

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE MEDIA
THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE (SANDF)
THE RESERVE FORCE (RES F)

BACKGROUND

The Minister of Defence and Military Veterans (MOD & MV) has identified the ongoing revitalisation of the Reserve Force as a ministerial priority and has articulated Government's assessment of the importance of this capability. The MOD & MV has since issued a directive to the Chief of the SANDF to plan accordingly. The Ministerial priority, as confirmed in the Defence Budget Vote debate during March 2011, is described as follows:

“The Reserves must be transformed and revitalised so that they can fulfil their primary role of providing the majority of the conventional landward capability of the SANDF, whilst at the same time supplementing the peace support missions conducted by the Regulars. The Reserve strategy must be finalised and fully implemented.”

THE CURRENT DEFENCE POLICY: THE “ONE-FORCE” POLICY

To execute the Defence mandate, South Africa pursues a “One Force” approach in which the three components of Defence, more specifically the Regulars (full time uniform), the Reserves (part time uniform) and the civilian component, constitute an integrated Defence Force.

The Reserves provide Defence with affordable additional surge capacity as and when required. All defence structures that must be able to expand more rapidly than normal recruiting will allow, have an appropriate Reserve component.

The “One Force” gives equal prominence to the role of the Regulars, the Reserves and the civilian components and acknowledges that the three components are integrally reliant on each other for their existence and success in operations as ordered by Government. The standard of training of the Reserves is at least equal to that of the Regulars.

ROLE OF THE RESERVE FORCE

The role of the Reserve Force is currently described as:

- a. to augment the Regulars in ongoing internal and external operations including peace support operations, border safeguarding, support to the people including the developmental agenda of Government and proposed National Key Point protection,
- b. to provide part of the core defence capability,
- c. to provide the expansion capability of the SANDF for major combat operations,
- d. to provide certain specialist and scarce skills to the DOD,
- e. to enhance the relationship between Defence and the public and private sectors.

SOURCES OF RESERVES

The Reserve Force is sourced from the following areas.

- Currently, through the Military Skills Development Programme (MSDS) on completion of basic military training after two years. A separate dedicated military intake system for the Reserves has been approved, called the Reserve Development System (RDS) for the Reserves according to Service requirements. Recruitment is decentralised and done by Reserve Units/Management Centres and is based on an individual's motivation and passion and not on seeking employment. Selection is centralised and in accordance with Service specific profile requirements.
- The University Reserve Training Programme (URTP), which was piloted at two tertiary institutions, is currently being expanded with a view to providing under-graduates with an opportunity to qualify themselves as officers upon graduation. The URTP, conducted by Services according to their specific requirements, provides members and leaders with professional or technical skills to the SANDF.
- Focussed direct recruitment by Units/Management Centres according to Service requirements. This includes individuals who participated in Service specific Youth Development Programmes. These members are trained and developed on a decentralised basis under the auspices of the corps schools to ensure training outcome standards.
- Members from the former forces who volunteer to serve in the Reserves.
- Former SANDF Regular Force members who leave and volunteer to serve in the Reserves.
- Professionally qualified specialists who volunteer to serve in the Reserves.

RESERVE FORCE UTILISATION

It is important to note how the different Services utilise their Reserves differently according to their unique requirements. The current Reserve strength has increased to 26 000 of which approximately 85% are from the previously disadvantaged groups. Some 14 500 Reserve Force members are utilised or called-up per year.

The bulk of the SA Army members called up and successfully utilised for operations, are members who were recruited by their respective Reserve Force Units and trained by those units on a decentralised basis under the control of force preparation centres of excellence.

Reserve Force utilisation in the last few years has made a significant contribution to job creation as most of the members called up were otherwise un-employed. It is important to mention that the Defence Act was amended to make it compulsory for the Reserves to respond to call-ups not only in times of war but also in times of national need. This has provided the ability to invest in the development of the Reserves.

RESERVE FORCE DEPLOYMENTS

In support of our role of "Safeguarding South Africa for a better life for all"; the utilisation of the Reserves in external deployments in support of the UN and AU peace missions, peace support operations, on the continent has increased. The Reserves have been successfully deployed in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan. The Reserves are also deployed internally to safeguard our borders where they are achieving success. The Reserves were also extensively utilised during the 2010 Soccer World Cup event and are continuously providing support to the people. There are also Reserves deployed at the Department of Home Affairs.

THE DEFENCE PROVINCIAL LIAISON COUNCILS (DPLCs)

The SANDF, under the auspices of Chief Defence Reserves, has recently established the Defence Provincial Liaison Councils (DPLCs) through the nodal offices of Defence Reserves in the provinces. The ultimate objective of these DPLCs is to create awareness, a clear understanding and knowledge of the Reserve Force service system and to engender employer support for the Reserve Service System (in particular from employers), so as to increase the number of volunteers joining the Reserves in the respective provinces.

The DPLC membership comprises of influential people from industry, NGOs, academia and traditional leaders. These councils will not only promote Reserve service but will also provide the SANDF with feedback on the workings of the Reserve Service System. There are currently seven (7) Defence Provincial Liaison Councils that have been established.

HOW TO JOIN THE RESERVES

There are two categories in which volunteers can join the Reserves, namely:

- Category 1. Volunteers without previous military training or service
- Category 2. Volunteers with previous military service

How to join the Reserve Force without previous military training of service:

- Through the Military Skills Development System (MSDS), young people with a grade 12 qualification, between the ages of 18 and 26 and who meet the requirements, as set out further down on this page, can join the SANDF through this system and eventually become members of the Reserve.
- At certain academic institutions registered students studying towards a degree or a post graduate or equivalent qualification, can join the Reserves through the University Reserve Training Programme (URTP).
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- Prospective volunteers with professional qualifications or scarce skills and or capabilities required by the military can be accommodated in the Reserves. As these volunteers are recruited mainly for utilisation within their professional qualifications, the age restrictions are more lenient than in the MSDS and URTP.

How to join the Reserve Force when you have previous military training:

- Volunteers who have previously done military service in the statutory or non-statutory forces can apply to join the Reserve Force.
- You will need to have your original force number and complete the necessary application forms for appointment in the Reserves.

The Requirements for both categories to join the Reserve Force are as follows:

- New applicants must be between the ages of 18 and 26 years (the allocated age varies according to the category of training/service) when joining for the first time. This age band does not apply to applicants with professional or skilled qualifications.

- Applicants must pass the prescribed medical and psychometric tests for appointment in a specific post or entrance to a specific training programme.
- Applicants must sign the prescribed voluntary service contract (usually for a period of five years) and be prepared to render service when required in terms of the Defence Act and the General Regulations of the SANDF.
- If employed, the applicant's employer must be willing to grant special leave for military activities within reasonable demands.
- Applicants must have no military or civilian criminal record.

Conditions for appointment

- Availability of a vacant post.
- Medical fitness (applicants will have to undergo the prescribed SANDF military health examination).
- A clean criminal record.
- The successful completion of psychometric tests and appearance before a selection board (when necessary for certain appointments, eg, officer's appointments).

DEFENCE RESERVES WEBSITE

The Defence Reserves website, www.rfdiv.co.za which is active and gets updated on a daily basis contains more information.

With the significant progress that the Reserves have made and the commitment that they have shown; it can be concluded that the Reserves are indeed a force to be reckoned on.