

TRIBUTE CEREMONY FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE HELICOPTER CRASH OF 22 JANUARY 2017

SPEECH BY THE HEAD OF STATE

Yaounde, 3 February 2017

**The President of the Senate,
The President of the National Assembly,
The Prime Minister, Head of Government,
The First President of the Supreme Court and the Procureur General of the
Supreme Court,
Honourable Ministers,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
General Officers,
Distinguished Officers, Petty Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Privates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

What a sad and painful day, 22 January 2017! Four brave officers of our armed forces returning from an assignment perished in a helicopter crash. This is a brutal and irreparable loss.

Please, let us observe a minute of silence in their memory.

(...) Thank you.

Major General KODJI Jacob, who was then Commander of the Fourth Combined Services Military Region, was leading Operation Emergence 4 against the Boko Haram terrorist group.

He knew how to respond appropriately to the acts perpetrated by this barbaric organization. Through the system put in place, he helped secure the border with Nigeria, maintain synergy between the forces waging war against Boko Haram and significantly reduce attacks and hostage-taking.

This outstanding General Officer had a promising future. His untimely death has created a huge vacuum in the upper echelons of our armed forces. However, his example will inspire future generations of service men and women in our country.

Brigadier General NKAMENI Alphonse, then Commander of the Fourth Gendarmerie Military Region, was specifically responsible for homeland security issues.

He was entrusted with the delicate task of liaising with the population, especially the vigilante groups. He played a key role in stirring the patriotic fervour demonstrated by the inhabitants of the areas under threat. He deserves well of the Nation.

Captain CHINDA MÛ TANKAM Aurélien Brice, Pilot Officer, and Captain SOULOUKNA GRASSOU Basile, Engineer Officer, unfortunately lost their lives at the dawn of a promising career.

**General Officers,
Distinguished Officers, Petty Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Privates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we bid farewell to these four officers who died for the fatherland, I would like to assure their families that I will remain close to them. I share their pain and they can trust me to ensure the implementation of the legal provisions relating to war orphans.

THIS BEREAVEMENT CONCERNS THE NATION AS A WHOLE.

I express the solidarity and gratitude of the nation to the families and the armed forces.

The tribute we are paying to the four deceased soldiers today also goes to all those who have fallen while defending the fatherland. We will forever remember their sacrifice.

The military profession is the only one where the supreme sacrifice is accepted as an eventuality. The Glory and Submission of military service account for its unparalleled nobility.

However, our unfathomable sorrow of today should not lead to despair or resignation. Rather, it should strengthen our resolve to soldier on against a ruthless and unscrupulous enemy, and we must remember that this fight will only end with the final defeat of that enemy.

A single word: FATHERLAND... vibrates and echoes in the souls of these four freedom fighters who are proudly draped in the national colours.

The blood of these valiant soldiers, who fell in battle, in the line of duty, speaks to us ...

It calls and appeals to us all, from East to West, and from North to South:

- to rekindle our civic and patriotic spirit,
- to rally further around these three colours that we chose in all solidarity and sovereignty,
- to blend into this unitary star, at the centre of our national flag, which is a glowing symbol of faith and unity.

Let us be one, let us remain united!

These fallen heroes, champions of peace, just like those who have preceded them, will forever remain in the memory of our people...

Long live Cameroon's Defence and Security Forces!

Long live Cameroon!