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A NATION
THAT WORKS FOR ALL



SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIER

The official monthly magazine of the SA Department of Defence

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SANDF PRESTIGE WEEK 2025 HIGHLIGHTS A DECADE OF UNITY, STRENGTH, AND EXCELLENCE: SANDF personnel assessing the performance of the Botswana military after their round of shooting. (Photo by L Cpl Paul Mpangala)

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FRONT COVER: SUSTAINABLE COMBAT READINESS THROUGH PHYSICAL TRAINING AND SPORTS – Members of the SANDF in a training session under the leadership of by Cpl Cumbe at Thaba Tshwane. (Photo by Ms Akona Kenqu)

From the Editor's Chamber



The Misuse of SANDF Camouflage raises A Concern for National Integrity and Civic Responsibility

In every nation, certain symbols carry meaning far beyond their material form, they represent identity, service, and sacrifice. In South Africa, the camouflage uniform of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is one such emblem. It is not merely clothing; it is a symbol of discipline, loyalty, and the solemn duty of those who serve to protect the sovereignty and security of the Republic. It is deeply concerning that military members and civilians continue to wear this patented uniform illegally.

Recently, social media has circulated footage showing individuals in SANDF combat uniforms committing crimes and antisocial acts in communities. The SANDF distances itself entirely from these individuals and the acts they commit. Such acts often constituting an affront to the dignity, credibility, and public trust vested in the SANDF as the statutory defence force of the Republic.

The SANDF camouflage is a registered patent, reserved exclusively for authorised personnel usage. Only serving members and, under exceptional circumstances, honorary members specifically approved by the Chief of the SANDF may lawfully wear it. The Defence Act 42 of 2002, Section 104 (5) and (6), stipulates that any person who possesses or wears the uniform without authority, or performs any act while wearing it, is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to five years. .

Illegitimate use of the SANDF uniform poses a tangible risk to public safety and national security. Impostors in camouflage may gain unlawful access to restricted areas, manipulate civilians, and commit crimes while masquerading as soldiers. This behaviour not only endangers individuals but also creates confusion, weakening trust in legitimate SANDF operations.

Every soldier who earns the right to wear SANDF camouflage does so through rigorous training, discipline, and a commitment to uphold the Constitution.

The problem also reflects a wider ethical concern: a blurring of the lines between respect for service and

disregard for societal order. This is not solely a matter for law enforcement or the SANDF to address. Civilians have a role to play. Communities should refuse to tolerate or normalise the unauthorised wearing of SANDF camouflage. Ignoring or even trivialising such behaviour can indirectly encourage it, further eroding societal respect for the principles and institutions that underpin national security.

Members of the SANDF, guided by their sense of duty and patriotism, are also encouraged to act responsibly. Within legal and safety boundaries, they should challenge or report instances of unauthorised uniform use, and where possible, confiscate it. Such interventions are not acts of confrontation but of stewardship, a protection of the dignity and integrity of the uniform. Every lawful and measured action helps reinforce that the SANDF uniform cannot be misused without consequence.

Manufacturers, retailers, and designers must acknowledge their responsibility: producing or selling SANDF-pattern camouflage for profit or fashion breaches both the law and ethical standards. The uniform is a national symbol, not a commercial commodity, and its misuse erodes respect for service and authority.

More broadly, this issue underscores the importance of civic responsibility and national consciousness. Military symbols carry power because they are earned, representing discipline, service, and courage. Misappropriation diminishes these values and undermines public trust in national institutions. Society benefits when citizens uphold the integrity of such symbols, showing respect for those who serve and for the structures that safeguard security and order.

Ultimately, the illegal use of SANDF camouflage is a legal, moral, and social concern. It endangers lives, undermines security, disrespects service, and distorts the principles upon which the Defence Force and, indeed, the nation are built. Respecting the uniform is not merely about compliance with the law; it is about acknowledging and preserving the honour and sacrifice it represents. It is about protecting the moral fabric of society while supporting the institutions that safeguard our sovereignty.

As a nation, we must foster awareness, accountability, and civic responsibility. Every citizen, whether part of the SANDF or not, has a role in protecting national symbols. Opposing the unlawful use of the SANDF uniform reinforces respect, order, and integrity. The camouflage is not a costume or fashion statement; it represents service, discipline, and national pride, and must be treated as such.

The preservation of this symbol is ultimately a shared responsibility. Through vigilance, awareness, and principled action, society can help maintain the respect and credibility of the SANDF, reinforcing both the moral and operational integrity of the Defence Force.

Lufuno Netshirembe
News Editor SA Soldier 

Reaffirming Military Respect for Hierarchy, Discipline and Observance of Command and Control

Members of the South African National Defence Force... I address you today with the utmost gravity to reaffirm the principles that define us as a professional and statutory military force. It is important that every member, from the lowest-ranked troop to the highest officer, understands that military discipline, respect for hierarchy, and strict observance of command and control are non-negotiable standards. These principles are the foundation of our operational effectiveness, the cohesion of our units, and the integrity of the SANDF.

I have taken note of an unmilitary culture slowly but surely creeping in within the SANDF, a degree of informality has emerged that undermines the very essence of military discipline. Members, irrespective of rank, have been observed referring to one another using popular or colloquial expressions such as “comrade,” “chief,” “leadership, nyamazane” or similar informal titles. Let it be unequivocally clear that such practices are inconsistent with the ethos, traditions, and professional standards of the SANDF.

The SANDF operates under a clearly defined rank system. This rank system is not symbolic; it carries authority, accountability, and responsibility. Each rank reflects the experience, knowledge, and entrusted duty of the individual who holds it. Respect for rank is therefore not negotiable. It is essential that all members, from the lowest-ranked troop to the highest officer, understand that the chain of command is sacrosanct. The observance of command and control is fundamental to operational effectiveness, cohesion, and the preservation of life during military operations.

Military discipline is the lifeblood of our organisation. Discipline is not merely about adhering to orders; it encompasses every aspect of a soldier’s conduct, including speech, demeanour, and interaction with others. A soldier remains a soldier not only in appearance but, crucially, in words and in action. Every utterance, every statement, and every communication must reflect the values and standards of the SANDF. The words



Chief of the South African National Defence Force, General Rudzani Maphwanya.

of a disciplined soldier are never casual or careless; they are measured, respectful, and reflective of the rank, authority, and command structure within which the soldier operates.

Saluting, addressing personnel by their correct rank, and observing the formalities and courtesies inherent in military life are not optional acts of politeness. They are mandatory demonstrations of respect for the individual, for the rank they hold, and for the broader system of command.

Compliments or acknowledgements are to be given where due, but always within the framework of military propriety. The introduction of informal or civilian modes of address is therefore strictly unacceptable.

I emphasise that personal feelings, preferences, or interpersonal differences must never interfere with the professional conduct of a soldier. Even in circumstances where personal relations may be strained, every member is

expected, without exception, to maintain the decorum, respect, and professionalism that our rank system and military discipline demand. A soldier’s personal sentiments are secondary to the responsibilities inherent in the uniform and the oath of service undertaken.

It is the responsibility of all general officers, senior officers, junior officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers at every level to model this behaviour consistently. Leaders must enforce the observance of rank, the correct conduct of salutes, and the appropriate forms of address within their commands. Failure to maintain these standards at the leadership level sets a dangerous precedent and risks eroding discipline throughout the ranks.

This is not a request... it is your duty... it is your honour. As the Chief South African National Defence Force, I issue this directive with clarity.

General Rudzani Maphwanya
Chief of the South African National Defence Force 

Parliamentary Committees Conduct Oversight Visit to Limpopo Military Installations and Border Operations

Article by Ms Thando Ramasimong
Photos Courtesy of Director Defence
Corporate Communication

From 13 to 16 October 2025, the Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD) and the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans (PCDMV) conducted an oversight visit to Limpopo Province. The visit formed part of Parliament's ongoing efforts to assess the operational readiness, infrastructure conditions, and interagency coordination of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and its partners responsible for protecting the country's borders.

The visit focused on key military facilities and border operations, providing Members of



Chief of the South African Air Force, Lt Gen Wiseman Mbambo at Makhado Airforce Base.

emphasised that persistent financial constraints continue to impact the SAAF's operational readiness,

Lt Gen Mbambo highlighted that due to funding shortages, the Air Force has had to cannibalize parts from non-operational aircraft to keep others flying, a necessary but

Day 1-Makhado Airforce Base.

Parliament with first hand exposure to the realities, challenges, and achievements of defence personnel serving in demanding operational environments.

The oversight week commenced on 13 October 2025 at Air Force Base (AFB) Makhado, where Members of Parliament engaged with the South African Air Force (SAAF) leadership to gain deeper insight into its operational status and strategic challenges.

The Chief of the SAAF, Lt Gen Wiseman Mbambo, delivered a comprehensive briefing outlining the Air Force's mandate, achievements, and key areas of concern. He



Day 2 - 15 SAI Battalion.

particularly in maintaining advanced aircraft systems such as the Gripen Weapons System.

unsustainable measure. Despite this, he emphasised the SAAF's continued commitment to protecting South



Day 3- Musina Borders.

Day 4-Beit Bridge Border Post.

Africa’s airspace, praising the resilience and teamwork of its personnel. Members of Parliament, including PCDMV Chairperson Mr Molefi David “Dakota” Legoete, also commended the dedication of Air Force staff working under limited resources.

On 14 October 2025, the committees proceeded to 15 SAI Bn in Thohoyandou as part of their continued oversight programme. The visit focused on assessing the unit’s operational readiness, living conditions, and the welfare of deployed soldiers.

The Officer Commanding, Lt Col M. Radzilani, delivered a briefing covering the battalion’s mandate, deployments, and logistical challenges. Members of Parliament later toured the base, engaging with personnel about working conditions, morale, and the realities of operational service.

As part of the SA Army Infantry Formation, 15 SAI Bn plays a crucial role in border safeguarding and internal stability operations. Its rapid deployment capability remains vital to upholding peace and security along the country’s borders.

Co-Chairperson of the JSCD, Dr Malusi Gigaba commended the battalion for its dedication to service, discipline, and commitment to mission success despite resource constraints.

On 15 October 2025, the JSCD and PCDMV continued their oversight visit at the Joint Tactical Headquarters in Limpopo, located in Musina.

The committees were joined by Chief Joint Operations, Lt Gen Lucky Sangweni, as well as representatives from the Border Management Authority (BMA), South African Police Service

(SAPS), and South African Revenue Service (SARS).

The visit focused on the coordination of border safeguarding operations across multiple agencies. Presentations highlighted progress made through Operation CORONA. Discussions between Members of Parliament and the Joint Operations leadership centred on resource optimisation, the welfare of deployed soldiers, and the need for enhanced interdepartmental collaboration to strengthen border security.

Following the briefing, the committees proceeded to the Limpopo borderline, where Members of Parliament observed day combat patrols conducted under Operation CORONA. This engagement provided MPs with first hand perspective on the daily realities faced by soldiers protecting South Africa’s territorial integrity. Despite the ongoing challenge of illegal crossings, particularly by Zimbabwean nationals entering through unauthorised routes, SANDF members continue to demonstrate discipline, endurance, and unwavering commitment to their mission.

The visit demonstrated Parliament’s appreciation for the role of the SANDF in maintaining national security and the sacrifices made by soldiers serving in remote

and high risk areas.

The oversight programme concluded on 16 October 2025 at the Musina Local Municipality, where committees met with representatives from the SANDF, BMA, SAPS, and SARS to address border management challenges along the Limpopo frontier, including porous borders, illicit trade, and vehicle smuggling. Stakeholders shared operational experiences and discussed strategies to strengthen cooperation and resource alignment.

Reports indicate that South Africa loses about R28 billion annually to the illicit cigarette trade and around 30 000 vehicles are smuggled into neighbouring countries each year, threatening national revenue and security.

Throughout the week, Members of Parliament commended the SANDF and partner agencies for their “dedication and professionalism.” The visit underscored Parliament’s commitment to strengthening defence capability, promoting accountability, and safeguarding the Republic’s sovereignty. It also highlighted the “bravery, professionalism, and unwavering dedication” of the SANDF, whose members, despite resource constraints, remain committed to protecting South Africa’s territorial integrity and ensuring the nation’s security. 

South Africa Hosts the 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces

Article by Ms Thando Ramasimong
Photos by Ms Boitumelo Choene

South Africa hosted the 17th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (ICOAF) at Emperors Palace, Kempton Park, Ekurhuleni. The gathering brought together ombuds institutions, defence representatives, legal experts, and academics from across the world to engage on best practices that promote accountability, transparency, and fairness within armed forces.

The Minister of Defence and Military Veterans,



Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Angie Motshekga, officially opens the 17th ICOAF at Emperors Palace, Kempton Park.



Lt Gen (Ret) Vusumuzi Masondo, South African Military Ombud hosting the 17th ICOAF.



Ms Dani Hadi, Senior Advisor, National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman.



