

**PRESENTATION BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL C. E. A.SINGOGO, ZAMBIA AIR FORCE COMMANDER
ON AIR POWER AND AFRICA'S ASYMMETRIC THREATS IN THE 21 ST CENTURY DELIVERED
DURING THE 2004 SIR PIERRE VAN RYNEVELD AIR POWER SYMPOSIUM ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2004
PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA**

1. I have no doubt in my mind that we have in our midst eminent authorities and accomplished researchers on the subject matter, who I trust will gladly share with us all their valued knowledge and experiences in the course of our interaction with them.

2. I wish to commend all those who put in their time and devotion together with General Beukes for the meticulous arrangements put in place for this symposium, which like several others before, should continue to serve as proud reminders of the unmatched achievements of the founding father of the South African Air Force, Sir Pierre Van Ryneveld.

AIM

3. The aim of this presentation is to provide an overview on the challenges facing the African continent in the application of Air Power in the face of asymmetric threats in the 21st century.

SCOPE

4. I have arranged to cover the subject under the following headings.

- a. Introduction.
- b. Defining Asymmetric Threats.
- c. Complexity of Asymmetric Threats.
- d. Security Concerns.
- e. Possible Air Power Actions to Counter Asymmetric Threats.
- f.
- g. Q and A

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

5. Since that first flight by the Wright brothers on 17th December 1903, achievements in aviation have by far surpassed the dreams of those early pioneers of Air Power. Aviation has since then been revolutionized and refined. The world now faces greater and more complex threats never imagined by those great visionaries of Air Power.

6. Strides in aviation technology have evolved from simple single piston aircraft of World War One to the more complex multi-role combat aircraft, satellites, missiles and unmanned air vehicles, which now constitute the world's Air Power. This indicates to what level Air Power is being deployed as a means of defending national interests.

7. Yes indeed Air Power in its various forms has increasingly continued to dominate conflicts and the situation is truly likely to remain the same in the foreseeable future. However, the emergence of a new form of warfare, which is characteristically asymmetric in its application, has dramatically changed the nature of conventional warfare. Notwithstanding this, Air Power for what it is, through its innovative employment can greatly reduce the impact of asymmetric threats.

DEFINING ASYMMETRIC THREATS

8. One of the focus of attention regarding the new manifestation of warfare as earlier mentioned is the concept of asymmetric use of force, a phenomenon which has seen the conventional force on force combat, that which has traditionally been strategized on frontage and depth, giving way to a non linear and elusive way of applying force. Asymmetric threats have thus come to be defined as follows:

- "UNANTICIPATED OR NON TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO CIRCUMVENT OR UNDERMINE AN ADVERSARY'S STRENGTHS WHILE EXPLOITING HIS VULNERABILITIES THROUGH UNEXPECTED TECHNOLOGIES OR INNOVATIVE MEANS".

QUOTED FROM THE 1997 UNITED STATES QUADRENNIAL DEFENCE REVIEW

- " CLASHES OR CONFLICTS BETWEEN OPPONENTS, ONE OF WHICH IS STRONG, WELL EQUIPPED AND ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND THE OTHER WEAKER, SMALLER IN SIZE WITH FEWER MEANS AND LESS TRAINED", AS DEFINED BY NATOs' STUDIES ANALYSIS SIMULATION PANEL.

9. Going by the foregoing two definitions of Asymmetric warfare, it is evident by implication that asymmetric warfare is the use of force by an opponent or hostile elements who are elusive targets themselves and confront their intended targets with unconventional strategies and tactics that are difficult to predict and match. Actors of this type of emerging warfare therefore devise a variety of strategies that frustrate conventional combined arms warfare capability.

COMPLEXITY OF ASYMMETRIC THREATS

10. The complexity and the unpredictable nature of asymmetric warfare has shown that those who apply it more often than not elect to use environments such as built up areas like cities, so as to degrade the conventional use of Air Power to locate and strike at targets that are of military significance. This underlines the difficulties surrounding the application of any type of military force against asymmetric threats.

11. Asymmetric threats as is evidently clear manifest themselves in various forms ranging among others, from international terrorism, organized crime, and religious indoctrination to psychological operations. Compounding this complex nature of asymmetric threats is the indiscriminate selection of targets by perpetrators of such attacks which are rather unpredictable as these invariably include innocent and defenceless citizens at large, busy urban locations, tourist sites, mass transportation systems and infrastructure, government institutions at all levels, commercial utilities such as power generation complexes and all other elements of national economies. The primary motive behind all such indiscriminate attacks is to cause terror among the people, so as to instigate resentment against legitimate governance, and thus force a decision on the affected government.

