputy Minister appointed the Director Operations Policy at the Defence Secretariat (Dr Rocky Williams) as the new convener of the DRWG as the formulation of defence policy was ultimately the responsibility of the Secretary for Defence. The Director Strategy remained in the DRWG as the principle representative of the chief of the national defence force and as leader of the sub-committee for defence posture, tasks and force design.

### **The process**

Much has been written about the process followed in the elaboration of the Defence Review. The review itself includes a description of the process in its introduction. A short overview of the process is briefly repeated in this chapter for ease of reference.

The DRWG set up various sub-committees with representatives from the JSCD, the DOD, other government departments and civil society organisations on each of them. These sub-committees were responsible for specific chapters of the Defence Review such as defence posture, tasks and force design; efficiency, management and structure; human resources; the part-time or reserve component; land and the environment; the defence acquisition process and the defence legal environment.

The Defence Review process consisted of work done in plenary sessions of the central DRWG, sessions of sub-committees, discussions with departmental management bodies, regional consultative conferences, sessions with the JSCD and national consultative conferences of which three were held (including the conference of 12 and 13 February 1996 which has already been mentioned). After the final national consultative conference, public hearings were held by the JSCD after which the Defence Review was presented to Cabinet and Parliament for final approval in April 1998.

The DRWG determined that the review would be developed in two reports to be done simultaneously. The first report focused on defence posture, functions and force design and used a logic based on the ends, ways and means approach. This entailed the analysis of existing defence policy and strategic doctrine to determine the roles and tasks of the SANDF and the available strategic and operational concepts for their execution. From this the characteristics and the operational capability requirements of the future SANDF and the corresponding resource implications were to be deduced. The second report, to some extent dependant on the first, focused on defence management and structure, human resource issues, the use of land and the protection of the environment, the defence acquisition management process and the defence legal environment.

## The approach of the top management of the SANDF to the Defence Review Process

At the start of the development of the Defence Review, the primary concern of the top management of the SANDF was to arrive at a clear definition of the future force design of the SANDF. This issue, not adequately addressed by the White Paper, was considered to be the 'hard issue' by the SANDF and its resolution was deemed essential in order that it might serve as a basis for force development (including armaments acquisition) and force preparation. The general attitude of the military was that the role of politicians was to define the national defence posture and functions of the SANDF and that the SANDF would then determine how to execute these functions and the corresponding force design and financial requirement. The view was that the Constitution and the White Paper provided the political guidance and that the SANDF

should be allowed to determine the best operational concepts and resulting force design.

The SANDF at the time had a scientific strategic planning process and a sophisticated computer based force design model known as OPTIMUM. This system was designed to provide 'optimised' answers regarding the force design of the SANDF for a range of inputs. It was meant to be used as a decision support system, but was sometimes incorrectly seen as a 'black-box' that provided ready-made answers. The basic logic used in the model was one of calculating the best defence value for money. Defence value was equated to risk reduction and defence cost (or money) was calculated in terms of the sustainable cost of the various force designs. In brief the process involved in the determination of an optimised force design was based on the following logic:

- All possible defence contingencies were listed and described. This list was very comprehensive.
- Defence value was determined per contingency through the calculation of the relative risk that such a contingency implied. Risk was equated to a function of the probability of the contingency occurring and the potential impact on the RSA if the contingency could not be successfully countered or managed by the SANDF. Obviously, the capacity to counter a high-risk contingency (one of high probability and with potentially serious impact), provided high defence value.
- The various operational concepts for the countering of each contingency and the associated required mini-Force Designs were determined.
- The full sustainable cost per mini-Force Design was calculated.

All these variables as well as a range of budgetary limits were fed into the computer that would then calculate the optimal solution; being the integrated force design that offers the greatest risk reduction for a given budgetary ceiling.<sup>2</sup>

A lot of effort and time had gone into the development of Project OPTIMUM, which was an effort by the SANDF to find answers to the difficult question of the best design for the future defence force for South Africa. By the time of the development of the Defence Review the SANDF had, at the level of the Defence Command Council (DCC), gone through many force design iterations with the optimum model and had arrived at a preferred one. It was the conviction of the top management that this force design (which implied a defence budget of close to 2% of GDP) was based on the functions, posture and principles as spelled out in the Constitution and the White Paper. It was considered to be the smallest acceptable core force for the future SANDF. The DCC believed that this force design should be taken up in the Defence Review as the force design for the SANDF.

