

Contribution of the Armed Forces in Response to Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Challenges (Malaysia)

Suggested speaking notes:

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Thank you Chair.

As I am speaking for the first time, I wish to start by congratulating and thanking **Myanmar** for hosting ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) and for the hospitality extended to me and my delegation and for the excellent arrangements for this conference.

I am honored to **share** with you our **views** on the subject of **Contribution of the Armed Forces in Response to Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Challenges**. This platform provides me with the opportunity to join you in recognizing the roles that the armed forces could assume today amidst of growing traditional and asymmetrical threats. In this aspect I would like to outline **Malaysia's perspective** based on our own experiences.

Mr Chairs, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by saying that,

It is a well-established fact that the security challenges in the 21st century are **profoundly different** from previous decades.

In Malaysia's case, from late 1940's, after the 2nd WW to 1980's, our severest threat came from the **insurgency**. Defeating it was embedded in the then policy and operational doctrines. During that period and until the Communist Party of Malaya laid down its arms on 2nd of December 1989, the armed forces played a most vital role in countering the insurgency.

Although the threat could be regarded as **traditional**, by virtue of it being present for a long time, the **tactics used** to defeat it were **not as straight forward**. They included winning the hearts and minds of the people especially among certain section of society, and linking defence and security to economic development.

It was even apparent back then, that the role of the armed and security forces were not to be and should **not be limited to fighting** the insurgents alone. In fact, the role of security forces was imbedded in the process of implementing the **development plans** of the Government to ensure that defence and development go hand-in-hand through the approach or philosophy known as **KESBAN, short for – Keselamatan dan Pembangunan or Security and Development**, the objectives of securing security and economic development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are certain circumstances necessitating the participation of the armed forces in countering traditional and non-traditional security challenges. In the Malaysian context the primary role the armed forces remains to **defend the sovereignty**, territorial integrity and national interests against external threat. The Malaysian Armed Forces do not take lead in dealing with non-traditional security challenges.

The National Defence Policy stipulates that the **secondary role** of the Armed Forces is to assist the civilian authorities in the maintenance of peace, public order and other operations like disaster relief. It therefore provides room for the involvement of the armed forces in tackling non-traditional security issues, but, **not** in a **leading** capacity.

Special circumstances or the strategic environment of an individual country might dictate for greater participation of the armed forces, rather than the police, in maintaining public order or in dealing with insurgents from within. Such is what happens in Mindanao, in the Southern Philippines.

The Armed Forces have inherent advantages when dealing security challenges. Firstly, the armed forces have an established and effective **command and control**. The task of countering a threat, be it traditional or non-traditional, can therefore, be more easily managed. Secondly, the **discipline** and the **training** that is provided to the military personnel, naturally makes them a competent party to be deployed. The third advantage is that the armed forces are always in **high state of preparedness**, as they are expected to be on standby, assets and personnel -wise.

The fourth advantage is that the armed forces are **strategically located in the country**. This, in turn, makes for easy deployment. The fifth advantage is that the armed forces are more **self-sustained** thus deploying them more practical, especially for tasks involving a longer period. Lastly, armed forces have more **outreach capability**. This is so as they possess the assets for land, air and naval operations.

On the other hand, there are challenges and issues in engaging the armed forces to tackle security challenges. The first **disadvantage** is that there is a **lack of authority** that is given to the armed forces, especially in its involvement in the non-traditional security challenges. As far as Malaysia is concerned, the role and authority that is given to the armed forces to tackle issue of non-conventional threats is generally to assist the relevant authorities, such as the police.

Broadly speaking, the National Security Council gives directives to all the enforcement agencies, the armed forces included. As an exception, although most enforcement responsibilities relating to national maritime laws is tasked to the Maritime Enforcement Agency, the Malaysian Navy nevertheless leads in **counter-terrorism at sea**.

The second disadvantage is that the armed forces is accustomed to standard or the **normal operational doctrine**, i.e applying a certain assets for a specific purpose. It then becomes a challenge in making the armed forces more flexible and adaptable for tasks other than its conventional role, not only in terms of its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), but also the use of the assets.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me now to illustrate to you the contribution of the armed forces in the Malaysian context. As I mentioned earlier, for an operation to be successful, the **whole-of-government approach** must be applied. The incident of **security breach in Lahad Datu in the East Malaysian state of Sabah** early last year exemplifies this. In the incident, the gunmen aligned to the so-called Sultanate of Sulu in the Philippines were attempting to enforce the Sultanate's purported claim to the state. Subsequently, our military and security forces undertook Ops Daulat (Op Sovereignty) to repel the intruders and killed 71 of them.

