

THE AIR FORCE RESERVE SQUADRONS

In 1963 the concept of reservist air squadrons, long advocated by the Aircraft Owners' and Pilots' Association of South Africa, became a reality. Twelve squadrons, (101 to 112), all manned by civilian volunteers using their own or hired aircraft were formed to undertake communication flights, air reconnaissance for police and army units, supply and message dropping and light transport flights. In October 1968 they became substantive South African Air Force units under the then Light Aircraft Command and were located at strategic points in the Republic. In January 1976 a special women's squadron was added. Members were required to hold at least a Private Pilot's Licence, have a minimum of 500 hours flying experience, to hold an Instrument Rating, and be the owner or have guaranteed use of a suitable aircraft.

Subsequent down-sizing measures brought about the disbanding of some of these units, but several of their members were absorbed into the other squadrons. Their collective name underwent several changes during this time, but today they are known as the Air Force Reserve Squadrons and are located in regional (provincial) context as nine separate Air Force Reserve units as follows:

Air Force Reserve Squadron	Base	Officers Commanding
101	AFB Hoedspruit	Lt Col F. Boshoff
102	AFB Makhado	Lt Col W.J. Roux
104	AFB Waterkloof	Lt Col M.J. Roets
105	AFB Durban	Lt Col A.J. Clarke
106	AFB Bloemspruit	Lt Col L. Wiese
107	AFB Bloemspruit	Lt Col J. Human
108	AFS Port Elizabeth	Lt E. le Roux (Acting)
110	AFB Ysterplaat	Lt Col J.J. L. van Zyl
111	AFB Waterkloof	Lt Col R.J. Mossom

The Air Force Reserve Squadrons are an integral part of the South African Air Force. The additional resources that they bring to the SAAF are invaluable and include aircraft ranging from small two-seater aircraft to executive jets which have on many occasions been used to transport the President and other local or foreign dignitaries. Members of these squadrons come from all walks of life and respond to calls 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

To qualify for membership of such squadrons, at least a Commercial Licence with an instrument rating is currently required, but many of the present members hold flying qualifications far in excess of this. They are also expected to be the owner, or have guaranteed use, of a suitable aircraft.

Most of the present flying done by these squadrons embraces VIP transportation, operational support to the Air Force by way of internal and external light transport flights, borderline and maritime reconnaissance, and humanitarian support. They are expected to be proficient up to SAAF standards, and to ensure this, these units follow strict formal training programs, usually over weekends. Last year those Squadrons flew some 2850 hours.

The members of the Air Force Reserve Squadrons, as both soldiers and citizens, can therefore be relied on in times of war and peace to make twice the contribution to their country.

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24 May 2010