At the same time the SANDF had initiated a major transformation project to address the matter of efficiency in order to arrive at 'adequate, appropriate,

affordable and accountable defence for South Africa in the next millennium'. This project was launched because there was a realisation that to make the force design affordable, maximum efficiency would be required in the management and support structures of the SANDF. The project had some three years to go to reach finality. The position of the DCC was thus one of 'get political approval for the force design as the basis for defence planning, let the transformation project come to a conclusion, initiate implementation and finally address other outstanding soft issues'. This is a pretty standard and quite understandable bureaucratic approach. There was, however, little understanding of the political priorities and the commitment to parliamentary oversight by the members of the JSCD.

The JSCD, on the other hand, would not rubber-stamp results produced by the DOD. They were committed to an understanding not only of functions and posture but also of doctrine, operational concepts and force capabilities. The JSCD (as well as many officials in the Defence Secretariat) were very suspicious of OPTIMUM and saw it as a 'non-transparent black box' designed by the military to produce the answers that they wanted and they rejected the SANDF recommended force design. Furthermore, they gave high priority to normative issues in defence transformation. To them, the issues considered to be soft issues by the military were the real hard issues and required priority attention.

Despite the haste of the SANDF to reach finality on the matter of size and shape, it was soon clear that the Defence Review would have to be a very comprehensive policy document before any part of it would be accepted by the JSCD or approved by Parliament.

The positions of both the JSCD and the SANDF were quite understandable in the context of the historical background and probably quite common in the relations between defence forces and politicians in democratic societies. However, in South Africa in 1996 it constituted a new experience of civil-military relations in which both main actors were flexing their muscles. Unfortunately, at the early stages of this process, direct communication (and conflict resolution) between the JSCD and the DCC was not good and the DOD members of the DRWG very soon found themselves an intermediary in this power play.

As an example, all work done in the DRWG had to be presented to the Defence Command Council (chaired by the Chief of the SANDF) by the military members of the DRWG for approval prior to debate with the JSCD. The DCC often unilaterally amended the work of the DRWG to their view. This obviously led to conflict, as the parliamentary and civilian members of the DRWG argued that they were mandated by the minister of defence and that their work was therefore not subject to the agreement of the SANDF or the DOD. This caused many changes made by the SANDF simply to be rejected when discussed with the JSCD. The effect of this was a lengthening of the

process and an increase in debate before there was any consensus, and it necessitated a lot of fancy footwork by the members of the DRWG.

Another example of the initial attitude of the DCC to the development of the Defence Review is the events surrounding the first consultative conference held in the parliamentary buildings in Cape Town on 12 and 13 February 1996. This conference was attended by the JSCD and more than one hundred delegates from all sectors of the defence community but not by the top management of the SANDF. The Star newspaper of 19 February 1996 reported on this conference under the headline of “*The day the generals didn’t turn up for duty*” and commented that ‘their collective absence had moved (Defence Minister) Modise to remark that there had to be a change in attitude in the defence force’.

These events underline the saying that ‘change is not an event but a process’ and slowly but surely led to a more open and consultative attitude amongst the military command. Subsequent regional and national consultative conferences (August 1996 and May 1997) were well attended by the top management of the SANDF who also got more involved in direct debate with the members of the JSCD.

The major contributors to this change in attitude were:

- The very existence and composition of the DRWG itself. Within the DRWG and its many subcommittees politicians, military members and civilians rubbed shoulders on a regular basis. Through their extensive exposure to both sides of the debate the members of the DRWG understood the different perspectives and were able to facilitate the building of understanding and trust between the groups. Special mention must be made of the role played by the convenor of the DRWG, Williams, in building trust and understanding, which he was able to do mostly because of his insight into both sides of the debate and his credibility with both the military and politicians.
- The insistence by the JSCD on debate and the direct involvement of the top echelon of the SANDF. The JSCD, after the first consultative conference, more regularly called for briefings by the command of the SANDF. This created the opportunity for official and social interaction and assisted in the breaking down of barriers.
- The realisation by the command of the SANDF that no renewal would occur until the Defence Review had been approved by Parliament. This caused the Chiefs of the Services to seek to positively influence the JSCD by inviting them to visit units and bases so as to create a better understanding of the military. Such visits further created the opportunity for direct interaction and better mutual understanding.
- The rise in the SANDF to the level of the DCC of officers from MK who had historic links to the governing party.