The Lahad Datu incursion reinforces the notion that the biggest threat to nations today are not necessarily from each other, but from **shadowy groups**, often with historical grievances not easily addressed. It again reaffirms that security threats are best handled **hand in hand** with addressing **societal** and **developmental issues**.

The Search and Rescue mission of the missing airplane flight **MH370** is another good example of whole-of-government approach, civil and military cooperation and military contribution in operations other than war. The tragedy has called, not only for national inter-agency cooperation, but also for multilateral inter-military collaboration in this unprecedented mission. I would like to take this opportunity to thank countries concerned for the cooperation extended in the MH 370 SAR mission, especially Australia.

The Malaysian Armed Forces are to support the arrangements that are in place in tackling national concerns. As I had highlighted earlier the **National Security Council** under the Prime Minister's Department issues directives which, broadly speaking and in most cases place the armed forces in a supportive role. Once the directive is issued, the Armed Forces will then develop the military strategy to implement the given tasks. The usual process of formation of military strategies is through consultation with the policy, planning and implementing parties.

In reality, due to the confidence attached to the Armed Forces, especially in terms of their accessibility, capacity as well as capability, they are now more involved in the programmes that **engage** them with the **people**. MINDEF initiated a program called Program Jiwa Murni (heart and mind programme), which offers the opportunity for the armed forces to **reach** and **win** the **hearts** of the **people**. The program involves the

construction of bridges and roads in remote area by the Malaysian Armed Forces. The project helps foster closer cooperation between the Government and the people, and contribute to a synergizing efforts to address security issues. This initiatives is also in line with the basic Total Defence principle of the National Defence Policy - the incorporation of many elements including the various levels of society and the private sector into the Government's efforts in maintaining peace and stability.

I would like to highlight also the significant involvement of the Malaysian Armed Forces UN Peace Keeping Operation. Malaysia is active on the international front. Currently we maintain peace keeping duties in Lebanon, plus conducting peace observation in Sudan, Congo, Western Sahara and Liberia. Pending soon is a deployment of medical specialist to Afghanistan, known as Malaysian Medical Contingent one.

Malaysia is also the home to one of the oldest peace keeping centre in Port Dickson specialises in gender issues, protection of civilians and cultural diversity in peace observation and peace keeping duties.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is no doubt that there is potentiality in the participation of the armed forces in tackling non-traditional security concerns. The very fact that these **threats** are in nature **trans-boundary**, possess **escalatory impact** to another dimension or spillage effect, can **destabilize** a nation or cause **injury** to the population, calls for a comprehensive and practical approach involving, among others the armed forces.

In undertaking **military operations other than war** such as Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR), non-combatant evacuation operations, domestic and internationally such Typhoon Haiyan disaster, counter-insurgency and peacekeeping operations; The armed forces need require the necessary. Apart from coordination between the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces, there need to be better **inter-agency synergy** and collaboration in terms of systems and people interaction. Continued breaking-ups of silos must be the order of the day.

The existing, **bilateral** and **multilateral engagements** must be continued, and new ones established. Arrangements such as the **General Border Committee** between Malaysia and Thailand and Malaysia, and Indonesia have enabled any respective countries to reap the benefits in tackling the crimes at the borders such as people and arms smuggling.

Periodical **exercises** such as the military medicine, HADR and maritime security exercises held last year under the umbrella of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (**ADMM-Plus**) contribute to enhancing the defence forces' **interoperability** and **training professionalism**, apart from **confidence building** and **ease of tensions**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Current politico-security environment dictates that we are to operate in a **globalised environment** in which local and international events are unavoidably linked in **complex** and **unpredictable ways**. As far as the armed forces are concerned, their roles are no longer and not only limited to pouring more troops in the jungle, but to also to assume an **expanded role** in **promoting regional stability** and **cooperation**, **contribute** to the **maintaining of peace** and **security** in various parts of the world, and developing a **networked** and **information-based** forces.

The imminent threats, traditional or non-traditional, now necessitate the **evolution** of the **armed forces**. As they move ahead, the armed forces personnel must understand current **operational doctrines** and core **competencies**, and adapt its **force structure** and **assets preparedness** to a quickly changing environment.

On that note, I end my address. Thank you.