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PART-TIME FORCES AND THE FUTURE OF THE SANDF

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OPENING REMARKS

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The Institute for Defence Policy, for many years, has had an ongoing - if low key - research programme on the future of the part-time and reserve forces. I wish to share with you briefly some of the more 'common sense' guidelines that have emerged from this research.

Let us be clear, right from the start, that the future of the Part-time Forces is central to the debate about the future of the SANDF.

The future of the Part-time Forces, both the Conventional Forces (the former Citizen Force) and the Territorial Forces (formerly the Commando's), cannot be planned in isolation from the wider defence debate, policy and options. Therefore, the future of the Part-time Forces is a crucial component of the Defence Review and should be an intrinsic part of the planning for the future of the SANDF. To a large degree, the SANDF is the Part-time Forces. In the absence of a coherent foreign policy and of a national consensus on defence policy, some confusion is bound to remain. Many changes are occurring in South Africa at present and part of this process of change involves rethinking the fundamentals upon which South African defence policy is based. These range from transforming the country's force posture, to force composition, equipment, and peacetime orientation, and includes a complete change in our personnel recruitment, retention and exit policies - to name but a few. In some cases, change may appear to occur at a very rapid pace, overtaking our ability to adapt to that change. These changes are compounded by the commitment to build a truly non-racial, non-discriminatory defence force - broadly representative of the wider South African population and accepted as such by political leaders and, more importantly, by the broader population. But, we should not try to fool ourselves. There is a long road ahead. In many important circles, the Part-time Forces are not completely trusted and are suspiciously regarded as a relic of a previous era which, as yet, has changed little to adapt to the demands of the new South Africa. The fact that the reality of the situation may differ substantially does not change the importance of this widely held perception.

The detailed consideration of the building of the Part-time Forces requires the rapid development of a coherent and specific military personnel recruitment and retention policy - part of our National Security Policy that is still outstanding. South Africa has always been able to depend on its Part-time Forces in times of crisis. They have never hesitated in rendering their service. Those members of the Part-time Forces that still remain, should be thoroughly involved in planning their future for the benefit of the country as a whole. In practical terms, this means that the newly elected Part-time Forces Council should really get off the ground and running. It requires a clear commitment from the Ministry of Defence to the Part-time Forces, the allocation of resources to the Council to enable it to proceed and, in general, a active public campaign to convey the message. We need a national awareness campaign at every level of our society on the role, functioning and contribution that the Part-time Forces make and can make to our military and our society.

The debate on the restructuring of the Part-time Forces also needs to be transparent. The South African public needs to know and needs to be involved in the decisions regarding the

armed forces in general, and the Part-time Forces in particular. We should bear in mind that the importance of the part-time component, as the main operational element of the SANDF, will increase as the numbers of full-time soldiers decreases. But the Part-time Force will also have to do some introspection. After the changes of the past few years, what is really left of the Part-time Forces, as opposed to what is officially on the books? Our research indicates that the willingness to serve, has declined dramatically among the existing Part-time personnel base particularly with respect to ongoing internal service in support of the SAPS. In fact, the question of the future deployment, roles, missions and tasks of the Part-time Forces appears to be a potentially large stumbling block. To what extent will the use of the Part-time Forces in border protection, support to the SAPS, humanitarian actions and in international peacekeeping affect the attractiveness of the service to the person in the street? All of this implies that particular care will have to be taken when the details of remuneration, pensions, life insurance, medical benefits and the like are considered.

Against this background it is disconcerting that, in contrast to the Interim Constitution, the working draft of the final Constitution which was released on 22 November 1995, makes no reference to the Part-time Forces. It may be appropriate to entrench the principle in the Constitution that the defence force should consist of a balanced component of both regular force and part-time and/or reserve forces. The existence of part-time or reserve forces, whose members are in the first place part of civil society and then members of the defence force, is an important element of democratic civil military relations. Part-time forces effectively tie the armed forces into civil society, particularly in the case of an all-volunteer force as applies in the new South Africa.

