



**SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**VICE ADMIRAL M.S. HLONGWANE**

**REMARKS BY CHIEF OF THE SA NAVY DURING THE SA NAVY  
MEDIA BREAKFAST AT ADMIRALTY HOUSE**

**“Moving South Africa Forward – Propelling the SA Navy into the  
future”**

**16 MARCH 2017**

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, good morning and a warm welcome to this historic building, Admiralty House, and equally historic town – Simon’s Town, home of the South African Navy. I am pleased that you have accepted our invitation and afforded me the opportunity to share with you some of our achievements and successes. But, to borrow a phrase from Dr Martin Luther King: *“the solution of one problem brings us face to face with (yet) another problem”* so allow me to also use this opportunity to highlight some of the challenges we are seized with and how your Navy is dealing with them.

But before I do so, let me take a moment to pay tribute to the lives lost last month in Durban, when 3 of our young sailors, LS Amrithal Ramdin, Able Seaman Francois Mundell and Seaman Henro Ter Borg who, along with a contractor from Riordor, gave their lives trying to save 2 civilian contractors from the Department of Public Works – sadly, all 6 lost their lives. There can be no greater sacrifice than to give one’s life for one’s country or fellow countrymen and I wished to once again reflect on their bravery and courage. Nobody understood better than they did, what is expected of a member of the armed forces when he or she undertakes the oath to *“carry out one’s mission with courage and assist one’s comrades-in-arms, even at the risk of one’s own life.”* While no word or deed can ever compensate the bereaved families for their loss or serve as recompense for their sacrifice, we are able to at the very least recognise and reward their bravery and courage; albeit posthumously.

Indeed, our democracy has been forged in the fires of unyielding struggle and sacrifice, born of a vision of a society where principles of freedom, justice and equality prevail for all and if we do not remember, these sacrifices they would have been for nothing, so ladies and gentlemen, <sup>be</sup> rest assured that these three men will never be forgotten!

Allow me to point out that the last 6 editions of this particular exercise had been hosted in South African waters – with the home advantage, so to speak - but this is the very first time that we have deployed our capabilities to Germany. So, as I am sure you will agree, this was a steep learning curve for our men and women who participated, in that the battlespace is completely different and so too the challenges they were faced with, particularly the harsh Northern European winters. However, I am proud to report that our sailors were more than up to the challenge and by all accounts, acquitted themselves of their tasks exceedingly well, all of which contributes to forging a credible Navy. The SAS AMATOLA will also make port calls to Tema, Ghana; Malabo, Equatorial Guinea; Luanda, Angola and Walvisbay, Namibia en route back home. I await the full report of proceedings, upon their return next month, when I will be able to critically assess the level to which they were able to achieve on the objectives we set them and how we are able to improve.

The cooperation and camaraderie shared between Navies worldwide are little understood by those outside the fraternity so allow me to point out that during both these visits, the SA Navy was able to strengthen areas of cooperation with the Royal and German Navies and indeed, the high regard in which each is held is, wholly and unequivocally, reciprocated.

Slightly closer to home and directly following the completion of the Armed Forces Day, the SAS DRAKENSBERG immediately deployed on OPERATION COPPER and will return from the area of operations shortly! As you are no doubt aware, Projects BIRO - the acquisition of Offshore and Inshore Patrol vessels - and HOTEL, the acquisition of a Hydrographic survey vessel - are gaining momentum and will play a significant role in the achievement of broader national and international imperatives and, also when considered within the context of the security-development-economy nexus.

Our thoughts and prayers are also with the family of Sub Lieutenant Sello Ndimande who lost his life in a tragic drowning in Durban over the same period and while preparing for the Armed Forces Day. Allow me now to turn to some of our achievements and successes.

Last month saw the successful celebration of the South African National Defence Force's 6<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Day in Durban and, despite the inclement weather and tragedy suffered, I am able to report that we saw in excess of 18 000 visitors to our ships and submarine (The SAS DRAKENSBERG, SAS SPIOENKOP, SAS PROTEA, SAS GALESHEWE and SAS MAKHANDA and SAS QUEEN MODJADJI 1) which were open to the public for the duration – in addition, we saw 1000s more visitors to our static displays and recruitment teams located at the fan park.

As you might be aware, the President of the Republic of South Africa, his Excellency Mr Jacob Zuma, took the decision – a few years ago – to denote 21 February, the date of the sinking of the troopship SS Mendi, as the official date for the celebration of the South African Armed Forces Day and this year, the SA Navy was appointed the Chief Executor for the centenary commemoration of the sinking of the SS Mendi in the United Kingdom. As a result, I was unfortunately unable to attend the Armed Forces Day celebrations however, I am delighted to report that the SS Mendi commemoration was a resounding success and the more than 600 men, of the South African Native Labour Corps, who lost their lives in service of their country, were appropriately honoured at the cemeteries in Hollybrook, Southampton and Milton, Portsmouth as well as at the exact location where the SS Mendi sank. For this purpose our frigate SAS AMATOLA was deployed on Exercise KETANE where she successfully participated in the SS Mendi Centenary commemoration in the United Kingdom and then went on to complete EXERCISE GOODHOPE VII in Germany.

