

## **THE CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE'S PRESS STATEMENT ON ELADE UPDATE**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have called you to give you an update on the Elade incident in Somalia.

Before I give an update of the current situation, it is important to underscore the background of our entry into Somalia. On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011, The Republic of Kenya invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter. The article allows a sovereign state to pursue an enemy in self defence. KDF rehatto to AMISOM on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012.

KDF entered Somalia to fight Al Shabaab terrorists who had threatened Kenya's sovereignty, territorial integrity and National interests. Since then, KDF has liberated over 120 towns which include the strategic coastal city of Kismayu that were under the control of the Al Qaeda linked terrorists.

Since the operation started, we have celebrated the lives of each and every soldier we have lost in this war against terror. The gallant soldiers have paid the ultimate price that only soldiers can.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the fact that KDF has prevented attempted attacks and degraded the terrorists fighting capability, the al Shabaab still poses a threat to peace and security not only in Kenya but the region and beyond.

During this time that we have been engaged in the war on terror, Al Shabaab has exhibited an appetite for liaison with other international terrorist organizations with brazen attack means. It is believed that these organizations have given them funding and logistical support given the magnitude of the attack on Friday.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

As the Chief of the Defence Forces and my Service Commanders, we were more anxious for information on the incident than anybody else. As you may be aware, our affected troops are under the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). However, AMISOM did not have the necessary capacity and capability to assist our troops in Elade. We were therefore

compelled to act and therefore mobilize our own resources to respond to the situation.

## **BUILD UP**

### **Day One, Friday, 15 January 2016**

- We received the first report of the attack at 0630hrs.
- The first reaction was to contact the Sector 2 Commander in Doble.
- He was also not in communication with the troops because at that time we suspect the enemy had destroyed communication system. He sent out his helicopters to confirm the situation at Elade at 0900hrs.
- Meanwhile we diverted an aircraft that was en route to Kismayo to Elade.
- The diverted aircraft called in at 1000hrs confirmed that the camp was on fire and the fighting was ongoing. The aircraft also confirmed that the enemy had deployed two anti-air guns one close to a primary school. This warning was passed to the helicopters that were approaching the camp.
- In view of this, we realized that we could not carry out insertion of reinforcement troops by air.
- The only safest option was to send in ground troops.
- We mobilized troops from Mandera, Elwak and Wajir who immediately embarked on a 10hr movement to reach the concentration area at Damasa.
- In the meantime, at around midday, our surveillance aircraft picked the enemy loading the loot onto their trucks. Again, we had to delay our attack on the trucks until when they moved away from the camp at 1200hrs and engaged them 10 minutes later.
- Again, our surveillance aircraft picked another static convoy that had split into two. The convoy with more vehicles was engaged by our jets at 1500hrs. While the second convoy moved into the centre of Wal-Gadud town could not be engaged and it is still being searched.
- Also the helicopters managed to rescue the first group of surviving soldiers who had moved closer to the border.
- For the next 24hrs our aerial surveillance aircrafts continued monitoring the enemy activities and this has continued around the clock to date.

### **Day Two, 16 January 2016**

- The ground troops commenced their tactical movement (fighting through) from Damasa towards Elade with a lot of enemy resistance.
- Due to the reported resistance, a follow on force, comprising of armour elements was constituted and launched from Elwak.
- In the meantime, Search and Rescue continued with our helicopters rescuing more survivors.
- Further, aerial surveillance confirmed two enemy camps which were destroyed in two waves.

### **Day Three, 17 January 2016**

- On the third day, Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2016, our efforts concentrated on Search and Rescue and airlifting of the injured soldiers to Nairobi.
- We also attacked two Al Shabaab camps one in the morning and another in the afternoon where it is believed that Maalim Janow, the leader of the ABU ZUBEIR brigade who led this attack was killed.
- Meanwhile, both the forward and the follow on ground troops pushed on the advance with resistance.
- Of course Search and Rescue operations continued and the previously rescued and injured soldiers were evacuated to Nairobi.

### **Day Four, 18 January 2016**

- On the fourth day, Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the ground troops arrived at the objective as Search, Rescue and Recovery operations continued.
- On the same morning, the second group of survivors were airlifted to Nairobi and in the evening the first fallen heroes were also flown into Nairobi.

### **Day Five, Tuesday, 19 January 2016**

- The ground troops took full control of the Elade camp and insertion by helicopter of additional troops was done.
- Mopping up began in earnest while Search, Rescue and Recovery operations continued.
- We expect to conclude this phase of the operation today.

### **RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EVENTS**

Arising from the survivors' recollection, we are still reconstructing the accounts of what may have transpired and the picture so far is as follows:

At around 0500hrs, the first Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) drove through the adjacent Somali National Army camp and exploded at the centre of the KDF defensive position. It was then followed by two other VBIED that exploded in quick succession. They were also engaged by Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) as well as a truckload of suicide bombers.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I would like you to appreciate the intensity and magnitude of the attack. Each of the VBIED used in the incident had a force equivalent to the terrorist attack on the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998 or the VBIED attack on Jazeera Palace Hotel in Mogadishu on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015.

Despite the intensity of the VBIED and the suicide missions, not forgetting the fog of war, the survivors held their defensive positions and fought fiercely.

I would also like to confirm that the troops had just rotated other troops that had completed their annual tour of duty. It is also important to highlight that prior to deployment, all troops undergo vigorous pre-deployment training as per the KDF Standing Operating Procedures.

### **The current situational and operational update is as follows:**

- The Elade camp is entirely under the command and control of KDF troops
- Aerial bombardments continue on enemy targets
- Search, Rescue and Recovery Operations are still ongoing
- The injured continue to receive medical attention
- All soldiers are receiving Security and Counseling de-briefs
- The information and counseling centers have been set up at Eldoret, Gilgil and at the Defence Forces Memorial Hospital continue to attend to our families

I am aware that most of you are interested to know the figures. I would like you to appreciate the briefing already given on the magnitude of the attack and therefore the need for proper identification of our fallen heroes which in some cases will require DNA tests. The families have been requested to assist in this process.

**This may take long and I call upon all of you to exercise patience and to support our families in this regard.**

I constituted a Board of Inquiry to go to Somalia and carry out a full investigation of what really transpired and it is only then that we will be able to answer some of the questions you may have. As we talk it is on ground.

I want to thank the families for their patience and understanding. I also want to thank the media and the Kenyan public for their support, cooperation and for standing with KDF.

Finally, despite this barbaric act by the enemies of peace, KDF will remain seized on its constitutional mandate of the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our great Nation Kenya.

Thank you and May God bless you.