

**AFCEA – International, „Electronics, Information and Communication
Technologies – Varna”**

International conference

Development of the Air Force in the context of the smart defence,

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OPENING ADDRESS

of Deputy Minister of Defence, Mrs. Avgustina Tzvetkova

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate the organizers with conducting this international high expert level forum. Within its framework you will exchange different points of view and ideas on such a topical subject of a key importance for the defence of our country.

The topic of **smart defence**, presented by the NATO Secretary General some months ago, is timely and important for Bulgaria in the process of transformation of the Bulgarian Armed Forces in compliance with NATO standards and the requirements of the security environment. Like our Allies, we also inevitably face financial constraints. Thus we are obliged to look for new ways to develop our defence system and first and foremost – to search for innovative solutions and approaches in planning, building and employing the armed forces. It is the only way in which we can be sufficiently flexible and prepared to meet the challenges of the dynamic security environment.

The essence of the **smart defence** consists exactly of this: active international cooperation and close coordination between Allies and Partners in the form of different joint initiatives and decisions in acquisition of expensive capabilities like purchasing armaments and equipment, maintenance and overhaul, personnel training etc. I will quote again the Secretary General Rasmussen: “...the financial crisis makes cooperation between nations no longer a choice. It is a necessity.”

In order to achieve this, we need a clear strategy for the development of the defence system and for the required capabilities within the framework of available resources. The Force Structure Review conducted at the beginning of 2010 was one of the first key activities of the Integrated Ministry of Defense. It was followed by the White Paper on Defence and Armed Forces. That allowed us to have a clear position, as an expression of our national interests, for the participation of Bulgaria in the development and adoption of NATO's New Strategic Concept. On the other hand, as a result of strategic rethink, we established an entirely new strategic framework of security and defence. With the adoption of the National Security Strategy and the National Defence Strategy, together with the "Guidance on the defence policy 2011-2014" the conceptual base of defence was completely updated, synchronized and harmonized with NATO's New Strategic Concept and the innovations within the frameworks of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU.

The reforms in the sector are in line with the objective assessment of the security environment and with realistic political expectations bound to a clear and attainable strategic goal – building a single set of forces having joint command and ready to an equal extent for their three missions – defence, support of the international peace and security and contribution to the national security in peace time. These will be the Armed Forces which Bulgaria needs: modern and prepared, doctrinally, organizationally and technologically interoperable with NATO's armies while their maintenance and development is consistent with real resources availability.

A challenge that we approach with the necessary seriousness is the modernization of the Armed Forces and their rearmament with interoperable combat platforms and systems, armament and equipment. As far as the Air Force is concerned, the operational and technological interoperability is a crucial imperative with a view to the tasks they fulfill on air surveillance, protection and air policing the air space of the country in the integrated NATO air defense system.

In the Investment Plan-Program of the Ministry of Defence until 2020, we have formulated realistic and operationally substantiated goals on the rearmament of the Air Force. Three of the priority projects included in the Plan concern the Air Force. These are: provision of flight capability of MIG-29 aircraft; maintaining the flight capability of Cougar and Panther helicopters; as well as the project for acquisition of a new type of main combat aircraft¹, and provision of its integrated logistic support. The key requirements which we have incorporated are: through the three projects the Air Force

¹ Проектът се нарича на български „Проект за придобиване на нов тип основен боен самолет“. Добило е популярност като “multi-role fighter aircraft”

is to acquire capabilities to provide for the air sovereignty of the country within the integrated NATO air defence system, air policing and air reconnaissance, as well as provision of air transport, combat search and rescue missions and air-medical evacuation.

The rational and efficient spending of defence resources is an obligatory requirement to our investment policy. Now, Bulgaria has the chance to avail itself of all options and advantages opened to us by NATO's **smart defence** concept, as well as by the similar EU concept of „pooling and sharing” of defence capabilities and expenditures. I can share with you that we are already putting the above concepts into practice!

The Bulgarian Air Force provides some of the best examples to illustrate this. At this point we have to mention the Air Policing agreement, signed with Greece in 2010, and the on-going preparation of similar agreements with Romania and Turkey. Possible future solutions may also be implemented in the areas of joint training of the crews; exercises and drills; optimization of the logistics support regarding joint participation in operations, etc.

I would like to express our satisfaction with the fact that Bulgaria, together with nine other countries from the Alliance, takes part in the NATO Strategic Airlift Capability initiative. Our country has at its disposal flight hours for C-17 transport aircraft, which could be used in various crisis situations. In this regard, I would like to also mention Bulgaria's participation in the development of NATO's Allied Ground Surveillance Programme, which will provide an allied system for ground surveillance from air, jointly owned and operated by the Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The examples I have provided underline the proactive role that we, at the Ministry of Defence, are aspiring to play in the implementation and dissemination of the **smart defence** concept and its EU counterpart, the “pooling and sharing” initiative, especially at regional level. We are confidently applying these approaches to the development of the Armed Forces and their capabilities. Of course, from now on, we will be facing new options and alternatives, and we must be prepared to take maximal advantage of them. This is where industry, science and technology play a vital role. It will be the task of those working in the field of technology development to put forward issues which are complex but important for the future. The topics which will be covered at today's conference are yet another proof of this!

I wish you all successful discussions!