Advocate Simphiwe Damane-Nkosana, Deputy Military Ombud, SA National Defence Force.

Ms Angie Motshekga, officially opened the conference on 8 October 2025, marking a significant milestone for the Department of Defence and the country at large. In her address, the Minister emphasised South Africa's unwavering commitment to good governance, human rights, and the rule of law within the defence environment. She noted that hosting ICOAF reflected the nation's growing international recognition as a trusted partner in promoting oversight and justice within the military sector.

"This conference offers a platform to reflect on how we, as nations, ensure that our men and women in uniform are treated fairly, justly, and with dignity while maintaining operational effectiveness", said Minister Motshekga.

South Africa's hosting of ICOAF was

particularly momentous as the South African Military Ombud remains the only Military Ombud institution on the African continent. Established in 2012, the Office of the Military Ombud has become a cornerstone of accountability within the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), providing serving and former members with an impartial avenue to raise complaints regarding their service conditions and treatment.

The 17th ICOAF was hosted by the South African Military Ombud, Lt Gen (Ret) Vusumuzi Masondo, in collaboration with the Geneva

Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), represented by its Deputy Director, Ms Béatrice Godefroy. Together, they led an event that not only strengthened international cooperation but also reinforced the importance of robust oversight mechanisms in safeguarding the rights and welfare of armed forces personnel.

The conference officially opened on 8 October 2025 following a day of participant registration and preparations on 7 October. Proceedings continued through 9 October, marking two days of in-depth dialogue and knowledge sharing.



Delegates from Africa, Asia, and Europe gather for the 17th ICOAF in South Africa, strengthening collaboration in military oversight.

The primary objective of the conference was to raise awareness, facilitate and foster peer-to-peer exchange of knowledge and best practices, and shape future policy responses related to the mandate, powers, and functioning of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces.

This year’s conference theme centred on “Building Bridges: Awareness and Outreach Efforts by Ombuds Institutions”, enhancing oversight mechanisms and strengthening accountability within armed forces. Discussions explored the evolving nature of modern military service, mental health challenges among personnel, leadership ethics, and the importance of accessible complaint-handling systems.

Delegates from across Africa, Asia and Europe shared insights into how their respective institutions address systemic issues affecting service members. The exchange of knowledge reinforced the shared goal of ensuring that soldiers, regardless of rank or role, serve within environments that uphold integrity, respect, and justice.

Among the key contributors to the conference was the South African Deputy Military Ombud, Advocate Simphiwe Damane-Nkosana, who delivered a presentation on the Office’s outreach initiatives and its efforts to expand awareness among soldiers and communities across South Africa.

Adv. Damane-Nkosana highlighted that accessibility remains central to the Office’s mandate, and that continuous engagement with the SANDF’s uniformed members, especially those in remote areas, thus ensuring

that the Ombud system is understood and trusted. She further noted that collaboration with other oversight institutions strengthens institutional integrity and fosters accountability at all levels.

Her presentation resonated strongly with international delegates, as she emphasised how South Africa’s experience can serve as a model for other African countries seeking to establish similar institutions.

Of particular note, Kenya is currently benchmarking on the South African Military Ombud model as it works toward developing its own independent military oversight mechanism. This growing continental interest demonstrates the influence and credibility that South Africa’s Ombud continues to build across Africa in promoting fairness and transparency within defence structures.

The two day programme created valuable networking and learning opportunities for participants. It enabled ombuds institutions to benchmark against one another and identify practical strategies to improve service delivery to military personnel.


Panel sessions allowed delegates to exchange methodologies for resolving complaints efficiently and

promoting ethical leadership within armed forces. Beyond the formal sessions, side discussions encouraged collaboration between institutions and the exploration of regional partnerships that could strengthen oversight frameworks across continents.

Hosting ICOAF in South Africa demonstrated the nation’s commitment to promoting peace, accountability, and good governance within defence structures, both locally and internationally. The conference also placed a spotlight on the country’s growing influence in global military oversight circles.

In her closing remarks, Minister Motshekga expressed gratitude to the organisers, delegates, and the Office of the Military Ombud for ensuring the successful hosting of the 17th ICOAF. She encouraged continued dialogue among countries to enhance fairness and respect for human rights in the armed forces. “Our soldiers dedicate their lives to protecting our sovereignty and democracy. It is our duty, as leaders and oversight institutions, to ensure they are treated with fairness and dignity”, she said.

The South African Military Ombud, under the leadership of Lt Gen (Ret) Masondo, has consistently advanced the principles of fairness and accountability within the SANDF. The success of this international conference highlighted the Office’s pivotal role not only within the defence community but also in shaping continental and global standards for military oversight.

As the conference concluded, it was announced that the 18th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces will be hosted in Australia in 2026. Participants departed with renewed resolve to strengthen their respective institutions and to promote transparency in military environments. 

Chief SANDF honours deserving members for long-serving

Article by Sgt Thelma Magubele
Photos by S Sgt Nkosinathi Nkosi

The Chief of the South African National Defence Force (C SANDF), General Rudzani Maphwanya, officiated over a medal parade held at Air Force Base Ysterplaat on 3 October 2025, where he honoured 144 members of the SANDF for their outstanding and loyal service spanning 30 and 40 years. The parade formed part of the SANDF's ongoing recognition of excellence, discipline, and enduring service, encapsulating the essence of



Chief SANDF, General Maphwanya, congratulates Maj Gen Mercur who received the 30 years of service Bar.



Chief SANDF, General Maphwanya, honour the 144 recipients.

military professionalism and dedication to duty. The recipients were awarded Bars to the “Medalje vir Troue Diens”, a prestigious honour instituted on 27 April 2003 (Warrant dated 16 April 2003) and conferred by the President of the Republic of South Africa upon members who have distinguished themselves through long and efficient service.

Among the honoured recipients was Maj Gen Rene Mercur, Deputy Chief Joint Operations, who was presented with her 30 Years Medal, symbolising three decades of

exceptional leadership and operational contribution to the SANDF. The recipients represented a wide rank grouping from Major General to Corporal, demonstrating that the values of loyalty, dedication, and excellence are embedded at every level of command. In his keynote address, General Maphwanya commended the honourees for their unwavering commitment to service, describing

the medals as “living records of courage and sacrifice.” He stated: “These medals are not mere decorations, but testimonies of character and endurance. They represent years of deployment, long absences from loved ones, and an unbroken commitment to the Republic of South Africa. Each one of you has carried the honour of this uniform with pride and has served as a custodian of our national integrity.”

HONOURING FALLEN COMRADES

In a moment of solemn reflection, General Maphwanya paid tribute to the SANDF members who lost their lives during operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) while serving under the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission (MONUSCO). He acknowledged their bravery, noting that they made the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of peace and stability on

the African continent. “We shall forever carry in our hearts the memory of our fallen comrade’s men and women who stood tall in the face of adversity and paid the highest price in service to humanity. Their legacy lives on through every soldier who continues to wear this uniform with pride,” said General Maphwanya. He further extended condolences to the bereaved families and affirmed that the SANDF remains steadfast in honouring their memory through continued operational excellence, discipline, and loyalty to the Constitution of the Republic.

The Symbolism of Service and Continuity

As the medals were pinned and the bands melodies echoed across the parade ground, one could sense the profound symbolism of the occasion. The honourees stood as embodiments of the SANDF’s enduring spirit of resilience, disciplined, and unwavering in their pursuit of service excellence. The ceremony not only recognise years of service but reaffirmed the Defence Force’s collective


commitment to its institutional values of loyalty, integrity, and selfless service. It also highlighted the SANDF’s Journey to Greatness initiative, which seeks to modernise the Force, enhance operational readiness, and strengthen the nation’s defence posture.

General Maphwanya reminded members that the SANDF remains the cornerstone of national security and a visible symbol of the Republic’s sovereignty and unity. “The SANDF stands as the shield of the nation,” he declared. “Our mandate is not only to defend, but to uphold the dignity and safety of every citizen. Each medal conferred today is a reflection of that sacred responsibility.”

A Force United in Duty and Honour

The parade at AFB Ysterplaat stood as a powerful reminder of the

SANDF’s strength that’s built on the unity of its members, the honour of its traditions, and the sacrifice of its people. It was a celebration of service, a renewal of commitment, and a solemn acknowledgment of those who gave their lives in the line of duty. As the sun set over the air base, medals gleamed on proud uniforms, and the echoes of the melodies from the band lingered in the wind—a fitting tribute to a Defence Force steadfast in its mission to protect, defend, and serve the Republic of South Africa.

“The SANDF remains the guardian of our democracy,” concluded General Maphwanya. “We salute every soldier, past and present, for carrying forward the legacy of courage, loyalty, and service.” Congratulations to all 144 recipients for their unwavering service and dedication to the South African National Defence Force. 


HANDING OVER THE LOGISTICS COMMAND

In addition to the medal ceremony, the parade marked a significant administrative transition within the SANDF. The Chief of the SANDF presided over the formal handover of all SANDF logistical depots to the Chief of Logistics, Vice Admiral D.M. Mkhonto, effective 1 October 2025. This official transfer of command included several critical logistical nodes, namely the Defence Mobilisation Centre, South African Army Main Ordnance Depot, South African Army Ordnance Sub Depots, South African Naval Ammunition Depot, Naval Store Depot, and the Military Health Base Depot. In his official declaration, General Maphwanya entrusted these logistical facilities to the command of Vice Admiral Mkhonto, expressing his full confidence in her leadership and ability to maintain the highest standards of efficiency and accountability.

“The logistical branch is the lifeblood of the SANDF,” General Maphwanya affirmed. “Without efficient logistics, even the most capable fighting force cannot sustain itself. I am confident that under Vice Admiral Mkhonto’s command, these depots will continue to uphold operational excellence and discipline.” Accepting the scroll of command, Vice Admiral Mkhonto expressed gratitude for the trust



Chief Logistics Vice Admiral Mkhonto accept the responsibility of the SANDF Depots.

placed in her and pledged to execute her duties with integrity and diligence. “I undertake to perform my command with resolve and to set a worthy example to all those placed under my leadership. The logistical division will continue to ensure that the SANDF remains ready, responsive, and resilient,” he said. 

SANDF Members Complete Rotation as MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade Deployment Continues

Article by Ms Thando Ramasimong
Photos by L Cpl Paul Mpangala

A total of 315 members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) who deployed to the Democratic Republic of



Returning soldiers complete arrival documentation at Bram Fischer International Airport, officially confirming their return from the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC.

the Congo in January 2025 under the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO) have completed their scheduled rotation and rest cycle. Their phased return, which began on 4 November 2025, reflects the SANDF's ongoing commitment to supporting stability efforts in eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Department of Home Affairs officials screen the temperature of each returning member as part of standard post-deployment health protocols.

The first group arrived on 4 November 2025 and proceeded directly to the Department of Defence Mobilisation Centre at De Brug near Bloemfontein, where they entered a structured demobilisation programme. The process includes spiritual welfare support facilitated by military chaplains, medical triage and psychological assessments conducted by SANDF medical practitioners, Defence Intelligence debriefs and Joint Operations lessons-learned sessions. These activities are designed to support the well-being of the returning members and ensure a smooth transition back into their home environment after months in a demanding operational setting.

The second group landed on 5 November 2025 at Bram Fischer International Airport, where the Joint Operational Headquarters General Officer Commanding, Maj

Gen Godfrey Thulare, welcomed them before they joined their colleagues at De Brug. The final group, initially expected on 6 November, arrived a few days later and immediately began the same comprehensive demobilisation process. The rotation cycle gives members essential time to rest, recover and reintegrate before resuming duties within the SANDF.

The Force Intervention Brigade was established by the United Nations (UN) in 2013 with a mandate to take decisive action against armed groups threatening civilians in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is the first UN formation structured to conduct targeted operations where required. South Africa has been a core contributor since its inception, deploying experienced infantry, engineers, and support elements capable of operating in complex environments. Alongside regional partners, the brigade forms a critical component



Brig Gen Ernest Singo, Director of Peace Support Operations under the Joint Operations Division, welcomes the soldiers on their safe return.

of wider efforts to protect civilians and promote stability.

Throughout the 2025 deployment, members of the SANDF operated across terrain defined by instability, distance and humanitarian need. Months away from their families, extended patrols, fluctuating security conditions and demanding operational rhythms formed part of their daily reality. Yet their presence helped improve access to livelihoods, secure movement along key routes and support humanitarian partners serving

affected communities. In doing so, SANDF members contributed to regional efforts intended to stabilise affected regions and strengthen prospects for long-term recovery.

South Africa's continued participation in the Force Intervention Brigade proves the country's commitment to strengthening peace efforts on the continent. As this rotation settles, preparations for the next contingent

continue within the SANDF, ensuring that operational readiness remains steady in support of the mission's objectives.

For the members now back on home soil, the return offers a well-earned moment to catch their breath. And in classic SANDF fashion, even while their boots take a brief break, the quiet rhythm of duty is already waiting in the hallway, clearing its throat and checking the time. 



