

CAF RETREAT SPEECH, 30 September 2020- SWARTKOPS AFB

Members of the PDSC in absentia.

Members of the MCC in absentia.

Deputy CAF Maj Gen Buthelezi.

Members of the Air Force Command Council.

Generals.

Senior Officers

Junior Officers

SCWO Stanton Jones Warrant Officer of the SAAF

Warrant Officers

Chairperson of the Spouses Forum, Mrs Msimang.

Members of the Spouses Forum.

Members of the Media.

Esteemed Limited Guests

Introduction

I want to start by thanking all of you for being here. To say that there was much deliberate uncertainty about today would be an understatement, but as always, when we see obstacles we find ways around them.

We find ourselves in an interesting time, where our minds reflect our national borders, porous to illicit activities, but closed to much of what's important to us. Covid has come at a time where we would have celebrated our Collective Heritage of a quarter century of the Republic, and remembered the full century of the world's Second oldest Air Force. I would like to take a moment to remember all those who have been affected by COVID-19 and lost loved ones.

As I'm leaving, I want to leave you with some short musings from my mind on these last 8 years of service, capping off a honest and transparent career formally spanning 42 years, but really, as the story of a child bundled into exile at six months, a story spanning 60 years. I believe my leadership style has been one focused on 4 pillars known as THAD: Transparency, Honesty, Accountability and Discipline.

Projects

In my tenure as the Chief of the South African Force, I have, to the best of my ability, strived to lead in a manner that you could feel proud of and confident in. I believe that it is through our actions in establishing community driven projects, reshaping organisational structures and systems and carrying out the national project of the transformation of our institutions that I may have done so.. I have always believed that we are capable.

To be an Airforce that Inspires Confidence we need to be confident in ourselves. Since I started here, I have always believed that you, each of you, are more than capable. I believed and still do that you have the capacity to make this organisation into something bigger than what it was. And it starts with small things, yes? I remember tasting the food made by our chefs after (insourcing). You would remember that it was at a time when the Airforce had outsourced such an essential service. We had battled long and hard to take back our capabilities in making something as simple as our own food. But we won. And once it was in your hands you dazzled us. Function after function there are people telling me how delectable and elegant your dishes are. And that has been one of the

cardinal pillars upon which this work has stood: to remind you of your capabilities, to put you in a position to demonstrate it.

Today we have our technicians able to maintain the Falcon 50, Oryx and the Caravan, essential services which were out of our hands.

One of the legacy projects that I would love to see carried into the future and developed upon is education. We have established Early Childhood Development Centres around the country that cater to the educational needs of our future -- our children. The Fledgelings ECD Centres are successful in creating platforms for increased employment, schooling and personal confidence. I have heard stories of young personnel registering for the babies yet to be born.. I truly believe that this project has helped shape the military community into one that is beginning to sound like a family.

We have recently welcomed the return of our young pilots from Cuba. The celebration of old liberatory bonds through the exchange of ideas and knowledge has been crucial. These students were part of an exchange programme, started in 2014, that aimed at skilling our youth. Some of the graduates, who by the way received golden awards for engineering degree and others for sports, started of as our maths and science summer and winter school learners from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Yes, we deployed members to communities to help with education, and we've seen the results, the learners were hungry for access and they were satiated with degrees, and I'm proud as an Air Force we could Inspire That Confidence.

The number of SAAF learners at the Saldhana military academy continues to be impressive. Members who are studying and graduating from various institutions of higher learning are next to none. Today I welcomed the team from the School of Government as lessons of good governance and ethics are non negotiable.

As your leader, I have given myself completely to the project of transformation. 26 years into democracy and there is still so much ground to cover, but while we were here, we managed to put forward placements for extremely talented and brilliant minds who have attended their expertise to making this an Airforce that inspires confidence. I am glad to see so many more African faces in command positions in this institution. I am proud to see the vision that some many comrades fought for materialising. I am, however, saddened by the limitations placed on me to fully achieve the vision of transformation. I was unable to restructure the

Air Force in such a way that gave spotlight to many brilliant women. I was limited in many ways to create a culture of strategic and timeous staffing.

Limitation & prevention of Progress

Of course, as a pilot, I have always reached for the clouds, and oftentimes what I wished to happen was grounded. I want to highlight a few possible barriers to progress that the SANDF faces. Firstly, I must stress the fact that we have such amazing policies that are constantly being improved on, but with no oversight and will - policy just remains paperwork . There needs to be better alignment, discussions and collaboration between members of the MCC, the parliamentary oversight committee and the commander in chief, the current centralized approach can seemingly be tricky. Attempts to procure more strategic assets have resulted in a pile of documents languishing on a desk somewhere, unsigned. The cyber security course in Hoedspruit was terminated and to date we still hope it will be approved.

Fiscal maladministration is not the only problem our government battles with, abuse of power is rampant throughout the State. Military law is clear that there shall be no fraternising with juniors, and that we shall not exchange positions for favours. Furthermore, I must note, that abuse of power also comes in as many forms, many civilians do not trust their security apparatus, and it's our job to regain their trust and be held accountable. The stories that came out during lockdown horrified me.

In my time as Chief, my name has been thrown around painfully. I've almost been fired, demoted or shuffled many times for my appreciation of the PFMA, as well as for refusing to let my subordinates take the fall for complying with military orders.