Nor, for that matter, does the draft Constitution provide for citizens to be liable for military conscription under justifiable circumstances - in fact we believe that conscription would be unconstitutional in terms of the proposed Bill of Rights, except during a state of emergency, at which stage it would be too late to allow for timely and adequate preparation. The State must have the ability to institute military service in good time to counter the build-up of any threat, however remote such a threat may appear at the present time.

At IDP we believe that the Ministry of Defence, the SANDF, the SA Army and the Part-time Forces Council will have to be innovative when considering the options on the international table. This may require that we revisit many 'holy cows' and deeply held convictions regarding the length of continuous training required for the average soldier and the extent of military training required by professional and skilled persons, such as doctors and mechanics.

Another area that must receive far more attention is the reintroduction of a comprehensive school cadet system. The provision of school cadet training by the Department of Defence at selected schools, after agreement is reached with the staff and parents, to provide early basic military knowledge, cultivate future recruits, and serve the community by providing disciplined extramural youth activities, is an important area that deserves much more public attention than it has received thus far.

The introduction of a system similar to the American Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at universities wishing to participate, is yet another established tradition that South Africa could benefit from. This scheme allows students to acquire military qualifications during recess, thus making them immediately suitable for direct commission as officers after obtaining a civilian degree. It therefore also provides a possible second career, as well as employment during vacations.

These suggestions are only a few among many possibilities that would allow maximum utilisation of trained, partly trained and untrained manpower in a cheap and flexible way. Ideally, it could mean that each part-time unit would consist of several layers of expertise, so that it would be of immediate, albeit limited use for routine tasks and could expeditiously be trained to the required operational standards when the need arises.

The Territorial Force's role of area protection serves as an essential part of any strategy to combat crime and provide internal security, similar to that of the Full-time Forces which is deployed in support of the SAPS internally and in border control duties. This role in support of

the police played by both Part-time and Full-time Forces is of great importance. The National Commissioner of Police, George Fivaz, has stated in the media that discussions between the two departments, which might even lead to some SANDF elements being transferred to the SAPS, are currently undertaken. In fact, the extent of the SANDF's aid to the police amounted to R1,2 billion in 1995/6, as the Minister of Finance recognised in his Budget Speech. But the Territorial Forces face a tough time ahead to justify its value in political terms to the new government. And it is here, perhaps more than anywhere else, that the overlap between the police and the military will have to be investigated more closely.

The days of compulsory conscripted service are over and the Part-time Forces will only attract the right calibre person if the environment within which service occurs is favourable and the appropriate incentives are provided. People will join the Part-time Forces if employment is perceived to be an attractive, adventurous and adequately remunerated part-time occupation - not merely out of a sense of altruism. The Minister of Defence has stated in public that volunteers, particularly those with experience, should come forward and sign up. They will be paid at basic regular rates and after four years of service may even earn a small bonus. Their service careers and military employment should be negotiated with them and their employers regularly. But as we all know, there is a major difference between talk and action. What is needed is for people to actually volunteer, to come forward, to sign up and to start training. The Department of Defence has already commenced with the creation of a more favourable dispensation, but recruiting volunteers must be done at the community level, where family and career considerations must be accounted for, and individual units must adjust their personnel procurement techniques to their own environment and operational role. This means that each unit must have its own plan and be responsible for its own recruiting. The public, employers and families must all be involved in this process. A unit in the Part-time Forces needs experienced leaders to form its cadre, but it also needs enough members to fill its ranks so that it not only exists in name, as a ceremonial sub-unit or two, but as a full-strength Part-time unit capable of being fully operational.

In the final analysis, the many (often justified) complaints that Part-time Forces members raise regarding promotion (or the lack of), medals and decorations, and other issues, are merely the symptoms of a much deeper problem - the lack of an institutionalised, effective and authoritative representative body for the Part-time Forces within the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Secretariat and the SANDF itself. I know that some progress is being made in this regard and perhaps my remarks reflect uncalled for haste. We cannot plan 'for', but need to plan 'with'. The Part-time Forces should be provided with the means and avenues to participate in structuring their own future, as well as in defining South African defence policy and doctrine.