Officials from the South African Revenue Service conduct compliance checks for the recently returned military personnel.



The final member of the SA National Defence Force MONUSCO contingent steps off the aircraft, marking the end of their deployment and a safe return to South African soil.



Members of the SA Military Health Service verify the yellow health cards of returning troops to ensure all medical records are up to date.

Reflections on a Tenure of Strategic Defence Diplomacy and Steadfast Leadership Forging stability

Article by Mr Lufuno Netshirembe
Information and photos courtesy of Maj Gen Mnimimzi Sizani

When Brig Gen (currently a Maj Gen) Mnimimzi Sizani completed his duty as South Africa's Defence Advisor to the United Nations in June 2022, he closed five years of focused and thoughtful service. After his promotion, he continued to build on the experience gained during his time at the South African Permanent Mission in New York, where he worked through a period of major global change. His Exit Report reflects both his work and his understanding of how South Africa can use defence diplomacy to advance its national and



President Cyril Ramaphosa, Mr Then Secretary of the United Nations, and behind, Maj Gen Mnimimzi Sizani during the United Nations General Assembly, First Republic of South Africa Presidential visit to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).



Maj Gen Mnimimzi Sizani with the United Nations Security Council Military Staff Committee (MSC), where he served for two years from 2019 to 2021.

regional interests in an uncertain world.

When he began his mission in May 2017, global tensions were rising and cooperation was weakening. He described the environment as volatile and uncertain, warning that a "new Cold War" was emerging that was driven by influence, technology, and control of information rather than ideology. He noted that cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, and disinformation were becoming as threatening as conventional weapons.

In this context, South Africa's role at the UN had to be active and strategic. Brig Gen Sizani believed defence diplomacy was not just about attending meetings, but about building influence and forming partnerships that

protect national interests. His work required constant engagement with the UN Secretariat, the Security Council, and regional groups involved in African peace and security. He ensured South Africa's views were heard, respected, and aligned with national priorities and Africa's peace agenda.

A major focus of his work was the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Created through cooperation between SADC and the UN, the FIB faced proposals for restructuring during his time in

New York. He worked with partners to protect its mandate and ensure that South Africa and its regional allies remained central to its leadership. His careful diplomacy helped keep the mission stable and strengthened South Africa's credibility as a peacekeeping contributor.

To him, defence diplomacy was a form of strategic influence.

He helped shape the Defence Attaché Office into more than an information channel, transforming it to become a space where South Africa could quietly influence important UN discussions. Through steady engagement with Security Council permanent members and African military representatives, he built networks of trust that supported South Africa's reputation as a reliable and professional partner. Part of his role was to keep senior officials at home informed of key developments and to offer advice based on first-hand observation of global security trends.



Maj Gen Mnimimzi Sizani during the annual Military Staff Committee (MSC) photo session with United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG).

His Exit Report also reflects his concern for long-term global challenges. He supported the idea of a UN Office on Strategic and Existential Threats, aimed at studying dangers that could threaten humanity's survival. He highlighted climate change, artificial intelligence, biological weapons, and pandemics as risks that must be addressed early. He encouraged South Africa to strengthen research, science, and technology within its defence and intelligence institutions in order to prepare for these emerging threats.

He recommended that South African Defence Intelligence make greater use of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) skills to improve its ability to foresee new security risks. He also advised that analysts and intelligence officers undergo advanced training in Future Studies at the University of Cape Town to improve strategic planning and long-term thinking. This reflected his belief that modern defence systems need strong thinkers who can anticipate challenges, not only soldiers who respond to them.

Throughout his service, he also demonstrated the importance of personal relationships and consistent communication in international diplomacy. His professionalism earned the trust of colleagues from both African states and major global powers. He understood that influence at the UN relies heavily on trust built over time. His calm and informed approach strengthened South Africa's image as a dependable advocate for peace, cooperation, and responsible leadership.


His time in New York showed how defence diplomacy supports foreign policy and national strategy. He ensured that South Africa's defence activities aligned with the country's values of peace, multilateralism, and regional

cooperation. His work improved understanding between the UN, Africa, and South Africa's Department of Defence. Through clear communication and long-term thinking, he demonstrated how military diplomacy can advance national interests while promoting international stability.

His Exit Report also stressed the need for continuity and knowledge transfer. He encouraged future defence diplomats to combine practical military experience with strategic insight. He noted that global security challenges will continue to grow more complex and that South Africa must adapt by improving foresight, planning, and coordination. His recommendations call for a defence service that is disciplined, knowledgeable, and prepared to take part confidently in complex international discussions.

His leadership at the UN balanced quiet diplomacy with firm representation of South Africa's interests. He showed that real influence comes from consistent work, reliable information, and respect for established processes. Under his leadership, the Defence Attaché Office strengthened its reputation as a centre of professional military diplomacy that supports national goals and Africa's collective security.

As he concluded his mission, he stressed that South Africa's defence diplomacy must blend intelligence, professionalism, and vision. His

service in New York proved that disciplined and informed engagement is the most effective way to promote peace and protect national interests. Through preparation, cooperation, and foresight, he demonstrated that the true strength of defence diplomacy lies not in power, but in purpose. 

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- ◆ Participated in Joint SADC/ICGLR- UN FIB Reconfiguration assessment in 2018.
- ◆ Planning and Participated in UNSC assessment of UN PKO Missions.
- ◆ Representing RSA in the UN Security Council and managing to effect Defence Diplomatic manoeuvres to safeguard RSA and SADC Interests on the Dissolution of FIB.
- ◆ Successfully lobbying United Nations to grant RSA Hosting Rights for the 6th Partnership in Peacekeeping International Symposium.
- ◆ Led SADC Military Advisors Field assessment of a MONUSCO and FIB in 2021.
- ◆ Participation on SADC Assessment of Team of FIB and Threat Picture in DRC, Chair Main Planning Conference in Kinshasa, and facilitation of Final Pledging Conference of SADC Pledging TCC for final SADC SAMIDRC Force.
- ◆ Provision of timely covert collection intelligence during M23 Advance to Eastern DRC and contribution to ICC Intelligence Picture for the Great Lakes.
- ◆ PMUN Commendation Certificate for Best Service to RSA during UNSC 2019-2020.
- ◆ Best Defence Advisor Office for RSA at RSA Defence Conference 2019 

The sacred honour of the SANDF uniform: a symbol of duty, discipline, and national pride

Article by Sgt Thelma Magubela
Photos by L Cpl Paul Mpongala

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) uniform is more than attire, it is a sacred covenant between the soldier and the nation. Each thread represents sacrifice, honour, and loyalty, woven together by discipline and commitment to service. When a member of the SANDF wears the uniform, they do not simply wear military fabric; they wear the flag, the Constitution, and the legacy of every soldier who has stood watch over South Africa's freedom.

During the official opening of the 10th Annual SANDF Prestige Week at Thaba Tshwane, the Chief of the SANDF General Rudzani Maphwanya spoke passionately about the profound symbolism of the uniform, reminding members that it must always be worn with dignity and respect. "Our uniform is not a costume. It is a sacred covenant between the soldier and the nation — a symbol of sacrifice, honour, and duty. That is why you carry a flag on your shoulders. Do not treat our uniform as a costume in a drama theatre," he emphasized.

The Chief's message carried a stern warning to both soldiers and civilians: the SANDF uniform must never be misused, commercialised, or disrespected. Acts such as using the uniform for social media trends, posting videos that bring the Defence Force into disrepute, or performing inappropriate behaviour while wearing it are grave violations of military ethics and regulations. Such conduct undermines the integrity of the SANDF and dishonours the men and women who have worn that uniform with pride, including those who paid the ultimate price in the Democratic Republic of Congo and other



The SANDF uniform: a symbol of duty, discipline, and national pride.

missions of peace. Their sacrifice demands that every soldier upholds the highest moral standard, both in and out of uniform. "Wearing the uniform carries immense responsibility," the Chief reiterated. "When you wear it, you represent the people of the Republic of South Africa. Your conduct reflects the honour of our Defence Force."

The Restrictions and Responsibilities of Wearing the Uniform

To preserve the dignity of the SANDF uniform, strict rules govern its use. Among them:

1. No Political Activity in Uniform: Soldiers may not attend, speak at, or participate in political gatherings, protests, or
2. No Social Media Misconduct: Soldiers are prohibited from posting photos, videos, or comments in uniform that could harm the image of the SANDF, disclose sensitive information, or display inappropriate behaviour.
3. No Commercial or Entertainment Use: The uniform cannot be worn for advertisements, films, music videos, or public performances without official authorization. It is not a costume; it is a state symbol protected by law.
4. No Alcohol Consumption or Disorderly Behaviour: Drinking,

campaigns while in uniform. The SANDF is a neutral national institution, loyal to the Constitution, not to any political party.

Disorderly Behaviour: Drinking,

smoking, or engaging in any form of misconduct while in uniform is strictly forbidden, as it degrades the image of professionalism expected from a soldier.

5. **No Alteration or Improper Wearing of Uniform:** The uniform must be worn complete and correctly, according to regulations, with all badges, insignia, and ranks properly displayed. Altering or mixing it with civilian clothing is prohibited.


The Honour of Wearing the Nation's Colours

The SANDF uniform represents discipline, unity, and sacrifice. It is earned through rigorous training and steadfast service, and it

demands respect from those who wear it and those who see it. Every soldier who puts it on carries the pride of the Republic, the trust of the Commander-in-Chief, and the spirit of those who have fallen in the line of duty. It unites soldiers of all languages, cultures, and backgrounds into one family, a microcosm of South Africa itself: diverse, proud, and united in service.

As the Chief of the SANDF and Master chief warrant officer of the SANDF continually remind all uniformed members, that the SANDF uniform is not just a

symbol of authority, it is a reflection of the nation's heart. To wear it is to live by its values: discipline, integrity, and respect. "With discipline, you can do anything, because discipline is the mother of victory,".

The call is clear: to every soldier and every citizen, treat the SANDF uniform with reverence. It belongs not to the individual, but to the Republic of South Africa. It stands as a testament to those who serve, those who have fallen, and those who continue to guard the nation's freedom with honour. Any misuse of the uniform in public or social media platforms is a criminal offence. 



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Defence
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA




CODE OF CONDUCT | FOR UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

- I pledge to serve and defend my country and its people in accordance with the Constitution and the law and with honour, dignity, courage and integrity.
- I serve in the SANDF with loyalty and pride, as a citizen and a volunteer.
- I respect the democratic political process and civil control of the SANDF.
- I will not advance or harm the interest of any political party or organisation.
- I accept personal responsibility for my actions.
- I will obey all lawful commands and respect all superiors.
- I will refuse to obey an obviously illegal order.
- I will carry out my mission with courage and assist my comrades-in-arms, even at the risk of my own life.
- I will treat all people fairly and respect their rights and dignity at all times, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, culture, language or sexual orientation.
- I will respect and support subordinates and treat them fairly.
- I will not abuse my authority, position or public funds for personal gain, political motive or any other reason.
- I will report criminal activity, corruption and misconduct to the appropriate authority.
- I will strive to improve the capabilities of the SANDF by maintaining discipline, safeguarding property, developing skills and knowledge, and performing my duties diligently and professionally.

SANDF College Celebrates Completion of Security and Defence Studies Programme 11/2025

Article by Ms Thando Ramasimong
Photos by L Cpl Paul Mpangala

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) College marked a significant milestone on 12 November 2025 at the Saint George Hotel, as it celebrated the graduation of the Security and Defence Studies Programme (SDSP) 11/2025.

The programme, which began on 13 January 2025, is the most senior educational



Trophies and certificates prepared for the graduates of the Security and Defence Studies Programme 11/2025, symbolising excellence and achievement in strategic military education.



Capt (Nigerian Navy) A. Akano receives recognition as the Best Student of the Security and Defence Studies Programme 11/2025.



Col N.C. Ndouvhada is honoured as the Second Best Student of the Security and Defence Studies Programme 11/2025.

course in the SANDF, designed to prepare general officers, senior officers, and other state officials for executive roles as national security advisors.

Participants spent almost a year immersed in an advanced interdisciplinary programme that sharpened strategic thinking, strengthened leadership abilities, and deepened their grasp of global security complexities. Through a demanding mix of lectures, syndicate exercises, debates, and real-world scenario planning, they effectively underwent a mental “boot camp,” gaining practical

experience in decision-making and strategic analysis.

The graduation ceremony was presided over by the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Rudzani Maphwanya, who awarded certificates to the graduates, trophies were also presented to those who demonstrated exceptional performance and leadership. Furthermore, the presence of the Chief of Joint Operations, Lt Gen Lucky Sangweni, and the Chief of

Human Resources, Lt Gen Malungisa Sitshongaye, highlighted the SANDF’s commitment to nurturing capable and strategic leaders.