This improvement in relations between the JSCD and the SANDF and the vis-

its by the politicians to military bases and units greatly enhanced the understanding of the real issues of the defence debate on both sides. More and more the Defence Review debate lost its animosity and became a fruitful search for real consensus on the future defence policy of South Africa.

## The role of the JSCD: Strengths and limitations

As has been stated, the JSCD played a major role in the development of the Defence Review. Members of the committee were incorporated in the plenary Defence Review Work Group and in the sub-committees. The JSCD worked through all drafts of the Review page by page and extensively questioned the representatives of the DOD and SANDF in particular. They participated fully in the three national consultative conferences and in conclusion held two days of public hearings on the final draft. The JSCD took full ownership of the final product.

At the time of this process there was, understandably, very little expertise on defence within the JSCD. The defence debate in the previous era was closed and exclusive and most of the members of the JSCD had no experience of conventional defence doctrine, operational concepts, the composition of forces or supportive defence tasks. They could easily have been misled or have become a rubber stamp on work done by the DOD had it not been for their insistence and commitment to become deeply involved in the process. This required hard work and time.

The JSCD made a very positive contribution to the standard of the Review by their commitment to understanding every policy position before they were willing to agree to it. This was achieved by questioning inputs, by getting other opinions from civil society, by allowing for extensive and open debate during the weekly sessions between the Committee and the DRWG and by bringing political perspective to defence policy.

The strengths of the JSCD that made this positive contribution possible were:

- Their commitment to exercising their oversight function to the full.
- The composition of the JSCD, which included all major political parties and was very representative with regard to race and gender. This enhanced the quality of the debate and ensured that all perspectives were considered.
- Their access to the members of the Military Research Group of the ANC as advisors.
- Their commitment to spending time on the respective work groups and on the general policy development process.
- Their willingness to allow for comprehensive and open debate and to listen to all opinions before coming to conclusions.

The majority of the members of the JSCD initially lacked expertise in defence policy and defence matters in general. They had pet concerns about what they perceived to be the principal sins of the SADF under apartheid and the initial attitude of a large section of the committee was a total distrust of the military. They lacked perspective on the integrity and loyalty of the average soldier. These limitations initially restricted the discourse between the JSCD and the SANDF. During the Defence Review process many of these perceptions changed and the ensuing debate greatly enhanced the level of expertise within the JSCD. Other early limitations of the JSCD were their lack of institutional capacity for research and the lack of funds for consultative conferences that made the committee dependant on the DOD for funding.

### Outcome of the Defence Review process

Despite the initial difficulties, the Defence Review process developed into a truly consultative and transparent one that resulted in the approval by Parliament of the Defence Review in April 1998. The review was a very comprehensive policy document and laid the basis for future defence developments in South Africa.

Due to the great emphasis on transparency and consultation, as well as the inclusive nature of the process, the Defence Review met with little resistance in later approval phases by Cabinet and Parliament. The review provided a basis for a national consensus on defence and the process has been internationally acclaimed for the consultative and transparent manner in which it was conducted.

The Review expands on the 'primary defensive posture' as determined in the Constitution and White Paper and develops this into a clear SANDF strategic doctrine. It also develops the rather generic functions of the SANDF as set out in the White Paper into specific roles. This strategic doctrine and task list was used to present options for the force design of the SANDF and the recommended force design was also accepted and approved by Cabinet and Parliament. The approved force design does not differ substantially from that which the SANDF originally proposed but it was agreed upon only after exhaustive debate and after the JSCD was convinced of the rationale for the design. This force design today serves as the basis for force development and for acquisition projects.

The Review also incorporates some of the results of the DOD Transformation project and formulates the basic principles for the management and structuring of the DOD. Furthermore, the Review comprehensively develops SANDF and DOD policies regarding human resources, the Part-Time Forces, the management of defence land and the environment, defence acquisition processes and the defence legal system.