Indeed, maritime insecurity demonstrates little reverence for geographical boundaries and all nations are to a greater or lesser extent dependent on the sea for the continued success of their economies and the well-being of their people.

In his state of the nation address last month, the president once again emphasised that because the economy was not growing fast enough, a few key focus areas were identified including: “to grow the oceans economy” - dubbed OPERATION PHAKISA. In line with its objectives, the SA Navy is preparing to host the government garage concept for all state-owned vessels in Simon’s Town, including the maintenance and repair of government-owned vessels, through the newly established South African Navy/ARMSCOR/Denel partnership.

While much has already been achieved by our Dockyard Transfer Team, more work remains to be done. The future business model, for the management of the Dockyard, places the Dockyard firmly under the sovereign control of the SA Navy, and I am confident that this relationship can be leveraged to ensure that the SA Navy is better able to fulfill its mandate, concomitant with unlocking the economic potential as conceived by OP PHAKISA.

Bearing OP PHAKISA in mind, I am pleased to report that significant strides have been made in terms of the spatial development of Naval Base Durban. Our plan is to home port some of the BIRO vessels at Naval Base Durban thereby leveraging its geographic position in terms of the South African Development Community’s Maritime Security Strategy.

Furthermore, Phase 2 of Project CAROL will commence shortly and will see the acquisition and refurbishment of boats and/or ferries for the base bringing the vision of a fully functional naval base even closer to being realised.

Allow me now to turn to some of our challenges, for it was Albert Einstein who said: "The mere formulation of a problem is far often more essential than its solution!" So, ladies and gentlemen of the media, we understand what our challenges are and this, in my view, is critical to finding and crafting a solution.

I have previously alluded to Project HOTEL and while we welcome the recent announcement to build a new Hydrographic Survey vessel as well as Inshore and Offshore Patrol vessels, the end-goal is still beyond the horizon. In the meantime, our grand "White Lady," the SAS PROTEA, celebrates her 45<sup>th</sup> birthday this year and is essentially 15 years beyond the internationally, accepted service lifespan for hydrographic survey vessels. Given the challenges inherent in the security-development-economy nexus previously alluded to, we have to challenge traditional constructs and ideas and employ innovation to propel our Navy into the future, for the "Grand old dame" has just successfully completed a survey in the Durban area and continues to serve her country with pride.

Having said this however, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that despite this interim solution, we are seized with new problems such as an increase in her unscheduled maintenance periods, accompanied by the decline in productivity during these periods and in turn, our inability to achieve on our planned sea hours for the year; remembering of course, that South Africa has a coastline of approximately 3924 km and an exclusive economic zone encompassing an area of about 1.5 million square kilometers.

As you may be aware, members of the media, the Hydrographic Bill is well advanced and when passed into legislation, will effectively elevate Hydrography to the national level and therefore our Hydrographic capability becomes an important part of our national infrastructure.

Still closer to home, and still focused on some of our challenges and how the South African Navy is dealing with them, I now turn to some of the human resource initiatives which have shown some success in addressing HR lacunae. Currently, we have 5 learners who are pursuing academic studies in Russia with the aim of qualifying them as Engineers. We are also collaborating with the Durban University of Technology to roll out the Work Integrated Learning Programme towards qualifications in various fields such as Human Resources, Logistics and Engineering to name a few.

We continue to assist the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in training the National Rural Youth Service Corps particularly in the areas of leadership skills and discipline. Last year we successfully trained 750 members and this year we plan to train 600 more at our training unit, SAS SALDANHA. Another challenge that we have had to critically reflect on is that of security at some of our establishments. This has proven to be one that will require significant effort and innovation in the face of exiguous resources.

As a result we, together with various specialists, have been hard at work developing various methodologies to respond to this challenge. These include having instituted Boards of Inquiry to determine not only what had transpired during various incidents of insecurity at specific establishments but to frame a holistic response. We are also reviewing our standing operating procedures and responding states of readiness at all our establishments. Furthermore, we are consulting with specialists on the most effective, integrated security systems at our key establishments and this particular initiative is already far advanced.

But, we are ever mindful of the prevailing constraints under which we must all operate so while much work has been done over the last few months, this will need constant interrogation, adjustment and adaptation going forward.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen of the media, despite the challenges we are faced with we, the South African Navy, **are** doing our part because the people of South Africa have placed their trust in us. We must therefore work **harder** and **smarter** – doing more with less, and now more than ever, we need to challenge traditional constructs, employing innovation to propel our Navy into the future.

Ever mindful of our current socio-economic climate and the need to account to the people of this country we, each year, open our doors and hearts to the people of South Africa so that they are able to see and experience **their** Navy **first-hand**. I therefore invite, no, I **encourage** you, members of the media as well as the members of our public to join us at Navy Festival 2017. We have once again put together an action packed programme of events that includes a Navy Band concert this evening at the head of our dry-dock, displays, demonstrations, tug rides, food-stalls and, of course, all our ships will be open to the public to visit over the weekend. And, best of all, this event is absolutely free!

Allow me now to introduce the senior members of my command council who will assist me in answering any questions you might have.

Thank you.