A standout among the graduates was former Acting Director Defence Corporate Communication Col Selina Rawlins, who was recognised for her outstanding contribution as Deputy Leader of the Winning Syndicate. Reflecting on her achievement, Col Rawlins said, “Completing the Security and



Colonel R.M. Morobane, one of the students of the Security and Defence Studies Programme, receiving a Certificate from General Rudzani Maphwanya.



Mr Livhuwani Mathoho proudly joins the cohort of graduates, demonstrating the programme's inclusivity of both military and civilian officials.



Capt L.T. Lebea proudly receives the trophy for the Best Syndicate of the Security and Defence Studies Programme 11/2025.



Col S.P. Rawlins Deputy leader of the winning syndicate.

Defence Studies Programme has been an enriching experience. It has strengthened my strategic thinking and reinforced the importance of teamwork, discipline, and adaptability in leadership. I am proud to have contributed to the success of my syndicate and to carry these lessons into my service.”


The graduating cohort included officers from India, Nigeria, and other international defence forces, as well as senior officials from other South African government departments, reflecting the programme’s regional, global, and cross-government engagement.

Gen Maphwanya described the programme as a “crucible of leadership,” where participants learn that true strength lies not only in rank or uniform, but in the

ability to think strategically, collaborate across services, and build trust across borders. He highlighted that the programme’s theoretical foundation spans multiple disciplines, including political science, international relations, sociology, and economics, which enabled graduates to address modern security threats such as terrorism, cyber warfare, and climate insecurity with a holistic perspective that links national security to the wellbeing of society.

In his closing remarks, Gen Maphwanya commended all graduates for their dedication,

perseverance, and professionalism, urging them to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to strengthen the SANDF and advance South Africa’s defence and strategic objectives. He emphasised that the programme equipped officers and officials with knowledge to make informed decisions and lead with confidence in both national and international arenas.

The ceremony brought a close to a rigorous academic year, emphasizing the SANDF College’s pivotal role in preparing visionary leaders committed to safeguarding the nation’s sovereignty and promoting stability in the region. 

Trial Advocacy Course for Pupillage Programme Pupils

Article by Ms Nompumelelo Mahlangu
Photos by L Cpl Paul Mpangala

In collaboration with the Pan African Bar Association of South Africa (PABASA), the School of Military Law and Leadership held a Trial Advocacy Course at Thaba Tshwane City Hall, Court A and Court B from 29 September to 02 October 2025. The aim of the workshop was to grant pupils an opportunity to present, engage and familiarise themselves with trial advocacy in a courtroom.

The course comprised pupils from Pius Langa School of Advocacy, which is an independent institute, accredited with the Legal Practice Council and falls under



The Adjutant General of the SANDF, Maj Gen (Dr) Eric Minisi, observing the progress and performance of military members during the course.



Advocate Irma Naido, one of the lead facilitators, guiding participants through the Trial Advocacy

PABASA. The pupils consist of 5 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) members who are currently on Pupillage Programme and pupils from Tshwane Society of Advocates.

The collaboration allows for an exchange of best practices between the School of Military Law and Leadership and PABASA, ensuring

excellence in the profession of law within the military and South Africa at large.

Director Military Prosecutions, Brig Gen Sunita Solomons highlighted that the Trial Advocacy Course was more practical. “The Trial Advocacy is actually the tail-end of the Pupillage Programme, if I can put it that way. The Pupillage Programme concentrates a lot on theory, mentorship and examinations. The Trial Advocacy is the practical part of the Pupillage Programme, where we have trained advocates coach and mentor the pupils in an actual live mock trial situation,” she stated. Brig Gen Solomons explained

that the Litigation Directorate, under the Defence Legal Service Division, introduced the Pupillage Programme to develop SANDF members capable of representing the organisation in civilian courts. She highlighted that the School of Military Law and Leadership partnered with Bar Associations, including PABASA, to gain mentorship from practising advocates and secure accreditation through the Legal Practice Council thus ensuring military advocates meet the same professional standards as their civilian counterparts.

She commended PABASA for being among the first to support the initiative and urged pupils to fully embrace the mentorship, strive for competence and confidence, and eventually give back to their communities through service, just as PABASA advocates do.

Advocate Irma Naidoo, a member of PABASA served as an acting judge



Maj Tshepo Mtimkulu presenting his case during the Trial Advocacy Course at Thaba Tshwane City Hall.



Group photo of the Pan African Bar Association of South Africa (PABASA) alongside SANDF members at the conclusion of the course.



L. Bless and a colleague receiving guidance on courtroom dos and don'ts while presenting before the bench.

during the course of the advocacy trial training. She mentioned that she was excited for the pupils and proud of them for being at the course for the first time. "Trial Advocacy is where we prepare our advocates to be able to go into open court. One of the things that we have noticed was that LLB is highly academically oriented. So, we go into obviously the law and the rules, whereas advocacy

training is a very important component of this. This is where we teach our future advocates the practicality behind these things. It is almost where you bring the academics together with the practical part of law," explained Adv Naidoo.

Adv Naidoo said the

programme aimed to equip future advocates with courtroom confidence, proper decorum, and practical skills, noting that trial advocacy was the foundation for their success.

Maj Tshepo Mtimkulu, a prosecutor at the SANDF's Legal Aid Scheme (LEGSATO) in Bloemfontein and one of five members in the pupillage programme, expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to train as a future advocate. He said the programme tested their ability to perform under pressure in court and reinforced the importance of ethics and presenting a client's case with integrity.

Reflecting on his experience, Maj Mtimkulu described the programme as intensive and demanding, requiring resilience, collaboration, and strong articulation skills. He noted that it not only expanded their legal knowledge but also enhanced their confidence and competence in litigation.

1 Military Hospital: A Pillar of South African Military Medicine Through the Decades

Article by Ms Thando Ramasimong
Photos by Ms Boitumelo Choene

Rising like a steadfast guardian against the rocky slopes near the Voortrekker Monument, 1 Military Hospital has stood at the heart of South Africa's military health services for decades. As the flagship tertiary hospital of the South African Military Health Service, historically it has been central in caring for members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and later the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), as



Main entrance of 1 Military Hospital at Thaba Tshwane, Centurion/Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa.



Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans of South Africa, Maj Gen (ret) Bantubonke Holomisa with the leadership Cadre of SAMHS 1 Military Hospital.

well as their families and authorised government patients, especially around the time of South Africa's transition to democracy.

Beyond its clinical role, the hospital embodies a rich heritage that reflects the evolution, resilience, and professionalism of military medicine in South Africa.

The expansion of South Africa's defence force in the early 1960s created an urgent need for larger and more modern medical facilities. The existing hospitals, 1 Mil at Thaba Tshwane

(formerly known as Voortrekkerhoogte) in Pretoria and 2 Mil in Wynberg, Cape Town, complemented by smaller sickbays and examination rooms at various units, were no longer sufficient. Recommendations for new hospital complexes were made in 1962, and by 1968, planning for 1 Mil Hospital had been approved. Construction contracts for both 1 and 2 Mil

Hospitals were finalised in December 1969. While Wynberg was completed and opened in 1979, construction delays at 1 Mil Hospital meant that the facility only became operational in 1982.

The new complex, strategically positioned on a rocky incline near the Voortrekker Monument, was officially inaugurated by Prime Minister Pieter Willem Botha (otherwise popularly simply known as P.W Botha) on 27 August 1982. The original hospital building continued to serve as a recovery wing and later accommodated psychiatric and war casualty rehabilitation services.

From its inception, 1 Mil Hospital fulfilled a broad spectrum of roles. Beyond inpatient and specialist medical care, it became a hub for professional training and research. The hospital's nursing college and specialist units cultivated generations of skilled medical personnel, ensuring

operational readiness across the SANDF.

Community nursing programmes complemented these efforts by providing preventive care and early diagnosis for military personnel, their families, and surrounding communities. In Pretoria in 1981 alone, more than 1 800 new patients were consulted, over 10 000 follow-up visits were conducted, nearly 1 500 immunisations were administered, and 1 700 clinic sessions were held. This outreach extended even beyond the Republic, contributing to civil affairs and fostering positive relations in South-West Africa (current Republic of Namibia).


Throughout its history, 1 Mil also played a pivotal role in research and specialised medical projects. From psychiatric care programmes to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) treatment initiatives, the hospital has consistently supported efforts that advanced both military and public health knowledge. Its infrastructure, which includes operating theatres and specialist wards, has been designed to meet the unique demands of military

service, including trauma care, operational deployment support, and care for dependants.

Despite its proud legacy, the hospital has faced significant challenges. Decades of service led to infrastructure degradation, which required large-scale refurbishment. Previous projects, although substantial, were often delayed or underfunded, resulting in prolonged periods of reduced functionality. In recent years, renewed refurbishment efforts have focused on modernising patient wards, upgrading plumbing and power systems, improving lighting, and equipping the facility with contemporary medical technology. Completion is expected by 2027, and the project promises a revitalised facility that preserves the historical significance which defines its character.

The significance of 1 Mil extends

far beyond its physical structure because it represents the dedication of countless medical professionals, the operational readiness of the SANDF, and the health of those who serve the nation. Its training programmes, community outreach, and research initiatives have built a legacy that spans generations.

As refurbishment progresses, the hospital is poised to reclaim its status as South Africa’s premier military medical facility as it combines modern capability with decades of experience and institutional knowledge. 1 Military Hospital’s story is one of enduring service, historical significance, and ongoing renewal. It remains a vital institution of the SANDF, committed to providing comprehensive care, supporting military operations, and preserving a proud tradition of medical excellence for generations to come. 

SANDF Education Trust



The SANDF Education trust is funded through donations and contributions received from the private sector and international business enterprises. Ongoing fund raising initiatives are in place, and the SANDF welcomes all contributions.

For more information on the SANDF Education Trust, visit www.dod.mil.za

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We believe in heroes, we hope you do too.
Together we move South Africa Forward



SANDF Spouses Forum Marks 20 Years of Service and Support

Article by Mr Lufuno Netshirembe
Photos by S Sgt Nkosinathi Nkosi

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum marked its 20th anniversary at St. George Hotel in Irene, Centurion on 25 October 2025. The event commemorated two decades of organised support for military families through empowerment initiatives, outreach programmes, and family welfare activities.

The anniversary was held under the theme “Holding the Baton with Creativity,



First Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Mrs Busi Ngwenya(left) with the incumbent chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Mrs Masindi Maphwanya cutting the anniversary cake.



First Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Mrs Busi Ngwenya(left) with the incumbent chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Mrs Masindi Maphwanya cutting the anniversary cake.

Determination and Resilience.” The occasion was attended by the Forum’s founding and former leaders, including Mrs Busi Ngwenya and Mrs Charlotte Shoke, as well as former Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Dr Lindiwe Sisulu and keynote speaker Dr Florence Musengi. The current Chairperson, Mrs Masindi Maphwanya, delivered the main address, reflecting on the Forum’s establishment, progress and continued

relevance.

In her remarks, Mrs Maphwanya acknowledged the Forum’s founding members, saying, “We must begin by paying homage to the visionary women who walked before us. Their foresight and dedication were instrumental in laying a solid,



Former Chairperson of the SAMHS Spouses Forums, Mrs Sedibe lights up the candle in honour of the fallen soldiers.

unshakeable foundation. They recognised that while our soldiers protect the nation, their families need protection and support on the home front.”



Mrs Busi Ngwenya, Pioneer and First Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum delivering her speech.



The incumbent chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Mrs Masindi Maphwanya.



Dr Lindiwe Sisulu, former Minister of Defence and Military Veterans delivering her speech.

The SANDF Spouses Forum was founded in 2005 by Mrs Busi Ngwenya during the tenure of General Godfrey Ngwenya, who served as Chief of the SANDF from 2005 to 2011. When General Solly Shoke took over in 2011, his spouse, Mrs Charlotte Shoke, became Chairperson until 2021. The current Chairperson, Mrs Masindi Maphwanya, assumed leadership when General Rudzani Maphwanya became Chief of the SANDF in 2021.

Mrs Maphwanya described the Forum as “the official support and community-building organisation for the spouses and families of the South African National Defence Force.” She said the Forum operates in coordination with other SANDF family support structures, ensuring outreach across the South African Army, Air Force, Navy, and Military Health Service.

Over the years, the Forum has facilitated welfare and empowerment initiatives such as the SANDF Goodwill Parcel Drive, community outreach efforts, and skills development workshops. “Our focus remains on empowerment,” said Mrs Maphwanya. “By building the capacity of our spouses, we strengthen the entire military family structure.”

She noted that the Forum’s training programmes have included practical skills such

as baking, sewing and furniture making. “These are not just hobbies,” she said. “They are pathways to entrepreneurship, dignity and financial resilience.”

Mrs Maphwanya shared an example of a military spouse assisted through the Forum. A young woman’s small baking business was temporarily halted when her oven broke down during her husband’s deployment. Through regional coordination and community support, the Forum helped facilitate the repair within a week. “This is the essence of what we do,” she said. “Bridging the gap between need and provision, and fostering resilience.”