Since its completion and approval the Defence Review has served as the principle policy reference document for the further development of defence legislation, policy and doctrine and has been the primary frame of reference for the initiation of new defence acquisition projects. It serves as the vision for defence for the future.

## **Advantages and limitations of oversight and transparency**

### **Shortcomings of political input into the process**

From a military point of view some problems were encountered during the defence review process that led to frustration with the concepts of oversight and transparency. These included:

- The lack of clear national foreign policy and security policy and objectives to guide the development of defence policy. The military expected that politicians would provide this guidance, but this did not happen. It led to the interpretation that politicians were interfering in defence policy development within the competence of the military without being able to give inputs from within their sphere of responsibility.
- The lack of political vision on long-term financial guidelines. At the time of the development of the White Paper and the Defence Review, no medium term expenditure framework existed and defence planners had to develop a multitude of options for different financial scenarios. This led to a lack of focus and much wasted effort on unrealistic strategic planning assumptions.
- The lack of understanding of the long term character of defence strategy and planning. Politicians (and civil society in general) did not demonstrate an understanding of the need for thinking and planning 20 years and more ahead for defence. They did not understand the complexity of defence acquisition and force development and tended to want to design forces for the exigencies of the day. This caused much frustration in the military, which tried to focus the debate on the future, but had to continuously contend with arguments related to short-term realities.
- Issues of security of information. Whereas the military tends to be very conservative on security of information, civilians are equally liberal on the issue. In general, civilians have little understanding of the value of information to foreign intelligence agencies and regard military secrecy as a phobia. This caused a reluctance on the part of the military to be completely open with the other partners in the defence debate at all times.

## Advantages of transparency and consultation

Despite the problems experienced, there were many benefits to the military from this open debate on defence and from the authoritative position taken by the JSCD. These include:

- The acceptance of accountability by Parliament. Defence is ultimately the responsibility of Government and not of the military command. The military command is responsible for the management, development, preparation and employment of defence capabilities in line with government policy and direction. The way that the defence debate was conducted in South Africa underlined this division of responsibility and led to greater clarity and accountability for the various role players. Today parliamentarians, who were involved in this process, accept ownership for the policies of the Defence Review. This strengthens the hand of defence when making its case for new acquisitions, funding and other resources as was demonstrated with the latest strategic defence acquisitions.
- National consensus on defence. The open and consultative way in which the review process was undertaken in South Africa led to a large degree of national consensus on defence. This has the benefit that it gives legitimacy and credibility to the defence force and, therefore, also enhances popular support for and the image of defence. It furthermore led to good co-operation between the DOD and civil society organisations.
- Quality of defence policy. The participation of civil society in the defence debate greatly enhanced the quality of South African defence policy. The expertise within academic institutions and NGOs was used to complement that of the military leading to a fresh look at defence matters and the incorporation of modern practises in defence management. This again benefited defence by opening the door to this level of expertise and by enhancing the image of the military in civil society.

From the military perspective oversight and transparency are not in themselves a threat to defence but have to be applied judiciously. Excessive oversight can become interference and can hamper the execution of the defence function whereas excessive transparency can lead to breaches of security. As an example, a tendency amongst parliamentarians to want to oversee the conduct of operations, so interfering in the military line of command, would be taking oversight too far. Oversight should be executed in line with political responsibility and authority as set out in the Constitution and White Paper on Defence. This includes political direction by the Minister of Defence and the approval of legislation and the defence budget as well as the review of presidential decisions to employ the defence force by Parliament. The JSCD is mandated to investigate and make recommendations on the budget, functioning, organisation, armaments, policy, morale and state of preparedness of the

SANDEF. This is a wide-ranging authority but excludes the right to be involved in the execution of the defence task, which is the responsibility of the military line of command. However, the successful execution of oversight will always depend on a close and co-operative relationship between the parliamentary committees and the DOD.