This, unfortunately, led to punitive measures for raising pertinent and uncomfortable questions; no overseas trips approved. To my counterparts around the world, I can only apologise once more for appearing aloof and antisocial, despite my best intentions, some things just were not possible. I recall being called off a plane just before take off, and to that nation I also apologise on behalf of my outfit. I've been unable to attend strategic international Airshows, had annual leave disapproved, not once received a performance bonus in my entire 8 years in this office, in fact even the bonus that was approved by my predecessor shortly before I was appointed as SAAF chief was withdrawn.

The Future of SANDF

I want to touch briefly on the potential I see within this institution and how we can revolutionise it to be the Defence Force of the future. I have mentioned before the need to commence with a robust discussion on what capabilities, platforms, doctrine and tactics would be most appropriate for future conflicts? A Defence Force that is agile enough to both physically and intellectually move seamlessly between its traditional mandated tasks and functions and the demanding new environments of cybersecurity and cyber-resilience, proxy forces, hybrid warfare, transnational crime, climate change, as well as peace support operations to mention but a few.

I foresee a Defence Force rich in quality, educated and professional human capital. Teams that have the best interest of the Flag and what it represents. A force that can work with its regional, continental and international partners to form coalitions or partnerships to lead to greater internal and external security. As usual, there is an unsigned plan on this. We need a security sector that needs to reimagine how we deal with crime, as the current plan is not effective. I need to highlight the scourge of kidnappings, which often forms part of the femicide in South Africa, itself a significant issue.

The Defence Force is not just a bunch of members running with guns, we are the ones called when flooding happens in Mamelodi, or when Fires burn in Cape Town, and I imagine it remaining this way, however without improved funding, core mandates such as these, I fear a situation where our air power will become as effective as tanks, as we will be able to take off. For the betterment and safety of the country and region, I plead one last time for increased funding, the situation is dire. Yes, we signed off the purchasing of the 3 SAA Boeing aircrafts under the current SAA business rescue plan, to be able to increase our fleet, but this is not enough.

In the defense, I prioritised mental health, many of us served on different sides of a war for equality, and very few people have sought help on this. Depression, anxiety, and alcoholism also need addressing and I do see a time in the near future where we can have these discussions without stigma, so people can get the appropriate assistance they need. Additional and tighter regulations of Air Space is a must, and it is possible as I leave behind a great relationship with ACSA, but maintain that we need more oversight on movements into and out of our territory, another document left unsigned.

Lastly, we need to plan for a future where climate change has impacted us negatively. Already we have started studies into how we can be better prepared, and ideally would have sent out officers abroad to understand how other nations are dealing with this. It is my strong belief that this and many other considerations should be led by youth, those of us who only know how to destroy should make room for those who wish to build sustainably. The reality, as we learned with Mozambique's terrible flooding, is that we are underprepared and lack a regional plan which I'm more than willing to help build.

In a digital era, we lack the levels of digitalisation and cybersecurity necessary for us to compete and defend ourselves at a global scale. My attempts to create such have been thwarted and I do hope that the SANDF will pay close attention to such.

In a world where some countries look to the moon and are launching satellites, we still look to the ground, mistakenly believing that is where we will grow. The future of SANDF, and the country at large depends on a stronger Air Force and Navy, on a significantly improved leadership team, and most importantly, people who care for those under them.

My Thanks

I count my blessing daily for my extraordinary relationship with my wife, Afrika. Love, your support, motivation and inspiration kept me focused, energized and absolutely capable. Your love and commitment to the military families have been exceptional. You stopped at nothing to blast gatekeepers and defend what is right for the spouses and their children. You have adopted the military family as your own, you are truly a mother to all, you live up to your gigantic name. I shall remain eternally grateful to my mother for telling me to go and meet you at the ANC back office in Lusaka.

To my sons, I apologize for being too busy to pay full attention to your needs. I am grateful that inspite of having a very busy father, you remained disciplined, focused and helpful. Your pearls of wisdom and divine presence continue to mean the world to me.

To those who no longer walk with us, the silent architects of this democracy who fell before seeing it and have given your all defending it, your part is not forgotten, many of you were my friends or juniors and I carry you and your sacrifices in my heart.

A special word of thank you to my office. Your unwavering commitment and support has been exceptional. Thank you to each an every member in this outfit who has been an active participant to an Air Force that

Inspires Confidence. Please continue to improve on customs and traditions in the spirit of collective heritage.

Members on parade, thank you for your polished appearance. To the band thank you for always delivering splendid sounds. You always make the parades a happy spectacle. Thank you.

To Conclude,

What makes a man cosign the starting of a political party, that same man teach his nephews, that nephew flee a country chased by death squads unknowingly leaving family to be tortured, with his wife and kids following him a year later. What makes one of those kids pick up a toy plane at the age of 7 while speaking Swahili as a native tongue, learn Hindi by the age of 11 and go on to train in Russia, and fight in decisive victories in Angola as a revolutionary? What makes the Commander return home to be demoted and subjected to pure racism under the guise of integration and yet turn away lucrative job offers and stay the course? What makes the demoted man work his way up again, tirelessly, to the head of the Air Force, to face stiff opposition from his colleagues . What makes that man continue regardless, in the interests of his country, and what makes that man stand before you today to say thank you all for your relentless work in bringing many of my visions to life? What could it be that makes a man, an exile, a terrorist, a commander, a freedom fighter, a dedicated soldier, and a person that smiles through it all? What could it be if not a patriot, and love of the soil?

I hope you have found my musings fair, my desire for the betterment of this country unwavering and for these last few decades, you have my utmost gratitude.

This is Blackhawk, Signing out.