She also referred to the emotional impact of the SAMIDRC Mission earlier in 2025, where several SANDF members lost their lives. “It was a difficult time, but I am proud to confirm that, working seamlessly with other internal supportive bodies of the SANDF, we were able to provide much-needed comfort, support, and a steady presence to the families of the deceased,” she said.

Mrs Maphwanya thanked all SANDF divisions for their

cooperation. “To all the Services and Divisions of the SANDF, from Personnel to Chaplaincy and Legal Services, thank you for your relentless, selfless assistance. Whenever we call upon you, you respond without hesitation.”

Concluding her address, she emphasised the Forum’s ongoing role and relevance. “Our purpose is not about legacy. It is about impactful existence right here, right now. It is about the difference we make in a child’s life today, or the self-confidence we instil in a spouse tomorrow.”

She ended with words in Tshivenda: “Ndi a livhuwa. Na matshelo vha songo neta u ita zwivhuwa,” meaning, “Thank you. And tomorrow, do not tire of doing good.”

The 20th anniversary celebration reflected the Forum’s continued commitment to supporting SANDF families. For two decades, it has worked to ensure that while soldiers serve the nation, their families remain supported and connected through the collective strength of the Spouses Forum. 

The Seed That Gave Rise to Fledgelings Early Childhood Development Centres within the SA Air Force

Article and photo courtesy of Mrs Afrika Msimang

In 1995, as a young military spouse, I entered a world filled with both hope and hardship, a chapter of my life forever etched in my heart.

We arrived in Cape Town with a toddler, a newborn on the way, and our eight-year-old assumed son, ready to begin my husband's tour of duty at 22 Squadron, Air Force Base Ysterplaat, where he served as an Oryx helicopter pilot. It was a time when the process of Integration and Transformation in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) was still in its infancy. For me, as a graduate and young mother who had just left her job to start anew, the military world in a post-apartheid South Africa, was both exciting and daunting.

But what struck me most upon arrival was not the discipline or regimentation, it was the silence. Instead of a warm welcome, there was an unsettling quiet; instead of support, a void. For our family, integration was never just about the unification of statutory and non-statutory forces. It was about creating a genuine sense of belonging, a community rooted in unity, understanding, and shared purpose.

As a young, energetic, and politically conscious wife and mother, reality hit hard. We faced isolation and uncertainty that tested every fibre of our being. Denied base accommodation at Ysterplaat, we found refuge in a modest duplex in Table View. Mere weeks after settling in, joy was overshadowed by tragedy: the birth of my newborn was followed by devastating news, my mother, who was meant to join us, had suffered a fatal stroke.

In that unbearable moment, we were utterly



Mrs Afrika Msimang.

alone grappling with grief, cut off from any support network, and navigating subtle undercurrents of exclusion in a place that felt both foreign and cold. Three weeks into our posting, my husband, then a Candidate Officer (soon to be promoted to Major after bridging training), was sent away on various courses. Transport costs, childcare, and household responsibilities quickly compounded our emotional burden.

To make ends meet, I turned to freelance writing, transforming words into the sustenance that carried our young family through those early days. Five months later, I managed to secure a full-time employment, only to encounter another harsh reality: the dire lack of reliable childcare. That experience was humbling and deeply formative.

A year later, we were finally granted housing inside the base. Life within the military community



SA Air Force pioneer Fledgelings.

exposed me to a world still learning what “integration” truly meant. Social cohesion was fragile; the sense of family and what the military prides itself on was still being rebuilt.

From this crucible of hardship, a steadfast conviction took root within me: no woman, no family, should ever endure such struggles alone or unheard. It was a promise my husband and I quietly made to ourselves and one we carried forward as he rose through the ranks.

When he later became an Officer Commanding of a Flying Unit in 2003, and subsequently of a Base in 2005, support to the spouses became central to our mission. We sought to give transformation and integration their true meaning... not as policies, but as lived experiences. It was a necessary journey that gave us the empathy and insight needed for what was to come.

When my husband was appointed Chief of the South African Air Force (CAF), he formally called me into his office with a clear


and purposeful instruction: “Love, you are charged with the responsibility of shaping and running the Air Force Spouses Forum. This Forum will be an extension of the Office of the Chief.”

That moment was transformative. I embraced the task as a higher calling to serve the collective SAAF spouses with pride, compassion, and dignity. The trials of those early years had shaped my vision and ignited my determination to ensure that no family would ever feel as isolated as we once did.

The Air Force Spouses Forum was blessed with the collective support of the SAAF leadership, committed management, passionate members, and generous

external partners, creating not just as a platform for engagement, but as a living network of care and empowerment. From this movement emerged one of the most cherished projects within the Air Force community: the creation of Fledgelings Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs).

These centres became sanctuaries spaces where children are cherished and nurtured, and where parents, especially mothers, find community, strength, and hope. Fledgelings symbolise renewal, resilience, and the boundless potential that takes flight when families are supported.

What began as a seed of pain and perseverance blossomed into a project of purpose and a proof that from hardship transformation can take root. 

SA Army Foundation: A Legacy of Independence, Growth and Service

Article by Ms Thando Ramasimong
Photos by Ms Boitumelo Choene

As one of the longest standing welfare organisations supporting the South African military community, the SA Army Foundation continues to serve as a beacon of stability, empowerment and resilience for members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and their families. Established nearly seven decades ago, the Foundation will proudly celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2026, marking an enduring legacy of independence and excellence in service to the Defence fraternity.

Operating as an independent organisation, the SA Army Foundation was created to improve the quality of life of serving and retired military personnel through financial, educational and social support. Over the years, it has become a trusted institution that complements the welfare objectives of the Department of Defence and the SANDF while maintaining its autonomy in administration, governance and financial management. This independence has allowed the Foundation to remain agile, innovative and responsive to the evolving needs of its members.

At the centre of this remarkable journey is Mr Angel Ramphele, who has served the Foundation for three decades, including 13 years as General Manager. His tenure has been defined by visionary leadership, financial discipline and an unwavering dedication to the welfare of the Defence community. Under the guidance of Mr Ramphele as the GM, the SA Army Foundation has grown into a financially sound and viable organisation with reserves that reflect prudent stewardship and long term



Mr Angel Ramphele highlights key moments in the Foundation's history, showcasing nearly seven decades of commitment to the Defence community.

sustainability. As Mr Ramphele approaches retirement, he leaves behind a lasting legacy, having transformed the Foundation into one of the most successful and respected independent military welfare entities in South Africa.

During his leadership, the Foundation achieved several transformative milestones. Among these was the establishment of Shield Life, a fully licensed financial services provider designed to serve the specific needs of military personnel. Shield Life was created to provide efficient, fair and dependable insurance solutions, ensuring that no legitimate claim is ever denied. This initiative stands as one of the Foundation's greatest

accomplishments, reflecting its commitment to financial empowerment and security for its members.

Another achievement under Mr Ramphele's stewardship was the acquisition of St George's Hotel, a landmark property now owned by the Department of Defence and serving as a college for military personnel. This achievement highlighted the Foundation's forward-thinking approach, investing in assets that not only strengthen its own portfolio but also contribute to the broader objectives of the SANDF by supporting training, development and professional growth. Such initiatives reflect the Foundation's long



Mr Angel Ramphele, General Manager of the SA Army Foundation, points to photographs that capture the SA Army Foundation's journey of service, growth and impact and reflects on the organisation's milestones and achievements displayed on the office wall.

standing belief that supporting the soldier means investing in both people and infrastructure.

The foundation's commitment to education remains one of its defining contributions, by extending its commitment to the adopt a student bursary program. The program endeavors to provide comprehensive financial aid to the children of Army Foundation members who would otherwise not be able to afford tertiary education, ensuring that sacrifices of military families translate into lasting opportunities for future generations.

Membership in the SA Army Foundation is built on a subscription system, with soldiers contributing monthly fees that are reinvested into welfare programmes, financial products and educational assistance. These member contributions form the lifeblood of the organisation, sustaining a cycle of support that benefits the very people who make up its

membership. Beyond its core mandate, the Foundation has also extended its reach through charitable donations and contributions to events within the SANDF and the Department of Defence, supporting causes that uplift both military and civilian communities. Through these initiatives, the Foundation continues to promote goodwill, unity and compassion across the broader Defence environment.

Today, the SA Army Foundation stands as a reflection of independence, integrity and progress. Its success demonstrates a deep-rooted culture of accountability, effective leadership and member driven service. The Foundation's ability to balance its autonomy with close collaboration

with the Department of Defence and the SANDF has made it an indispensable partner in improving the quality of life of those who serve in uniform.

As it prepares to celebrate 70 years of dedicated service in 2026, the SA Army Foundation looks to the future with pride in its achievements and confidence in its continued relevance. Its rich heritage, built on financial prudence, social responsibility and a deep respect for the men and women of the SANDF, ensures that it will remain a cornerstone of support for generations to come. The legacy of Mr Angel Ramphele will endure as a testament to visionary leadership, leaving behind an organisation that is not only financially strong but deeply rooted in the values of service, compassion and sustainability. 

Defence Matériel Division Strengthening Defence Partnerships Through Strategic Networking

Article by Ms Nompumelelo Mahlangu
Photographs by Ms Boitumelo Choene

Defence Matériel Division (DMD) hosted a Strategic Networking Event at the Services Golf Club in Pretoria, where different services, divisions, and captains of industry gathered to share best practices and build cordial, mutually beneficial relationships. While the event incorporated a round of golf, its essence was firmly rooted in fostering meaningful engagement and strengthening defence industry partnerships.

Describing the purpose of the engagement, Chief Director Defence Acquisition Management, Rear Admiral Anthony Morris, highlighted that the event served as an important opportunity for the Defence Industry and the Department of Defence (DOD) to rub



Acting Chief Director of Defence Matériel Division, Mr Kopano Lebelo, addresses guests during the Strategic Network Golf Day.



The two former Chiefs of the South African National Defence Force, General (Ret) Solly Shoke (2nd from left) and General (Ret) Simphiwe Nyanda (right) were joined by the Acting Chief Director of Defence Matériel Division, Mr Kopano Lebelo (3rd from left), and a delegate (left) attending the golf event.

shoulders and deepen collaboration. “In essence, the purpose of the DMD Division Strategic Networking Event 2025 is to reinforce the relations and to appreciate the contributions, efforts and achievements made by the respective defence industries, small medium and micro enterprises and military veterans,” he said.

Delivering the opening address, Acting Chief DMD, Mr Kopano Lebelo, noted that the Department of Defence is in a period where the ability to acquire defence materiel within short timelines has become urgently necessary. Their capacity to update, adapt and modernise major equipment remains strategically significant for the SANDF.



Participants from across the defence sector gather at the Services Golf Club during the Defence Matériel Division Strategic Network Golf Day, hosted to strengthen industry partnerships and collaboration.

He emphasised that the gathering was not simply a golf day, but a deliberate strategic networking engagement designed to bring together individuals and entities capable of shaping the future trajectory of the South African Defence Industry. Their participation was essential in ensuring that the industry continues to prosper, thereby enabling the Department of Defence to fulfil its mandate effectively.

Mr Lebelo further underlined that there exists a symbiotic relationship between the Department of Defence and the Defence Industry. "This strategic network event is a perfect opportunity to nurture and foster industry and defence relations and thereby supporting the SANDF in its quest to modernise its military hardware," he added.

In recognition of the support received, sponsors were acknowledged across various categories. In the diamond category were Dinkwanyana Aerospace, Electro-EW House, Reutech Optronics, Dentec Group of Companies and Armscor. The Platinum sponsor was the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Numolux served as the Gold sponsor, TMI Simulation as Silver, while Galeboe Professional Services and Sysdel contributed as Bronze sponsors.

The day concluded with a Gala Dinner,


where strategic conversations continued in a more formal setting. Delivering the keynote address, Mr Lebelo emphasised that the global security landscape is evolving rapidly, demanding agile, forward-thinking responses. Beyond the immediate imperatives of defence and security, he noted a broader opportunity that speaks to shared commitments toward national development, industrial revitalisation, and inclusive economic growth.

He reiterated that the defence industry is not merely a pillar of national security but also a crucial driver of industrial capability, job creation, and technological progress. "Through targeted partnerships, we can stimulate local manufacturing, enhance skills development, and foster export competitiveness. These are not abstract goals, they are tangible outcomes that uplift communities, strengthen supply chains, and position South Africa as a global player in defence innovation," he stated.

Mr Lebelo congratulated the winners of the strategic network golf day as well as all participants who contributed to a memorable and impactful event.

As part of its corporate social responsibility efforts, DMD adopted Leamogetswe Safety Home in Saulsville, West of Pretoria, an NPO that provides care, education and support to 82 orphans and vulnerable children within the surrounding community.

