

Address At The Unveiling Of The Wall Of Remembrance And Lighting Of The Eternal Flame

Rietvlei, 29 November 2002

Honourable Deputy President,
Honourable Minister,
Director-General and Staff of the Intelligence Services,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you very much for inviting me to this important event of the Intelligence Services.

I am happy that we have unveiled this Wall of Remembrance and lit the Eternal Flame because for too long we have not acknowledged, at least at the public level, the invaluable service that men and women of the intelligence community are making to our country.

Accordingly, it is my particular privilege to recognise our former Minister of Intelligence, Honourable Joe Nhlanhla, who helped to build a sound foundation for a transformed intelligence service that serves the internal and external needs of all the people of our country.

It is because of the work done by the former minister and his team that today we have made many advances in integrating the various intelligence services of the erstwhile apartheid government, the Bantustans and the liberation movements.

Because of their important work, today we speak of one unified service that serves the interests of all the people of this country. Clearly, we will forever be indebted to this patriot, a true South African and a selfless African whose life has been dedicated to the struggle for a non-racial, non-racist and democratic South Africa.

As we know, we have given and continue to give due recognition to the sacrifices that the police service and the defence force are making to protect our citizens and country.

Amongst other things, for some time now, we have had the Wall of Remembrance for the South African Police Services at the grounds of the Union Buildings and a similar one for the South African National Defence Force at Klapper-Kop.

Yet, at the same time, the Intelligence Services have played and continue to play an equally critical role in all these processes, by making sure that, at all times we have the necessary information to defend our constitution and our democratic order.

It has therefore been necessary that we should build a wall of remembrance for those of our people who work tirelessly within the intelligence community.

This Wall of Remembrance here at Rietvlei completes our monuments to honour and recognise the service and sacrifice of each and every member of the security services.

Of significance also is the fact that this occasion is linked to the important matter of the unveiling of the conditions of service based on the overall theme of the quest for excellence.

This is very important, particularly at the time when we are faced with our many challenges both domestically and internationally, especially within the African continent.

We are all aware that we have managed to entrench our democracy because of the work of, amongst others, the security services. The challenge remains for us to further deepen this democracy.

Clearly, we are able to speak boldly and unequivocally that our democracy is irreversible because of the work that we have done together with the security services as well as other organs of state.

We are also able to make bold to say that the transformation of our country will continue, despite occasional setbacks, precisely because of the unflinching dedication of the men and women who constitute our security services.

I am therefore very happy that the Minister has decided to begin a process of improving the expertise, the skills and the overall craft of the intelligence services.

The decision to encourage the members of this community to adopt this important career for life with the introduction of what you call 'Officers for Life' is most timely. This will help us to attract people who will regard this work as a special calling that requires dedication and commitment that goes beyond the ordinary call of duty.

In this regard, the underpinning philosophy is the need to engender the culture of excellence, hard work and devotion to the country and all the people of South Africa.

In addition, I am told that there is a cadet programme aimed at recruiting people from different disciplines so as to build an efficient and effective machinery that is able to harness the best talent available among our people.

The fact that this will be strengthened by the participation and contribution of the experienced members of the service means that we have the possibility of retaining the skills and experience that are so crucial in the intelligence world.

In this regard, the envisaged Intelligence Academy, which will train the cadets internally, is very important in building long-term viability and skills within the service, based on our own needs and challenges.

We must continue to enhance this capacity so that we are better able to service our country and our continent. We must ensure that the work that we are doing for the regeneration of Africa is based on correct and timely information that should enable us to act with the necessary speed and precision. This must also entail the proper functioning of our early warning system, among others.

We have, in the past, identified the need to streamline the work of all the organs of our security services, so that we avoid duplication, and improve co-ordination as well as the integration of our work. I am happy that there has been some progress in this regard, though much still remains to be done.

This is important because for us to give better service to our country and our people we must ensure that our tasks are mutually-reinforcing and that each component part contributes to the effective development and positive outcomes of our strategic goals.

Once more I am happy to participate in this important event that should further inspire all of us to work harder, with the knowledge that government and the people of this country highly appreciate the work that we are doing.

As we perform our duties out of the public eye, let us do so in the knowledge that we are in real team of over 40 million South Africans who want this country to succeed. Let us be strengthened by the fact that our efforts contribute to the realisation of the goal of a better life for all.

I thank you.