12. Terrorism has gone to a new level since the 11 September terrorist attack in the United States of America, and has become so complex and wide spread to the extent where it is now a daily feature in most countries the World over. This undoubtedly has become one of the main concerns in international security, which all mankind must recognize as such.

13. Africa has been identified as one of the leading continents where many terrorist camps are established. Surely these once identified, can be lucrative targets for Air Power.

14. The rate at which international terrorism is growing dictates that Air Power be abreast with its many changing forms in order for us to combat it effectively.

15. Widespread poverty, lack of democratic governance and poor distribution of basic needs makes Africa a good breeding ground for terrorists as is Latin America and South East Asia. The high poverty levels obtaining in many African countries naturally cause unemployment among many of the youths, thus leaving them vulnerable for recruitment and indoctrination into terrorist organizations.

16. The illegal migration of people from country to country in search of a living, would require the utilization of a segment of air power to effectively patrol and safeguard Africa's vast borders and coastlines.

17. Technology, which is a great asset to humanity, has been and continues to be used for purposes it was not intended for. For example, the flow of information through the Internet has brought about the easy exchange of information between terrorist organizations and their collaborators, and further more the creation of web sites has also been found to being used for the indoctrination and recruitment of potential candidates into terrorist organizations.

SECURITY CONCERNS

18. Defence Forces the world over have been established as primary instruments of national power for the furtherance and protection of national interests cardinal amongst which is defence against threats emanating either from land, sea or air.

19. We in Africa are moving towards a Common African Defence and Security Policy including the establishment of regional standby forces, all aimed at promoting peace and security and thus facilitating development, wherein regional groupings such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) will serve as building blocks for a peaceful and economically vibrant Africa.

20. However, despite our desires to live peacefully and in a secure environment more so after the end of the Cold War, the world at large has continued to be besieged by a new form of threats as earlier alluded to. The 11 September attack on American soil, remains a gruesome reminder, that despite mankind's best efforts for peaceful co-existence and interdependence, the threat of asymmetric warfare has transgressed national and continental boundaries and as such has become a shared concern requiring collective approaches.

21. The Al Qaeda terrorist bombings that rocked Embassies of the United States of America in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam in 1998, resulting in fatalities, is a vivid example of how Africa is slowly but surely being threatened to become a staging ground for international terrorism. The emergence of this new form of threat continues to pose an entirely different kind of risk.

22. In the Sudan, the confrontation in the Darfur region is reportedly a consequence of years of low level conflict between Arab nomadic tribes and the African farming communities over scarce resources. The United Nations has estimated that the on going fighting has displaced more than one million people with several hundred thousand refugees encamped in neighbouring Chad, thereby creating the world's worst humanitarian crisis, a critical situation requiring use of air resources for humanitarian relief operations.

23. Governments all over the world need to evolve and implement increased security measures to protect airports, aircraft and air transport industry infrastructure against acts of unlawful interference.

24. Air Forces and Air Wings the world over as custodians of national airspaces have a duty to take all appropriate measures to facilitate the application of aviation security, commensurate at all times with the level of the threat. There is no doubt that revenue accrued from the tourism industry for instance would increase if air travel remained safe from hijackings and other sad developments.

25. The international nature of threats against air travel is that it is directed against the world's most vital and effective means of transportation. The aviation and air travel industry being put at risk does not serve only one nation or group of nations because travellers come from all over the world.

26. The need for a collective and concerted approach is further highlighted in view of the problems of other terrorist related activities such as drug peddling, illegal movement of people and transfer of weapons across borders through both surface and air transport. What with hundreds of unmanned airstrips scattered in the remotest parts all over the African continent most of which are outside radar coverage.

POSSIBLE AIR POWER OPERATIONS AGAINST ASYMMETRIC THREATS

27. We as users of Air Power know that availability of balanced air assets gives the user a very wide range of options. This is true for well-developed nations who have modern state of the art resources with unique capabilities such as strategic power projection, superior information dominance and deep strike capabilities.

28. Africa on the other hand cannot match these capabilities. We have seen from past experiences that the Air Power resources available in Africa have primarily been used for the provision of air transport support to deployed ground forces, the execution of anti surface operations and the use of reconnaissance and light aircraft in support of ground operations.

29. Given the expensive nature of military equipment and vastness of the African continent which inhibits high force to space ratios, very few countries in Africa have the economic and technological capabilities to have balanced Air Power resources. The inability of most African countries to maintain properly trained and equipped Air Forces is compounded by budget deficits in view of the requirement for governments to provide for other social and economic needs such as education and health. Added to this is the fact that most African economies are based on World Bank and International Monetary Fund programmes over which both institutions limit expenditure on defence procurement.