Delivering closing remarks, Director Technology Development, Brig Gen Andre Barends, reaffirmed the principles set out in the White Paper on Defence: "The SANDF shall be a balanced, modern, affordable and technologically advanced military force, capable of executing its tasks effectively and efficiently."

In conclusion, Brig Gen Barends noted that it is through the close relationship between the Department of Defence, the Defence Industry, and industry at large that they remain committed to serving their beloved country, South Africa. 

Chief of the South African National Defence Force Military Skills Competition 2025

Article by Ms Nompumelelo Mahlangu
Photos by L Cpl Paul Mpangala

The Chief of the South African National Defence Force (C SANDF) Military Skills Competition (MILCOMP) 2025 took place in Potchefstroom, North West from 28 September to 04 October 2025. Countries such as Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and South Africa, took part in the Military Skills Competition. Participants from seven different



Ready... steady... target aimed and locked... Fire – participants on target aiming and shooting session of the Military Skills Competition.

countries competed against each other in a variety of activities.

In his opening address, Chief Army Force Preparation, Maj Gen Njabulo Dube, indicated that this year marks the 18th iteration of the MILCOMP since its inception in 2006, “an event that stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of military professionalism and the value they place on readiness, resilience, and refined soldiering skill.” Over nearly two decades, MILCOMP has grown into a cornerstone of the Defence Force’s calendar and continues to inspire excellence across their ranks and those of their international guests. He welcomed participants from the seven countries and added that their presence



“Balance is not just steady feet, it’s a steady mind”
Netherlands competitors crossing with focus and grit.



Fearless and determined – women from the Botswana Defence Force showcasing strength, agility, and resilience during the Military Skills Competition 2025 in Potchefstroom.



Dutch participant preparing with ease and confidence, ready to display marksmanship skills during the rifle shooting event.



Botswana military member awaits the command to fire, demonstrating discipline and focus on the shooting line.



Maj Lauschagne during the Military Skills Competition 2025.



Capt de Vries in action at the pistol range, during the Military Skills Competition 2025.



Strength and resilience on display – a Zimbabwe National Army member powers through the challenge, proving that determination conquers obstacles.

“enriches the event and strengthens the bonds of military cooperation and mutual respect across borders.”

Maj Gen Dube acknowledged South African soldiers, stating: “Your dedication, honed over the past year through your respective arms of services’ Fittest Soldier competitions and even proud medal-winning participation at the July 2025 Inter-allied Confederation of Reserve Non-commissioned Officers’ Military Competition in Finland, show that the high calibre profession of arms is the lifeblood of this competition.”

MILCOMP is “not only a test of physical endurance but also a celebration of soldiering smarts and skill-at-arms.” Participants were tested in six demanding categories: the Water Obstacle Course, Land Obstacle Course, Rifle and Pistol Shooting, Hand Grenade Throwing, and the 8km Combat Run.

“To every participant: you are here because you have earned your place,” Maj Gen Dube said. “Compete with honour, with heart, and with humility.” He reminded participants that beyond medals and rankings, the event is “a celebration of unity, discipline, and shared

purpose.”


On the first two days, members underwent training to familiarise themselves with all events. On 1 October, the official swimming competition took place, followed by Rifle and Pistol Shooting on 2 October. The Land Obstacle Course and Hand Grenade Throwing took place on 3 October, testing “speed, strength, accuracy under pressure and measured tactical movement.” On 4 October, competitors completed the 8km Combat Run, which combines combat readiness and endurance.

At the prize-giving ceremony, Maj Gen Dube said they had witnessed “a whirlwind of explosive energy and fierce determination.” He emphasised that each event demanded “mental agility, tactical awareness, and sheer grit,” forming “forges for tenacious character.”

MILCOMP is “a fundamental part of force preparation and a

forge for leaders of tomorrow.” The competition paves the way for international events, particularly the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers and Non-commissioned Officers Competitions. South African members performed exceptionally well in July 2025, bringing medals home and gaining invaluable exposure.

Maj Gen Dube congratulated the winners, saying: “Wear your medals with pride, for they are earned in sweat, sacrifice, and service.” To those without trophies, he affirmed that they are “no less warriors,” and that their “participation, effort and spirit are the lifeblood of the competition.”

In conclusion, he encouraged all to “celebrate the friendships forged here,” describing the competition as “a bridge” connecting people across borders and reminding all of their shared purpose: “to serve, to protect, and to grow together.” 

SANDF Prestige Week 2025 highlights a Decade of Unity, Strength, and Excellence

Article by Sgt Thelma Magubele
Photos by L Cpl Paul Mpangala

The 2025 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Prestige Week commenced and concluded at Thaba Tshwane Military Sports Ground, marking the end of a significant week that brought together competition, culture, and camaraderie in one integrated platform. Now in its tenth year, the event stood as a strong reflection of the SANDF's ongoing commitment to physical readiness, discipline, teamwork, and unity of purpose across the Defence Force. From the opening parade on 07 October to the closing ceremony on 10 October, members from all arms of service and divisions demonstrated not only sporting excellence but also the spirit of togetherness and pride that continue to define the SANDF.

The week began with an opening parade that set the tone for the days that followed. The Chief of the SANDF, General Rudzani Maphwanya, officially opened the event and reminded participants that Prestige Week is more



than a sporting contest; it is a reflection of the SANDF's collective readiness and cohesion as one unified force. His message reinforced the importance of physical fitness, discipline, and teamwork as essential elements that strengthen the SANDF's operational effectiveness and readiness to serve the Republic.

Throughout the week, twenty-seven sporting

codes were contested across various venues, ranging from athletics, netball, rugby, soccer, volleyball, swimming, and martial arts to chess and golf. Each sporting discipline showcased endurance, precision, and determination that mirror the SANDF's operational

ABOVE and LEFT: Throughout the week, twenty-seven sporting codes were contested across various venues, ranging from athletics, netball, rugby, soccer, volleyball, swimming, and martial arts to chess and golf.

ethos. Athletes competed with focus and mutual respect, displaying the values of sportsmanship, teamwork, and service that underpin the character of the Defence Force. The spirit of competition, while intense, reflected the SANDF's unity in diversity, where members strive together toward collective excellence

Midweek, attention turned from the sporting fields to the cultural arena as members observed the "Village Walkabout," a long-standing highlight of Prestige Week. Each division and service transformed its exhibition area into a cultural village that showcased the diversity and heritage within the



LEFT and BELOW LEFT and RIGHT: Midweek, attention turned from the sporting fields to the cultural arena as members observed the “Village Walkabout”, at Thaba Tshwane Military Sports Ground that brought together competition, culture, and camaraderie in one integrated platform.



SANDF. Through traditional attire, song, dance, storytelling, and indigenous cuisine, members celebrated their roots and reaffirmed the SANDF’s role as a mirror of the nation it serves. The cultural display not only promoted pride and belonging but also strengthened unity and mutual understanding across formations.


During the walkabout, the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Michael Ramantswana, commended participants for their creativity and teamwork, noting that the event truly captured the spirit of unity through diversity. His light-hearted remark about one traditional drink that “had an effect he didn’t quite enjoy” drew laughter from the audience but also reinforced the spirit of camaraderie and shared humanity that characterised the week’s activities.

The week concluded with an awards ceremony that brought together all participants to celebrate achievement and collective success. The South African Army was crowned the overall winner of the 2025 Prestige Week, followed by the South African Air Force, South African Navy, and the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS). In

the Services and Divisional Cultural Category, the SA Army took first place, followed by the SA Air Force and SA Navy. Among the divisions, Defence Intelligence emerged in first place, Defence Materiel Division took second, and Human Resources Division came third.

In his closing remarks, Lt Gen Ramantswana congratulated all athletes and participants for their performance and commitment. He emphasised that even those who did not take top positions remained winners through their participation and effort. He reminded members that the lessons drawn from sport were discipline, teamwork, and endurance. Highlighting that these attributes were central to strengthening the SANDF’s collective readiness and resilience. These values, he said, must continue to guide the Defence Force in executing its mission with professionalism and purpose.

As the closing songs echoed across the Thaba Tshwane sports grounds and the flags were lowered, a sense of pride and achievement filled the air. The 10th anniversary of the SANDF Prestige Week not only celebrated a decade of growth but also reaffirmed the core values that binds the Defence Force: unity in diversity, strength through teamwork, and excellence in service. The event once again demonstrated that Prestige Week is not simply an annual sporting and cultural engagement but a strategic instrument for building morale, enhancing human performance, and fostering the spirit of service within the ranks.

With renewed energy and strengthened bonds, SANDF members returned to their units inspired to continue serving the Republic of South Africa with loyalty, resilience, and unwavering dedication. 

SANDF Showcases Its Shooting Capabilities During C SANDF Prestige Week

Article by PO Samuel Ramonyai
Photos by Ms Boitumelo Choene

Col Gerald Champion, Officer Commanding (OC) South African Military Health Service (SAHMS) Headquarters (HQ) said: “Good soldiers occasionally step away from their offices and daily duties to test their shooting proficiency, tactical skills, and physical fitness through various firearms and exercises.” He was speaking during the annual Chief of the South African National Defence Force (C SANDF)



Col Gerald Champion leads marksmen as they showcase precision and discipline during the CSANDF Prestige Week shooting competition in Thaba Tshwane.



SA Army marksman displays accuracy and control at the Pretoria Military Practical Shooting Club.

Prestige Week held at the Pretoria Military Practical Shooting Club in Thaba Tshwane.

“Col Champion emphasized that such activities sharpen operational readiness, improve marksmanship, and build camaraderie and healthy competition among members of the SANDF.

This year’s competition, held from 7 to 10 October 2025, brought together marksmen and women from all arms of service to showcase their precision and discipline under pressure.



With eyes on the target, SA Army marksman showcase their shooting skills.

He explained that the event not only celebrated excellence but also demonstrated the SANDF’s high training standards and readiness. “Throughout the week, participants competed in various

shooting categories, testing accuracy, speed, and composure under pressure—all while strengthening camaraderie among the forces and recognizing top shooters who often represent the SANDF nationally,” he said.



Maj J Makebe from the SA Military Health Service showcases her marksmanship skills on the range.

Promoting Skill, Readiness, and Unity

In an interview with SA Soldier, Col Champion elaborated on the broader objective of the competition. “The aim of this whole Prestige Week is to differentiate between the different arms of service and directorates through the skills they have practiced throughout the year,” he explained. “Here at the pistol shooting range, we are testing accuracy and speed among the different services.”


He noted that shooting remains an integral part of SANDF training and urged more Pretoria-based soldiers to join the weekly practice sessions at the Pretoria Pistol Shooting Club.

“Our aim is to shoot, whether it’s with a pistol or an R4 rifle. We need to practice these skills on a regular basis,” he said. Training sessions usually take place on Wednesdays



SANDF marksmen from different arms of service test their shooting proficiency and teamwork.

during sport parade hours, beginning around 12:30 pm. Participants prepare the range, distribute ammunition, and engage in different shooting events such as MPI and PPC disciplines. “Some events are fast-paced, like shooting six shots in eight seconds using a semi-automatic pistol,” Col Champion added.

“Events like this remind us that shooting is not just about competition, it’s about maintaining the core military skill that every soldier must master,” said Col Champion. “Through this tradition, the SANDF strengthens its readiness and honours the men and women who uphold its proud legacy of excellence and service.” 

Sgt Malusi Dlomo Shines at Chief of the SANDF Prestige Week Cross Country Race

Article by PO Samuel Ramonyai
Photos by Boitumelo Choene

In 2015, General Solly Shoke, the predecessor of the current Chief of the South African National Defence Force (C SANDF), General Rudzani Maphwanya, launched a Comprehensive and Transformative week-long programme called the C SANDF Prestige Week. The initiative aimed to maintain peak physical fitness, boost morale, and strengthen cohesion among the Defence Act Personnel, ensuring a combat-ready defence force through sport and recreation.

Since its inception in 2015, the C SANDF Prestige Week has grown into one of the most memorable events on the SANDF's annual calendar. The 2025 edition, held at the Pretoria Military Sports Ground in Thaba Tshwane, featured a rather interesting spectacle highlight of an 8 km cross-country race that had spectators on their feet. At the centre of the



Sgt Malusi Dlomo maintains a steady pace during the 8km cross-country race at the Chief of the SANDF Prestige Week.



Sgt Malusi Dlomo rejoices after a remarkable finish.

excitement was Sgt Malusi Dlomo, a runner well known for his speed, endurance, and remarkable pacing. Hailing from Air Force Base Bloemspruit in Bloemfontein, Sgt Dlomo is no stranger to high-level competition, despite being unfamiliar with the Pretoria route. Nicknamed an unstoppable champion runner, he powered through the course in an impressive 27 minutes and 20 seconds, averaging 3:20 per kilometre, a pace few can match.

This performance came just a week after he completed a solo training run from Johannesburg to



Sgt Malusi Dlomo catching air after finishing the 8km cross-country race.