In the process of rethinking the future of the South African Part-time forces, much reconsideration, orientation and motivation must be done, and I hope that this conference will contribute to the process. In particular, we should move away from the 'us/them' hostility which is sometimes apparent in the relations between regular and Part-time Forces soldiers. This will only be achievable if joint structures are set up, command responsibilities assigned to the Part-time Force leader component, and if we truly become a single National Defence Force that is no longer divided in Regular versus Part-time Forces.

A NEW DEAL FOR THE PART-TIME COMPONENT

Lt Gen R. Otto (SD, SM, MMM), Chief of the SA Army

INTRODUCTION

Over the past six months (since I addressed the previous SA Army Seminar), the campaign to establish the voluntary part-time service system in the SA Army, has commenced. Some aspects have required reassessment and explanation via various forums, undertaken by myself and other members of the army general staff. At ground level, although there is much to be done, indications are that with perseverance, vision and sound planning, this critical

element of the SA Army structure will materialise as planned.

I indicated at the previous seminar that the challenge for the SA Army would be to provide South Africa with a force that would be able to meet the military threats that might endanger the sovereignty and political system of the country. It is my conviction that the part-time elements are an integral and critical part of that future. This contains a further challenge. The major slice of the operational human resources on which the SA Army depends, must be drawn from the part-time component. For the SA Army to be of national value in future, the part-time component must produce trained, disciplined, committed and adequately strong structures.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PART-TIME SERVICE SYSTEM: THE CHEAPER OPTION

The value of an effective part-time component is clearly defined in the SA Army strategy regarding operational force employment. With an ever-decreasing budget, the provision of a balanced army consisting of both full-time and part-time components is critical in answering the challenge of future military threats, hence the "*one-force concepts*" which are now propagated. Should the part-time component not develop as envisaged, the SA Army will only have three basic options:

- a far more expensive, balanced, full-time component which is not at all an option for the foreseeable future;
- a small, specialised, full-time component with limited capability and restricted ability to execute its set mandate; and
- a return to some form of conscription to supplement human resources requirements.
- It is unnecessary to over-emphasise the extensive influence of our budgetary constraints on these aspects at this point.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME COMPONENTS

I have already referred to the SA Army mandate, in the challenge presented to the SA Army, which in turn led us to the 'one force concept' (supported by the Interim Constitution). The part-time and full-time components are now both of a totally voluntary nature and structured in such a manner to provide the core force required for flexible human resources utilisation. Once more, I must confirm the dependence of the SA Army on the part-time system, including both the conventional and territorial organisations, to prevent the development of an unaffordable full-time component.

You are undoubtedly aware that the designation 'Commando' has become contentious in South Africa and I do not wish to speculate about or pre-empt any decision in this regard. However, I wish to be quite clear on the value of this element of the part-time component (the Territorial Forces). Business leaders and communities alike show great appreciation for the role these units play in internal security. The recent, continuous flooding has once more allowed the SA Army and in particular, the Territorial Forces, to show their mettle. While it can presently be claimed with some legitimacy, that these units are not always placed geographically to enable them to serve all communities equitably, it is the SA Army's expressed strategy to initiate Territorial Units in order to overcome this weakness.

As far as representation in the part-time component is concerned, corrective action is an ongoing and progressive process with present statistics showing that approximately 12 000 people (other than whites) are already taken up in the conventional and Territorial Forces. This is by no means adequately representative of the country's population groups, but we are moving steadily towards a more proportionate situation as further people join up, are trained and take up positions within the system.

What of the future? The composition and structuring of the SA Army (although seemingly clear in many of our minds), is part of the vision for national defence - an issue on which national consensus is still to be reached. That there will be both part time and full-time components are confirmed in the Interim Constitution. That the part time component brings the SA Army closer to the community and can thus contribute to nation- building by adding value to its people, as well as an increased level of security, are also confirmed. However, it

is also important to note that rationalisation will play a role in the near future. The fact cannot be ignored that the process will ultimately mean a smaller SA Army and that the composition and structure of the full time and part-time components will be affected. My requirement is for this painful process to be executed with professionalism and sensitivity so that once it is completed, the SA Army will be a more streamlined and effective arm of service.

THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS AND UNCERTAINTIES SURROUNDING THE PART-TIME COMPONENT

I wish to convey some aspects of importance in this regard:

- The establishment of the part-time component as an all-volunteer force (both conventional and territorial) within the SA Army, is a strategic issue with the highest priority. The support, therefore, of part-time or full-time members is of major importance, either through direct or indirect means.
- In some quarters, a change in mindset is required of the full-time members in respect of their part-time components, their role, functions and responsibilities and a sensitivity for the 'one force concept' consisting of both elements.
- In discussing the new part-time service concept with private enterprise, it is clear that they will require more than lip service to the principles of sound administration and utilisation of the part-time component, to be forthcoming in their support. In the past, fingers have been pointed at the SA Army - something which should not occur in future.
- There is a definite negativity among some employers with regard to their support of the system, with possible cause. It is therefore imperative that our communications efforts should set the background against which our approach can be measured.
- There are people who have previously served and are still serving within Part-time Units, who have real and perceived uncertainties with regard to the new system.

These must be addressed to ensure a more positive, overall outlook.

The establishment and development of the part-time component as an all-volunteer force is a command communication challenge for the SA Army as a whole.

THE REQUIREMENT FOR HONEST AND CAPABLE PART TIME SERVICE MEMBERS

To ensure an effective system, there must be a strong commitment from individuals, units and formations in the Part-time Forces, with a *quid pro quo* from the full-time component responsible for the administration of these structures.

The basic requirement of an honest approach to life and to the SA Army should not be underestimated, as this will continuously influence the effectiveness of the system.

Ultimately, as we all know, "*The proof of the pudding lies in the eating*", and the part time component will have to achieve set standards for training, discipline, organisation, personnel management and financial control - to mention only some of the main fields. Meeting standards implies continuous and regular involvement. It is our challenge to make the system work.

THE HONOUR OF BEING A PART-TIME SERVICE MEMBER

Voluntary part-time service is traditionally an integral part of the South African military way of life and is a cornerstone in the development of the new SA Army. It is fair comment that "*success breeds success*" and it is hoped that, as this system deploys and develops, the *esprit de corps* and subsequent pride of membership will develop as well.

The challenge in establishing this *esprit de corps* lies in the SA Army's ability to enhance the status, credibility and professionalism of both the conventional and territorial elements. The 'one force concept' is a clear message that there will be no differentiation between the elements comprising the SA Army in future. Our international examples in this regard are the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the ways in which they have utilised their own part-time service equivalents in their military structures during the Gulf War.

THE PART-TIME COMPONENT: QUO VADIS?

Even though most of what I have conveyed is intended to facilitate a positive approach, you may well still ask the question: *Quo vadis?* Confirming the following points is thus important:

- The part-time component is an integral part of the strategy of the SA Army.
- Considering internal stability, the reality shows clearly that, for the foreseeable future, the SA Army will remain involved, although I would like to see it withdrawn from the situation. Together with the impending international peace support role for which the SA Army is presently preparing, it indicates that the SA Army are mainly involved in the medium term, in secondary roles. The implication for the conventional formations and units is clear. Flexibility in training and human resources development will be a priority for organisation survival.
- The part-time component, with regard to nation-building, should be seen as an investment, not only because of the personal added value that the SA Army provides, but because, in the words of President Nelson Mandela, "*[t]he citizen in uniform, active in civil society and as a volunteer soldier, deserves to be doubly honoured by our country.*"

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is quite clear that there is a tremendous amount of work to be done to ensure that the part-time component realises the potential that most of us envisage. The question is not whether the Part-time Forces should be integral to the SA Army, but whether we are committed enough to make the system work.

Having challenged you all, I wish to congratulate and thank the Part-time Forces Council, the liaison officers and all part-time service members for their sterling work in the past, and presently with the establishment of the voluntary system. I also wish to thank all the personnel at Army and Defence Headquarters, who have been involved with the planning, marketing and the establishment of the marketing forums which are now being activated.

Much has been done - much still remains to be done.