30. Notwithstanding this economic factor, there is need for member states to commit substantial financial resources needed to have balanced Air Power resources if Africa has to withstand the emerging asymmetric threats. This calls for political will and commitment to provide for the following:

a. Need for rapid collection, assessment and exploitation of intelligence information on asymmetric threats, and sharing of the same at national and regional levels.

b. Requirements for centralized command and control so as to ensure rapid decision-making process at national, regional and continental levels.

c. Need to have appropriate forces for rapid responses against asymmetric threats in all situations.

31. With these measures in place Air Power resources would then be appropriately applied to counter rising asymmetric threats through the following:

- a. Reconnaissance.
- b. Transport and logistic support.
- c. Interdiction.
- d. Air defence operations.
- e. Special tasks.

RECONNAISSANCE

32. Through all the phases of asymmetric action operation cycle, government agencies and military commanders will be in urgent and constant need of intelligence and reconnaissance information. Air reconnaissance therefore will be one major way of detecting changes in the pattern of normal activities of asymmetrical opponents. Some of the typical examples of reconnaissance tasks could be as follows:

a. Visual Recce

- (1) Familiarize the military, police and civil authorities with their operational areas.
- (2) Area search to observe hostile areas, supply routes, movement patterns and new bases.
- (3) Specific searches to reconnoitre specified points like helicopter landing zones, airborne dropping zones and possible asymmetrical opponent concentration areas.
- (4) Route reconnaissance to cover lines of communication, convoys and possible ambush sites.
- (5) Airborne forward Air Controller (FAC).

b. Photographic reconnaissance

- (1) Verify intelligence reports coming from various sources.
- (2) Provide relevant information on proposed dropping and landing zones.
- (3) Carry out night photography of asymmetrical opponent activities. Radar and infrared capability can also be incorporated.

TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SUPPORT

33. During counter asymmetrical actions air power may be used for the following air transport support operations.

a. **Airborne/Air Transported Operations:** These will enable military, police and civilian authorities and their logistic support to move directly into an area of operation by fixed wing aircraft or helicopters.

b. **Tactical Mobility :** Tactical lift of government forces together with their reserves for quick insertion of cut-off parties, roadblocks and rooftop patrols may be undertaken by support helicopters.

c. **Logistic Support:** Logistics support by air forces deployed to counter asymmetrical opponents in an area of operations may include air supply, movement of personnel, evacuation of casualties and back- loading of equipment.

INTERDICTION

34. Although interdiction in counter asymmetrical actions is complicated by the lack of fixed battle lines and positions and the fluid nature of ground operations, air interdiction can still prevent or hinder the asymmetric opponents use of an area or route.

AIR DEFENCE OPERATIONS

35. Point Air Defence weapons such as Air Defence Artillery and small arms can be deployed at certain vulnerable Areas/Vulnerable Points of national or military importance. Long range, flexible and all weather interceptor aircraft can also be deployed as area defence weapons.

SPECIAL TASKS

36. There are a number of special tasks, which can be undertaken to counter asymmetrical threats such as:

- a. Air borne Command Posts to control air and ground operations.
- b. Voice aircraft fitted with high power loud speakers can be used as a powerful psychological weapon by dissemination of instructions to the population.
- c. Defoliation operations to improve ground visibility and expose asymmetrical opponents hide outs and operational areas, though this may be unacceptable given current thinking on environmental degradation concerns.
- d. **Show of force'** operations in areas where the loyalty of the population may be waning.
- e. Infiltration and evacuation of clandestine friendly forces.

f. Domination of rioting crowds in urban areas by flying overhead and by dispensing anti-riot chemicals such as teargas.

g. Use of aircraft mounted searchlights to provide illumination of objective areas.

CONCLUSION

37. In conclusion, I want to observe that we are in a critical time, where we are beginning to face an emerging form of unconventional warfare. Preserving our national, regional and continental interests is paramount to our success in providing for our security today and in preparing to face rising asymmetric threats. Our success however will depend on having balanced Air Power resources, which undoubtedly will require that our governments commit substantial financial resources in this area.

38. Asymmetric threats transcend national or continental boundaries as seen from terrorist oriented activities both within and outside Africa. Terrorist organizations may capitalise on our rather inadequate Air Power capabilities to strike at targets of their own choice and at times and places convenient to them.

39. Our first line of defence is clearly to prevent the initiation of such attacks, implying the need for early warning by national and regional Air Power and other agencies. The second line of defence would be for us as users of Air Power to take an active role in the implementation of aviation security measures. Innovative employment of Air Power can pre-empt hostile asymmetric actions by targeting the cohesion and flow of their operational cycle.

40. I thank you for your attention.