Pretoria in 3 hours and 15 minutes, clearly using it as preparation for the event. Sgt Dlomo’s journey as a competitive runner began in 2010, and he has never looked back. “When I was growing up, I used to watch the Comrades Marathon on TV, and that’s when the desire to run in the competition was sparked,” he recalls.

In 2011, after years of training, he took part in his first Comrades Marathon. But his journey wasn’t without challenges. He remembers his most difficult race as the Athletics SA Marathon Championship in Durban (2010), where he completed just 25km before walking the final 17km. “Seeing older runners, some over sixty, cross the finish line at Comrades inspired me deeply. It fuelled my desire to one day run and complete the marathon myself,” he said.

Today, Sgt Dlomo has proudly completed twelve Comrades Marathons, earning nine silver medals and three Wally Hayward Medals, awarded to those who finish under six

hours but outside the top ten. His personal best time stands at 5 hours and 40 minutes, achieved in the 2023 edition.

His training is both rigorous and structured. Preparing for Comrades, he begins a dedicated training programme three months in advance, running between 120km and 180km per week, and tapering in the final fortnight. A typical training week includes:

- Monday: Easy run
- Tuesday & Thursday: Speed or tempo sessions
- Wednesday: Mid-week long run (20–25km)
- Friday: Rest day
- Saturday or Sunday: Long run.

Winter training doesn’t deter him. He relies on warm layers and a headlamp to get through early morning runs in the cold. Before

long runs, he fuels up with carbohydrate-rich meals, and during races, he starts conservatively to preserve energy for a strong finish.


“Running is not for the faint-hearted,” he explains. “It requires both physical and mental strength. Knowing that a reward awaits me at the finish line is what keeps me motivated.”

While he enjoys various types of terrain, he admits a preference for downhill running and dreams of one day earning a gold medal at the Comrades Marathon. He’s also passionate about helping develop the next generation of athletes and is a member of the Entsika Athletics Club in KwaZulu-Natal.

To fellow runners, Sgt Dlomo offers wise advice:

“Set your own target and stick to your pace. Don’t get swept up by unfamiliar ‘buses’ (pace groups), and only use nutrition you’ve tested in training. Most importantly, lean on your support system.”

Outside of running, Sgt Dlomo serves as an Aircraft Survival Equipment Fitter in the South African Air Force. His role involves the maintenance, repair, and testing of both aircraft and personal survival gear, demonstrating his dual commitment to technical excellence and physical discipline.

Sgt Dlomo is a living testimony to the spirit of the Chief of the SANDF Prestige Week, combining strength, discipline, and passion in both service and sport. 

A Purpose Driven Career Shaped by Service, Learning, and Leadership - meet Brig Gen Zoleka Niyabo-Mana

Article by Ms Nompumelelo Mahlangu
Photos courtesy of Defence Reserves Magazine

Born on 9 August, coincidentally South Africa's National Women's Day in Gqeberha (popularly known as Port Elizabeth) in the Eastern Cape province. The Acting Chief Director Defence Reserves, Brig Gen Zoleka Niyabo-Mana has served the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) for over 20 years. She started in 1998 when she integrated into the SANDF at the tender age of 22 years. What began as a young woman integrating into the newly structured SANDF has since become a career defined by resilience, leadership and an unwavering commitment to service.

Brig Gen Niyabo-Mana began her primary schooling at Arthur Nyobo Primary School, then moved to Wesile Higher Primary School, Phillip Nikiwe School, Siseko High School and later completing her matric at Cowen High School in Gqeberha. Riots started in her hometown which would sometimes lead to either burning of schools or preventing learners from going to school. This often resulted in approximately 3 to 5 year delay in schooling for most people. However, when riots transpired, her mom would take them to boarding schools in former Transkei and Ciskei homelands since they were not affected by riots.

After completing her matric in 1992, she took a gap year in 1993 because she did not know what to study. From 1994 to 1996 she went to Vista University to study for her Senior Education Diploma, the only qualification her mom could afford. In February 1997 she became an English and History teacher for a year at Ithembelihle Comprehensive School in Gqeberha until December 1997.

"In 1998 there was an opportunity for me to integrate when the Defence Force was integrating non-statutory forces and former homelands. As a member of the PAC, I integrated through APLA. I was not given any rank when I joined, so I started as a Candidate Officer since I was a graduate. I spent a year as a



Brig Gen Zoleka Niyabo-Mana.

CO, completed Officer's Training, became a Lieutenant, and worked my way through all the ranks to Brigadier General," she said.

From 1999 to 2001 Brig Gen Niyabo-Mana became an SO3 Personnel Officer at Air Force Base, Waterkloof, managing the Duty Room. This was where she felt the need to pursue studies in line with her work. "I believe with what you are doing at work, you must develop yourself. I studied Bachelor of Administration Degree with University of South Africa (UNISA)," she shared.

She went on to pursue an Honours in Public Management Development. Passionate about development and mindful of living in a developing country, she advanced further when, in 2017, the South African Air Force nominated her as the first woman to study abroad for a Master's in Security Strategy at Maxwell Air University in Montgomery, Alabama. She was the only female International

Fellow among 43 participants from around the world and graduated Cum Laude, earning an A in Strategy, the first African female student to achieve this distinction. Prior to 2017, Brig Gen Niyabo-Mana received a nomination in 2010 for a Future African Military Leaders course in Washington, United States. Out of the 65 international students, she was again the only female student in the course. Her other qualifications include a Senior Management Program from the University of Pretoria and Master's Certificate in Project Management from the International Institute of Research (IIR).

Upon the retirement of the then Chief Director Defence Reserves, Maj Gen (ret) Roy Andersen, in 2021, she was appointed Acting Chief Director Defence Reserves. In 2024 she was appointed as a Defence Attaché. As of 2026, she will be assuming a post as Defence Attaché in the United Kingdom for the next 4 years.


She explains that she makes the

most of every opportunity she’s given, “and the Defence Force has offered me many”. Though it’s not an easy environment for women, she acknowledges the valuable chances to grow, the mentors who supported her, and the additional qualifications she has gained. Ultimately, she attributes her progress to her commitment to her work and to the people who believed in her.

She strongly believes in the power of education and how it can make an individual stand apart from their peers, as well open many

doors for an individual. Outside of work, Brig Gen Niyabo-Mana enjoys spending time with her daughter, Ngelosi Mana. She has been married to Mr Nqaba Mana for 14 years. However, they have been together for 22 years.

She spends much of her time at the gym, and when she isn’t working out, she enjoys reading. Among her favourite books is *Inside Quatro*, which she values for its

revealing account of life in exile and the hidden struggles within the liberation movement. She also treasures *Ngúgí wa Thiong’o’s Decolonising the Mind*, embracing its message about the importance of language, culture, and identity. These works resonate deeply with her own journey, from humble beginnings to leadership, reminding her to stay rooted, honour her voice, and own her story. 

ROLES AND OBJECTIVES DEFENCE ATTACHÉ (DA)

In an era where global security is as interconnected as it is complex, the role of the Defence Attaché (DA) stands as a vital bridge between nations’ militaries and their diplomatic aspirations. At its core, a DA is a military officer assigned to a country’s embassy or high commission abroad, serving as the official representative of their armed forces in a foreign host nation. Far more than a uniformed diplomat, they are the eyes, ears, and voice of their military in international arenas, fostering bilateral cooperation, exchanging intelligence on shared threats, advising on defence policies, and building partnerships that underpin peace and stability.

A DA navigate the delicate interplay of strategy and statecraft, turning potential adversaries into collaborators and amplifying their nation’s defence ethos on the world stage. Being a SANDF (South African National Defence Force) Defence Attaché in the United Kingdom (UK) involves serving as the primary military diplomat and liaison officer for South Africa at the South African High Commission in the UK. This role is typically held by a senior officer (such as a Brigadier General) and focuses on advancing South Africa’s defence interests through bilateral cooperation with the UK, a key Commonwealth partner. The position combines diplomatic, intelligence, and operational duties to strengthen military ties, support strategic goals, and represent the SANDF abroad.


Key Responsibilities

The duties are broadly aligned with international standards for defence attachés but tailored to South Africa’s foreign policy

priorities, such as peace support operations, maritime security, and defence industry collaboration. Based on official descriptions and expert analyses, they include:

- **Military Diplomacy and Relationship Building:** Represent the South African Department of Defence (DoD) and SANDF in engagements with UK counterparts (e.g., Ministry of Defence, British Army, Royal Navy, RAF). This entails fostering bilateral agreements, coordinating joint training/exercises, and promoting defence exports or technology transfers.
- **Advising on Security Matters:** Provide expert counsel to the South African High Commissioner and diplomatic staff on UK defence policies, regional security threats (e.g., in Africa or the Atlantic), and potential opportunities for cooperation, such as counter-terrorism or humanitarian missions.
- **Intelligence Gathering and Analysis:** Monitor and report on developments in the UK’s armed forces, defence procurement, and strategic posture. This includes discreetly collecting open-source and liaison-based intelligence to inform SANDF

planning, without engaging in espionage.

- **Liaison and Coordination:** Act as the point of contact for UK military visits to South Africa, SANDF delegations to the UK, and support for South African military personnel or veterans in the UK. This may involve arranging logistics for events like Remembrance Day ceremonies or defence expos.
- **Promoting Defence Engagement:** Advocate for South African interests in multilateral forums accessible via the UK, such as Commonwealth defence meetings or NATO partnerships (as an observer). Efforts often emphasize Africa’s security challenges and South-South cooperation.
- **Administrative and Ceremonial Duties:** Manage the small defence section staff (including assistants or warrant officers), handle protocol for high-level visits, and participate in ceremonial roles, such as wreath-laying or national day events.
The role requires a blend of military expertise, diplomatic skills, and cultural adaptability. It demands adherence to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and host-country protocols. 

The tragedy that can be prevented: Practical drowning prevention toolboxes for children and adults

Information courtesy Martina Nicholson Associates
Photos (graphics) AI generated

Every moment near water holds the risk of an emergency, warns an emergency medicine specialist, urging families and individuals to be constantly vigilant as temperatures rise and the hazard of drowning intensifies.

According to ChildSafe SA, a leading child safety organisation, South Africa is globally listed among the top 45 countries with a drowning rate of 4.06 per 100,000 population. This silent epidemic demands immediate attention.

“Your child is never safe around water. Vigilance and a proactive approach are crucial to prevent drowning, particularly in summer months when the danger of drowning increases,” says Professor Feroza Motara, head of emergency medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand and emergency medical specialist practising at Netcare Linksfield Hospital.

“Drowning is silent, and can occur within seconds, without any warning signs. The risk is present around any water, including baths, swimming pools, and even small inflatable pools. Children must be watched every moment they are near water and this task must never be delegated to others, including older children or distracted adults, as disaster can strike instantly. Every lapse in supervision is a potential tragedy; vigilance cannot be compromised,” she warns.

Professor Motara points out that even a glance at your phone, replying to a message, or scrolling through social media while supervising children near water can lead to disaster. “It is particularly dangerous to consume alcohol or socialise when supervising children near water. Just one lapse in attention may result in serious, life-threatening consequences, especially when more than one



AI generated image.

small child is present. Every distraction creates a risk. Never allow anything to divert your focus when children are in or near water,” she cautions.

Practical child water safety toolbox:

- NEVER leave children unattended, inside and outside.
- Supervision must be undistracted—avoid phones, reading, or long conversations while children are in or near water.
- Keep alert to everyday risks, including toilets, bathtubs, water features, fish tanks, pet water bowls and buckets. Children can drown wherever there is access to water, and a baby can drown in as little as 2.5cm of water.
- Stay within arm’s length of all children around water.
- Always know where your children are. Parents must ensure they or a responsible adult is always watching children near a pool, jacuzzi or natural body of water. Don’t assume a child meant to be inside has not got out somehow.
- Learn life-saving skills, including the basics of swimming and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Enclose ponds, pools and water storage: Install a four-sided isolation fence at least 1.2m high with a self-closing and self-latching gate to control access to bodies of water.
- Focus on supervision. Never consume alcohol or let yourself be distracted by work, phone calls, social media, or anything else that could divert your attention while watching children.
- Replace the pool safety cover immediately after swimming.
- Don’t rely on armbands, floating toys, inner tubes, or other devices to keep children safe.
- Teach children to swim, but never leave them unsupervised around water.
- Consider installing water alarms, such as a floating pool alarm or external security beams, to complement the precautions of



AI generated image.

- fencing and supervision.
- Beware of drains. Children must be kept away from pool or jacuzzi drains as hair or

limbs could become trapped in the suction.


- Know who to call in an emergency. Be prepared for any medical emergency with Netcare 911 on 082 911, and download the Netcare app, which includes Netcare 911 emergency call and geolocation functions, as well as a 60-second callback option.

