

**REMARKS BY HON R-ADM (RTD) PETER HAFENI VILHO,  
MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, DURING  
EXERCISE-KHAN STRIKE ON 21 AUGUST 2020, KARIBIB  
TRAINING AREA**

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

**Hon Frans Kapofi – Minister of HAISS**

**Mr. Ben Likando – DG NCIS**

**Air Marshal Martin Kambulu Pinehas – CDF**

**Service Commanders**

**General Officers**

**Senior Officers**

**Junior Officers**

**Warrant Officers**

**Non-Commissioned Officers and other Ranks**

**Members of the Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**A very Good Morning to everyone.**

**First of all, allow me extend to you all an apology from His Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia and the Commander-in-Chief of the Namibian Defence Force for not being able to be in our midst today due to other equally important matters of state.**

**When we spoke, he said this to me: *“Cde Minister, due to the importance and magnitude of this exercise, I do understand that my commanders and troops expect me to be there, and it is important that I attend, but I just can’t make it. However, it is my sincere wish that everything goes as planned.”***

**Secondly, Air Marshall Pinheas, as our host today, I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for allowing me and all the invited guests to witness the closing stages EX-KHAN Strike. We appreciate the opportunity to see first hand the coming into fruition of what you have been preparing for over the past 12 months—which is the demonstration of Joint Service operational capability.**

**Thirdly, I would also like to thank all the participants for displaying a high-level of skills, knowledge and professionalism. Furthermore, this event would not have been possible without the many months of preparation and commitment on the part of the Exercise Planners.**

**Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**In *The Art of War*, Sun Tsu once said: “Know yourself and you will win all battles.” You can only know yourselves when you exercise together as a Defence Force, hence EX-KHAN Strike which is being conducted with one important aim—to test the interoperability among the forces and to carry out a live demonstration of integrated weapon systems.**

**This Joint Military Field Exercise was planned at a Brigade level and was conducted at Battalion Group level, consisting of elements from the Army, Air Force, Navy, Engineers, the Special Forces and the Mobile Field Hospital.**

**These types of exercises are meant to prepare you against threats to the wellbeing and security of our people. To enable you to maintain our sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence; to enable you to create conditions in which democracy is consolidated and social justice and economic development is achieved; to enable you to ensure an environment in which our citizens live in peace, freedom and safety.**

**Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**I must say that we have done well over the past 30 years until the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global scene, which has seen every country reeling under the impact of the virus. A virus which is killing individuals, destroying economies and threatening people's livelihoods.**

**The defense force has played a commendable role in acting as frontline workers. The force has participated in the manning of road blocks and the patrolling of national borders. They have contributed to the setting up of quarantine centers and hospitals.**

**However, the force has not been spared from the impact of COVID-19. Apart from the high risk that comes from being frontline workers, the defense personnel are also exposed because they live in communities, dine together in messes, travel together in groups and act together in operations, which makes it difficult to maintain social distancing**

**The various containment measures such as quarantine and nation-wide lockdowns have had a negative impact on crucial defense activities. Joint exercises, drills, conferences, regular training and recruitment have either been cancelled or delayed. For that same reason this exercise has been modified both in size and scope.**

**Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**When we depart from here we are going join the rest of our colleagues in the combating and containment of the spread of the unrelenting Corona virus. But our efforts will also be made difficult by those unpatriotic members of our society that are using the pandemic to gain political mileage and advance their economic interest.**

**Allow me to further illustrate this point.**

**It might sound strange but true that we are being more careful not to transmit the virus among strangers than we are among our own family members.**

**The other day, a man on television, in response as to why he is not wearing a mask flippantly tells the Inspector General of the Namibian Police that they are all from the same household. This carelessness within the family, this defective reasoning is what is unfortunately being extended and practiced in all other social settings.**

**I'm in a circle of friends, I'm with colleagues, I'm with my classmates, I'm with my team mates, I'm with my drinking buddies, and I'm with my Hubbly Bubbly buddies, and therefore there is not need for a mask, no need for social distancing, no need for sanitizing and before long the whole community is infected and affected both socially and economically.**

**And when the economy takes a knock through this careless behavior, guess who gets to be blamed – government of course. And this finger pointing is regrettable perpetuated through inciting statements coming from the business community who are blaming the government for destroying the economy and causing an increase in unemployment levels.**

**And when I say business people I'm not talking about the Kapana traders or the Three Sisters. I'm talking about that section of our population that controls and own 70 percent of the economy.**

**Their comments are not motivated by any concern for the welfare of the employees or preservation of jobs but for the**

maximization of profits at all costs. It is about economic racism. A slave and master relationship. A relationship that hark back to settler/apartheid colonialism and the slave trade.

We know that their wealth does not stem from business acumen but from the brutal exploitation of our people on their *latifundia*. It is wealth built on cheap and expendable labor of the contract system. Therefore, a sick or dead worker doesn't matter to them; there are many more where this one came from. And with the current high unemployment rate those that are dismissed today will tomorrow be replaced by others at a lower cost.

Unfortunately, some of our misguided intellectuals, who themselves are economically disadvantaged, latch onto this flawed narrative and pass it on through social media as if it were gospel truth, thereby fueling anxiety and uncertainty among the general population. There will always be squabbles within a family, but you don't invite the enemy into the house just because you are angry with your brother.

You must have noticed that some of them were even gloating when government recently lost the court case against the Namibia Employers Federation and others in its attempt to protect the jobs of our people and maintain economic stability. These are people fixated in seeing black governments fail. People who would tell you that, things were better under apartheid.

**Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**As government we admit that conditions are difficult, yes! But the truth is that we didn't lockout the world, the world locked us out. Whether tourists arrive on our shores depends very much on what happens in the countries of origin and the rest of the world than what happens in Namibia. The same goes in respect of the export of our minerals, fish and other economic and commercial relations with our trading partners.**

**The reason I'm telling you this is because there is a concerted effort to infiltrate your ranks. Those that are advocating for regime change know that the Defence Force is the last bastion and the most important pillar of our nation. Everything else rests upon your strength. If you collapse the rest will crumble.**

**Therefore, you are expected to be vigilant against these subversive and neocolonial attempts to reverse the gains of our independence. We should not allow ourselves to be misled by political opportunists, demagogues and self seeking business leaders. What do you think will happen to you and me when those that are controlling the economy also gain political control?**

**Finally, Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**This exercise was not triggered by any given development. It is a routine exercise as informed by the Namibia Defence Force Mission Statement. And I'm confident that, armed with the knowledge and experience you gained over the past 20 days you will return to your units with new ideas and new ways to inspire your troops in facing various security challenges. All security challenges require team effort. And this exercise has offered all of you the opportunity to deepen your personal ties with your counterparts from other services.**

**Allow me then on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of the Republic of Namibia to extend our appreciation to the Chief of the Defense Force and each and every member who contributed in making EXERCISE-KHAN STRIKE a success.**

**Thank you, and Bon Voyage!**