Transparency, equally, should be applied with care. The need for secrecy is acknowledged in the White Paper 'in order to safeguard national security interests, the lives of military personnel and the integrity of operations'. Although simple numbers of equipment and personnel could not be viewed as confidential, matters of preparedness, morale and operational plans must be afforded the correct level of confidentiality. In the South African situation the Access to Information Act (Act No. 2, 2000) determines the grounds for refusal of access to information. In section 41.(1) it determines that:

"The information officer [...] may refuse a request [...] if its disclosure – (a) could reasonably be expected to cause prejudice to the defence of the Republic; the security of the Republic; or [...] the international relations of the Republic; or -(b) would reveal information supplied in confidence by or on behalf of another state or international organisation; supplied by or on behalf of the Republic to another state or international organisation [...] which requires the information to be held in confidence; or required to be held in confidence by an international agreement or customary law ..."

## **Lessons from the Defence Review process**

*The empowerment through the Constitution and Law of Parliamentary Defence Committees is an essential ingredient for the success of the transformation of defence policy.* In the South African experience the JSCD played a crucial role in the development of defence policy through the Defence Review process as well as in the development of good civil-military relations. This was achieved through a robust insistence by the committee on its involvement in all aspects of the development and approval of the Defence Review and its refusal to rubber-stamp key policy positions unilaterally developed by the DOD.

*All government departments should be involved in the establishment of practical and sustainable defence policy.* One of the errors in the Defence Review process was the inadequate involvement of other government departments in the defence debate. Notably the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Intelligence Departments were not comprehensively consulted on foreign and broader national security policy during the debate. The Departments of Finance and State Expenditure were also not fully consulted on aspects of longer term budget planning.

*Top defence officials must be personally involved in the debate with the Parliamentary Committees.* The DOD at first did not acknowledge the role of the JSCD and sent officials at the rank level of Director/Brigadier General to debate with the committee and attend the consultative conferences. This caused ill feeling between the JSCD and the DOD top structure and resulted in lost time and opportunities.

*Consultation is imperative for national consensus on defence.* The broad consultative nature of the South African defence debate made it a slow and time-consuming process. However, it greatly enhanced the quality of the debate and the end product and led to a high degree of national consensus on defence.

*Transparency and consultation increase the quality of the debate and enhance the capacity of all participants for future contributions.* The development of a South African Defence Review was a great learning experience. It has enriched the defence debate and today South Africans are well positioned to participate in future debates on defence nationally and internationally.

## Conclusion

Today the South African DOD is a substantially restructured department aligned with the political and social exigencies of the day. Through the White Paper and Defence Review processes, policy developments have led to a variety of changes including new defence doctrine and a parliamentary approved force design. Affirmative action and equal opportunity policies have led to a fundamental change in the face of the Department. The defence act has been revised allowing for military trade unions in the SANDF and a new military discipline code, amongst other things. The processes of the department have been re-engineered and this has led to new management styles and new structures at departmental head office and in the services (the Army, Air Force and Navy). In the final analysis this has also led to the recent Cabinet approval of the strategic defence acquisition packages.

Since 1994 transformation of the defence function of South Africa has come a long way. It has not been easy integrating the various forces and reaching consensus on policy matters in order to develop a unified defence force with a single vision, mission and culture. Yet this has been largely achieved. The future security of South Africa will depend on how successfully these policies are implemented and carried through. For the government it is a matter of balancing priorities. Much of what South Africa would hope to achieve for itself and its neighbours is restricted by economic realities and budgetary constraints. This also applies to the transformed South African National Defence Force, which is finding its feet in this new reality.

Much was been achieved during the development of defence policy through the White Paper and Defence Review processes and the Department of Defence can rightly be proud of these achievements. Certainly, considering

the magnitude of the problems that the Department faced and the complexity of the issues, the successful transformation of the SANDF stands as an example for the world to learn from.

None of this would have been possible had it not been for the close co-operation and collaboration between the JSCD, the Defence Ministry, the DOD and Civil Society Organisations. This co-operation and collaboration has led to an unprecedented level of consensus on defence in South Africa, which bodes well for the future.

## **Endnotes**

1. In this Chapter the term Force Structure means the total structure of the SANDF. It includes the Force Design, that is the description of the size and shape of the combat or operational elements of the force. Force structure is therefore the sum of the force design 'ætooth' and all supporting elements 'ætail' of the SANDF. These terms are explained here as they are used extensively in the Defence Review.
2. It must be emphasised that this is a very simplified description of an extremely complex and highly scientific decision support system.