Mande Toubkin, Netcare's general manager of emergency and trauma, transplant and CSI, encourages everyone, especially parents and child carers, to learn basic first aid and CPR. While proper supervision and preventive steps should eliminate the need for emergency intervention, knowing CPR can mean the difference between life and death in a drowning situation. These lifesaving skills are indispensable; their true value is only realised during a crisis, when quick action can save a


child's life.

"Complacency is a major risk factor when we are having fun, and adults can also benefit from a refresher on injury and drowning prevention around water," she points out.

A safety refresher for adults

- Never swim alone.
- Never swim in the sea, dams or rivers at night.
- Avoid swimming while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants.
- When near water, children must always be supervised by a responsible adult who is not distracted.
- At the beach, only swim in designated areas with lifeguards and don't swim far out.
- Remember, swimming in the sea is very different to swimming in a pool or dam, even for experienced swimmers.
- Only dive into a body of water if you can see what is below the surface, and always test the depth first. 

BASIC CPR TECHNIQUE:

- Shout for help.
- Loudly call the person's name. If the person is not showing signs of life and not breathing, start hands-on CPR
- Ensure someone has called the emergency services, such as Netcare 911 on 082 911 or via the Netcare app.
- The Netcare 911 call centre will assist you to do CPR.
- Do not put the person in a car and rush them to hospital as valuable time is wasted not doing CPR.
- With the patient on a firm, flat surface, kneel next to the person.
- For adult patients, interlace the fingers and, using both hands, pump hard and fast in the centre of the chest. For adults, hands-only CPR may be used.
- For child patients, place one hand in the centre of the chest and begin single-handed chest compressions, hard and fast. After 30 compressions, tilt the head back, and give two rescue breaths into the child's mouth of one second each.
- For babies, use only two fingers for chest compressions, depressing the chest approximately 3.5cm. After 30 compressions, tilt the head back and give two rescue breaths of one second each, allowing the previous breath of air to escape before giving the next.
- Repeat chest compressions, allowing the chest to rise between each compression.
- Continue hands-only CPR until help arrives or the patient becomes responsive or shows signs of life, such as breathing or coughing. 

If you have never performed CPR before and encounter a medical emergency in South Africa, immediately call the national emergency number 112 from a cellphone or 10177 from a landline

Understanding Albinism: Health, Myths, and the Power of Awareness and Support

Awareness information from
Government Employees Medical Scheme

Albinism is one of the most misunderstood conditions in the world, especially in Africa, where myths, stigma, and discrimination still cast long shadows over people living with it. Yet behind the misconceptions lies a simple scientific truth and a powerful human story of resilience, courage, and beauty in diversity.

What Is Albinism?

Albinism is a rare, genetically inherited condition that affects people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. It occurs when a person is born without enough melanin—the pigment that gives colour to the skin, hair, and eyes. The condition is caused by gene mutations that reduce or completely stop melanin production.

There are two main types:

- Oculocutaneous albinism (OCA): affects the skin, hair, and eyes.
- Ocular albinism (OA): affects mainly the eyes.

People with albinism often have very light skin and hair and may experience visual challenges such as:

- Sensitivity to light
- Reduced sharpness or blurred vision
- Nystagmus (involuntary eye movement)
- Strabismus (crossed eyes)

Despite these challenges, albinism does not affect intelligence, personality, or lifespan. With proper care and support, people with albinism can lead full, active, and successful lives.

Health Challenges Linked to Albinism

Because melanin protects the skin and eyes from ultraviolet (UV) rays, the absence of it brings specific health risks.

1. Skin Health Risks:

Without melanin, the skin burns easily and is more prone to sun damage and skin



AI produced photo of a person living with Albinism.

cancer. Regular use of sunscreen with a high SPF, wide-brimmed hats, and protective clothing is essential.

2. Eye and Vision Challenges:

Many people with albinism experience poor eyesight or sensitivity to bright light. Regular eye check-ups and using sunglasses or vision aids can greatly improve comfort and visibility.

3. Psychosocial Impact:

The stigma and social discrimination often faced by

people with albinism can cause emotional distress, anxiety, or depression. Support from family, friends, and mental health professionals is crucial for self-esteem and emotional well-being.

Common Myths and Misconceptions

Unfortunately, albinism has long been surrounded by harmful myths and cultural superstitions, especially in African societies. These false beliefs can lead to rejection, isolation, and even violence.

- **Myth 1:** Albinism is a curse or



Albinism is a classic autosomal recessive Mendelian disorder caused by inherited gene mutations at a single gene locus, which results in a lack of pigmentation production by the cell. (AI produced photo of a person living with Albinism).

punishment.

Truth: Albinism is purely genetic and not caused by witchcraft or spiritual forces.

- **Myth 2:** People with albinism bring bad luck.

Truth: There is no scientific or spiritual evidence to support this. Such beliefs only deepen social exclusion.

- **Myth 3:** Body parts of people with albinism have magical powers.

Truth: This dangerous superstition has tragically led to ritual killings and trafficking. Every person deserves protection and dignity.

- **Myth 4:** People with albinism cannot live normal lives.

Truth: With awareness, protection from the sun, and proper care, they can work, study, play sports, and pursue any dream like anyone else.

The Human Face of Albinism

Behind every story of discrimination stands a person striving to be seen for who they truly are. Many people with albinism have risen above prejudice to become

symbols of strength and pride.

From international advocates like Josephat Torner of Tanzania to South Africa's own Thando Hopa, a lawyer and model who has graced global fashion platforms, people with albinism continue to challenge stereotypes and redefine beauty standards. Across the continent, organisations such as Under the Same Sun and the Albinism Society of South Africa are fighting for awareness, inclusion, and human rights.

Caring for Your Health and Well-being for those living with albinism

If you are living with albinism, caring for your skin, eyes, and mental well-being is vital.

Sun Protection Tips

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) daily.
- Wear protective clothing and wide-brimmed hats when

outdoors.

- Avoid direct sunlight between 10 am and 3 pm.

Eye Care

- Get regular eye check-ups.
- Wear sunglasses or prescription glasses with UV protection.
- Use magnifiers or sit closer to blackboards or screens if you have reduced vision.

Skin Monitoring

- Visit a dermatologist regularly.
- Check your skin for unusual moles or spots. Early detection can prevent skin cancer.

Emotional Support

- Talk to trusted family or friends about your feelings.
- Join support groups or counselling programmes.
- Celebrate your individuality and achievements—confidence is the best protection against stigma.

How You Can Support People with Albinism


Creating an inclusive society begins with awareness and compassion.

Here's how everyone can help:

- Learn and share accurate information about albinism.
- Challenge and correct myths or jokes that spread stigma.
- Encourage schools and workplaces to be inclusive and accommodating.
- Donate sunscreen, sunglasses, or vision aids to local support groups.
- Speak out against discrimination and violence.

Seeing Beyond the Surface

People with albinism are not defined by their condition, but by their humanity, talent, and dreams. With understanding and inclusion, society can replace fear with empathy and prejudice with respect.

In the end, embracing people with albinism is about more than awareness, it is about affirming that beauty, strength, and dignity exist in every shade of human diversity. 

Paracetamol, Popular Supplements and your Liver Pharmacist Warns of Often Unknown Dangers

Information and photo courtesy of Martina Nicholson Associates

Pharmacist Ms Thembeke Gule warns, “Just because something is labelled ‘natural’ does not mean it is risk-free, and easy access does not guarantee safety. The liver does the heavy lifting, processing everything we put into our bodies. However, when it gets overloaded, the fallout can be serious.”

Just because natural supplements are widely available does not mean they are harmless. Many over-the-counter medicines and natural products are marketed as safe, but some common ingredients, especially when taken in high doses, combined with other substances, or mixed with alcohol, can seriously damage the liver.

“Paracetamol toxicity is a major concern in South Africa and around the world because it is widely available and is not as strictly regulated. As a result, anyone can get paracetamol without medical intervention, which makes overdoses and misuse all too common. The danger increases when paracetamol is taken with alcohol or other medications that strain the liver, raising the risk of liver damage.

“These substances are all metabolised or detoxified by the liver and compete for the same detox pathways. When alcohol or other liver-stressing medicines overwhelm these pathways, it can lead to overdose. Since alcohol and many prescription drugs are also broken down by the liver, taking them alongside paracetamol or similar compounds can overload the system and significantly increase the chance of liver injury,” explains Ms Gule.

Herbal and dietary supplements are not without risk

Gule points out that concentrated extracts can strain the liver, especially in large doses, all at once, or mixed with other supplements or



Pharmacist, Ms Thembeke Gule.

medicines.


Take turmeric, for example, which is often praised as a natural remedy for inflammation and liver support. The turmeric extract, rich in curcumin, is valued because curcumin’s antioxidant properties can help reduce liver damage and eliminate fat from the liver. But turmeric can flip from being helpful to potentially harmful, especially when combined with black pepper extract, which boosts curcumin absorption. “Patients with pre-existing liver conditions, or any liver problems, should avoid high doses of turmeric and curcumin extract supplements and discuss any concerns with a healthcare professional,” says Ms Gule.

Green tea extract is hugely popular in weight-loss supplements, but it is not without risks. Unlike regular brewed green tea, these extracts pack a much higher dose of EGCG (epigallocatechin gallate) and other catechins, which pose a high risk to the liver. The increased concentration of EGCG, especially when taken in high doses, can overwhelm the pathway in the liver that detoxifies these compounds, causing the accumulation of toxic by-products that harm the liver.

Ashwagandha is known for easing stress by lowering cortisol, the hormone that controls your body’s stress response. The decreased cortisol levels help calm you down, but it is essential to follow the dosing instructions on the packaging insert, which will vary according to the strength of the product in the package. Because ashwagandha is metabolised by the liver, it can increase the risk of liver failure. In rare but severe cases, this has led to acute liver failure, sometimes requiring transplantation, mainly

when used with other supplements that are metabolised by the liver. “Ashwagandha is generally well-tolerated when taken for short periods. It is best to avoid long-term use unless advised by a healthcare professional. Individuals with pre-existing medical conditions are advised to consult their doctor or HCP before taking this supplement,” Ms Gule advises.

Garcinia cambogia is popular for weight loss due to its active ingredient, hydroxycitric acid. The evidence linking hydroxycitric acid to liver damage is limited and controversial, especially when combined with other fat burners, even though there have been rare cases of liver injury reported with its long-term consumption or when taken in high doses. Garcinia cambogia should be taken with caution, especially by people with pre-existing liver conditions or those taking other supplements.

Red yeast rice contains a naturally occurring statin called monacolin K, which may help lower blood cholesterol levels. However, it is often taken without consulting a healthcare professional, which can lead to inconsistent dosing, raising the risk of liver damage. 

Inflict No Harm to the Image of God!

Message By Cpln Tshepiso Moreosele,
Chaplain Service Division

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” – Genesis 1:27 (NRSV)

While we put our energy and effort to serve our country and support our leaders, we are faced with unfortunate incidents that have a negative influence on our current lives. The killing of women and children around the world raises great concern and threatens our cause to build a united and peaceful nation.

As the SANDF, we are not immune to the challenges facing our society today. Gender-based violence continues to plague our communities, and it calls for every soldier to reflect deeply on the divine responsibility entrusted to us as protectors of life and peace.

I therefore plead with men on this day: use your power to love and to protect our daughters, our sisters, our mothers, and all women. We are one force — abuse and violence against women is not our culture and has no place in the SANDF. We are reminded from the very beginning of creation that every human being, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, language, or sexual orientation, is created in the image of God.

All of us are created in the image of God — Imago Dei. The Imago Dei has nothing to do with how an individual looks from the outside; it refers to the inherent qualities that all humans share with God: rationality, intelligence, self-awareness, morality, and the possession of a soul. We are mirrors of God’s divine qualities on earth, distinct from all other creation, having the ability to make choices through free will.



Cpln Tshepiso Moreosele.

As servants of this beloved country, let us make deliberate choices to reflect the image of God in all that we do. Violence, discrimination, and abuse tarnish that image. When we inflict harm on others, we destroy the reflection of God within them and within ourselves.

If there is God in us, we ought to love one another because God is love. (1 John 4:8) If we cannot live together in peace as children of God, we will perish as sinners. Let us allow the original Spirit of God that is within us to lead us not our human-created spirit that brings forth hate, killing of women and children, abuse of power, corruption, and all injustices confronting us today.

It is upon us to take our Defence Force to embark on journey greatness! It all starts by reclaiming our true image, not the image we have created about ourselves

through pride, anger, or prejudice, but the one God has given us from creation. We are in this world but not of this world.

You are the image of God. No one has seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us. (1 John 4:12)

INFLICT NO HARM TO THE IMAGE OF GOD!

Prayer

Lord, we thank You for creating us in Your own image.

When the world calls us black and white, women and men, boys and girls, people and people with disabilities, homosexual and heterosexual, us and them — yet You love all of us.

O God, You see Your own image in each of us.

Bless us today to love one another more dearly, to protect the vulnerable, to honour Your image in every human being.

Amen. 

South African National Defence Force

Always Combat Ready



defence

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Defence
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

