

CONTRIBUTION BY HON. LEMPY LUCAS, MP, DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA DURING THE 2011/2012 NATIONAL BUDGET DEBATE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MARCH-APRIL 2011

Hon Speaker

Hon Members

The national budget is an important matter and as members of this August House, we ought to discuss it in that spirit, but it appears that some members of the House and the public take this debate lightly by trying to score political points out of it and opportunistically criticising this Vote or that Vote.

APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS IN THE NDF

Hon Speaker

Hon Members

I was amazed when Hon Moongo made unfounded claims that “a Himba person” has been a Private (an ordinary soldier) in the NDF since 1990. These claims are not just aimed at criticising the Defence Budget, but are also tribalistic in nature. In the NDF, soldiers are not identified as “Himba person” or the other person. The NDF is a professional and apolitical institution whose mandate as per Chapter 15; Article 118 of the Namibian Constitution is to defend the territory and national interests of Namibia. NDF members have numbers and names for identification and if the Hon

Member wants to prove his statement, he should have come up with the name and number of the NDF member in question, either here in Parliament or to the Ministry of Defence so that such a case could have been investigated as to why a member has remained in the same rank for 21 years.

That is unbelievable, unless something was seriously wrong with regard to that member's performance and conduct, it cannot be true. It is true that during the 1990s promotions were slow in the NDF, but in the 2000s NDF appointments and promotions were managed professionally and most soldiers who joined the NDF at the beginning have been promoted at least every three years if they maintained acceptable standards of performance and conduct, irrespective of their ethnic or background origin.

Special promotion exercises were carried out in 2004 and 2006 respectively, which swept downwards from those years to find out whether there were members who were not promoted as a result of omission by the NDF Leadership. If some members were left out during those special promotion exercises, it was not because of negligence on the part of NDF Leadership, but maybe such cases required special consideration such as members who had pending disciplinary cases.

I would like to inform this August House and the public that we are building a representative Defence Force in terms of

demographics of the Namibian society. Members of the Defence Force are posted and promoted based on merit regardless of their ethnic or political affiliation.

THE NEED FOR A WELL-RESOURCED DEFENCE FORCE

Hon Speaker

Hon Members

Some members of the public appear to be ill informed or are deliberately taking advantage of the national budget debate to criticise the Defence Budget. An article published in an English Daily on Friday, 25 March 2011, questioned the existence of the Namibian Defence Force (NDF). The author of the article criticised the Defence Budget by making, and quoting authors of the same kin, making unfounded allegations and irrelevant comparisons between the NDF and militaries of other countries.

The article alleges that *there is no return by investing in the military* and argues that “how to stop the bloated military budget and thus a waste of the country resources being spent on things that have no positive impact on our development agenda are issues that need to be debated” as if development takes place under instability.

Development and stability are two sides of the same spectrum. The one cannot take place without the other.

The Namibian nation needs to understand that the NDF is a legal institution established in terms of Chapter 15, Article 118 of the Namibian Constitution to defend the territory and national interests of Namibia. To question the need for the NDF is to question the judgement of the founders of our Constitution.

It should be remembered that when Namibia got its independence in 1990, Apartheid was still alive in South Africa and there was an ongoing civil war in Angola that time. It would have been inconceivable would the founders of our Republic not have been able to see the need for a Defence Force. Even if we did not want to, the political and military situation at Namibia's independence required that we have a Defence Force and thus the founders of our Republic and its Constitution were right in making provision for the establishment of the NDF.

How would Namibia have survived the security threats that faced it in the 1990s if it had no Defence Force? Who was going to defend it? Defence forces from other countries? Because if we cannot defend ourselves, we either forget about independence or we have to call on someone else to defend our country.

The NDF is there to make sure that would be aggressors would think twice before they contemplate invading our country. The

NDF is an unrivalled guarantor of peace and stability in our country and supports our foreign policy by supporting peace in Africa and the world.

Namibia made the right decision by establishing its Defence Force at independence and it should be proud of its Defence Force rather than regret its existence.

Since Namibia has taken the decision to have a Defence Force, it has to be prepared to allocate adequate resources to it. You do not want a half-baked Defence Force, you want an effective Defence Force and that requires resources. There is no two way about it, we either have a Defence Force on which we can rely for effective defence of our country or we have nothing, and maybe rely on some celestial forces to salvage our independence, which is idealistic.

The defence of our country is a noble duty for all Namibians and we have to do it ourselves if need be. For that, we decided to have the NDF and it is our responsibility to fund it properly to be effective.

The Namibian people should, therefore, understand that the NDF was established taking into account the political and military situation that prevailed just after our independence. The Namibian public must remember that the world changes constantly, including the security situation as we see it happening in North Africa and

the Middle East, so we need to be prepared to defend our country in case of security threats and we cannot do that if we have a poorly funded Defence Force.

Technology advancement is experienced to the same degree in the military field, with modern weaponry and military equipment emerging every time. As a result, the Namibian Defence Force is challenged to keep pace with military technological advancement. They cannot be expected to fight modern war with outdated weapons, hence, the need for adequate funding for the NDF to train and equip itself well to be able to carry out any operations competently.

INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION FOR FOOD SECURITY IN NAMIBIA

Hon Speaker, Hon Members

I am happy to note that the budget allocation to the agricultural sector has increased this financial year and the sector has been identified for employment creation under the Government's Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG). However, I would like to share my experience about the Etunda Irrigation Project in Omusati Region. I visited

this Project more than once in my capacity as a citizen of this country and my findings were not satisfactory.

I found that, despite the potential that the Project has, the produce at the Project are usually not handled with the necessary care. They are exposed to the sun, rain and all other weather conditions. There are no cooling and storage facilities to store the produce as it should be, especially the vegetables. The talk about Namibia not having enough cooling facilities has been on the card for quite some time, meaning a challenge was identified but the solution is not being sought. The level of production has dropped significantly^{ntly} to the level that one cannot imagine.

It is high time that the institutions responsible address the current situation sooner than later.

Based on my observation, I concluded that the main problem at the Etunda Irrigation Project is lack of leadership and coordination. I am, therefore, appealing to the Hon Minister of Agriculture, Water & Forestry and the Management of the Etunda Irrigation Project to intervene as a matter of urgency so that the Project can produce to its full potential.

It seems that The Etunda Irrigation Project is no longer pursuing its original goals. I believe that if the Project reverts to its original goals, production will increase again the Project can significantly

contribute to food security in our country, particularly at this time when the country is faced with severe floods.

TRANSPORTATION AND ROADS

Hon Speaker,

Hon Members

It is painful to watch each year during the rainy season, especially when there are floods, the destruction of roads, including strategic ones, in our country. The roads are damaged and destroyed by rain almost every year and as a result many economic and social activities come to a standstill.

It seems that the main cause of this problem in some instances is the poor road workmanship. This situation results in the waste of money and delays development, particularly in the most affected areas and in the country generally.

Because the roads were poorly constructed, money has to be spent each year on the repair of the same roads and social services such as education and health are often interrupted because of damaged roads.

I am suggesting that we strengthen the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for road construction in order to avoid further waste

of taxpayers' money and facilitate uninterrupted socio-economic development in all the regions of our country.

Finally, I would like to thank Hon Minister of Finance, the entire staff of the Ministry of Finance as well as the Director General of the NPC for an inclusive budget.

With these few remarks I support the Appropriation Bill and I thank you.