

## Ομιλία Αρχηγού ΓΕΑ στο 4ο Συνέδριο Αεροπορικής Ισχύος

Your Excellency Ambassador of Israel, fellow Chiefs of Royal Air Force and Italian Air Force, Commander of USAFE and the Allied Air Command, Mr. Secretary General of Ministry of Defence, honorable Chiefs of the Hellenic Air Force, Professors, Deputy Director of DGA, Officers of allied and friendly countries, dear friends and colleagues from all branches of the Armed Forces, ladies and gentlemen.

It is both an honor and pleasure for me to welcome you to the fourth Air Power Conference. A Conference that has been established in Greece as the main platform to promote views, developments, new ideas, and challenges regarding Air Power. This year we have opened up this conference for participation to the academic society, to Universities and to defence industries, having also the privilege to host from abroad, as key speakers, some very distinguished personalities from the Air domain. Next year, despite the budget constraints, we hope to evolve to an international Conference, inviting participants from everywhere, because we do believe that such for a can work as a force multiplier to our effort for the evolution and future's planning for our Forces.

No doubt the significance of Air Power has remained unchallenged since World War II, despite the shift from the traditional forms of armed confrontations, to the current operations against terrorism and other asymmetric threats. Through years and continuous evolution, Air Power has been changed a lot, but both its use and characteristics remain the same, and that is the direct rapid and in-depth projection of force that deprives the opponent the capability of strategic reaction.

Recent developments in the greater Middle East region, reaffirm the importance of Air Power as political leaders' first choices for projection and application of military force. In addition, having witnessed the implementation of its unique characteristics in achieving strategic effects, Air Power has been proven as the most appropriate mean for displaying clear and strong military and political as well messages.

The cost States have to bear in order to maintain a reliable level of Air Power has always appeared to be high and I stress the word appeared, because in my view it isn't, as long as the actual cost should be always compared to the intended strategic results. Nevertheless, long before the economic crisis of the recent years, the end of the Cold War era prompted primarily the European countries to alleviate this enormous economic burden, by reducing the size of their Air Forces and trying to maintain their

Air Power intact through reorganization, modernization, logistics optimization and partnerships.

The nature of air war in recent years seemed to justify the choice of drastically reducing the fighter aircraft fleet, and focusing on small-scale operations. However, more often than not, the international environment evolves faster than current operational plans, bringing forward a new range of threats, and the resulted impaired Air Power finally in many cases proved limited in offering options to cope with them.

The operational requirements have also drastically changed. The projection of large volume of firepower on concentrated military forces and infrastructures, gave way to the precise attack of minimal size targets in very tight timeframes. The need for accurate and timely information, surveillance, reconnaissance, identification, and effective coordination, led to a rapid growth in demand for new platforms, often in the form of unmanned aerial systems.

We often tend to expect that new aircraft platforms will provide us with the appropriate solutions to the upcoming challenges. However, we have to consider that the design and development of even the most modern fighter now in service, or in early production, dates decades back. The long process of developing a new weapon system does not allow for a fast adjustment to emerging demands.

Therefore, if we are to witness some innovations, maybe they will come by domains that keep rapidly evolving, such as that of networking and information, presenting the challenge of timely production, analysis and distribution of information, through integrated, durable and extended networks.

Looking to the future, obviously some questions emerge. How will the international environment be shaped in the coming decades? What are the challenges Air Forces will have to cope with? What technological solutions need to be developed in the near future? I am afraid that any answers to these questions should not be considered as accurate. However, we can with relative safety predict, the world to be greatly changed in the next few decades, with the need for reliable Air Power growing disproportionately high, compared with the allocated resources. The critical factor for any Air Force in the future will remain the capacity for rapid and flexible response and adjustment to new circumstances, challenges and threats. Close collaboration with the industry, especially in the research and development domain, can be a decisive factor in achieving the desired adaptation of today's technological capabilities to future emerging needs.

The Hellenic Air Force is undergoing a reorganization period and is optimizing its capabilities, having incorporated numerous modern weapons systems, while addressing the obvious constraints of the existing budgetary situation. Considering every challenge as an opportunity, we continue to plan with realism and flexibility, having as main driving force the skills and dedication of our airmen.

We focus our efforts on establishing accurate operational priorities, while seeking to modernize and enhance the capabilities of our weapon systems, to take the advantages of smart and cheap new technologies, to increase intra and interstate synergies, to optimize the technical and logistical support and, finally, to invest in the continuous realistic training and the optimum employment of our personnel.

The Hellenic Air Force will continue to fulfill its mission as a vigorous and credible deterrence force, as required by our national interests.

Fellow Chiefs,

The Air Forces that we lead differ in size, structure and equipment, being oriented in many cases towards different kind of threats. Nevertheless, our mission is to provide our countries with a credible deterrence force and if deterrence fails, fight and win a war. This is our common ground, a mission that has to be achieved despite a series of limitations and constraints we all face in different magnitude. I am confident that your presence in this conference will greatly contribute in finding appropriate way to address the current challenges to our Forces and to maintain the Air Power as a unique, reliable and dominant strategic choice for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am certain that in these two days this Conference will promote ideas and even produce conclusions that will enhance our operational capabilities, through the confirmation of existing or the identification of new priorities, as required for a successful transformation of Air Power in order to cope with any kind of emerging threat in the future.

Thank you

Lieutenant General Christos Vaitsis  
Chief of the Hellenic Air Force General Staff