



CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE REVIEW OF 2012: PROBLEMS, PROGRESS, AND PROSPECTS

Policy advisory dialogue

**held by the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town,
South Africa, on behalf of the Defence Review Committee**

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11

POLICY BRIEF

Introduction

In July 2011, an independent committee was appointed by the South African Minister of Defence, Lindiwe Sisulu, to undertake a review and update of national defence policy in compliance with the requirements of a Defence White Paper issued in 1996.

The Defence Review Committee issued a 423-page draft report in April 2012, and scheduled a series of public *imbizos* and meetings with interested parties and experts across South Africa to consult and seek public consensus on this first review of national defence policy since 1998. About 75 academics, civil society leaders, military experts, and diplomats were convened by the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) in Cape Town, South Africa, to discuss the document, which was described as a “constitution for the defence force’s future” by the committee’s chair, former South African Minister of Defence (1991-1992), Roelf Meyer. After the nation-wide consultation, a revised draft of the report was scheduled to be submitted to Parliament for approval in August 2012.

The draft *South African Defence Review 2012* aims to support goals set by the national government and proposes a “fundamental shift” from the priorities of the previous review in 1998, which focused on the integration of forces from the former South African army and the African National Congress’s (ANC) *Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)* after democratic rule was established in 1994; and the normalisation of security relations in Southern Africa following the wars and destabilisation efforts of the apartheid regime against the frontline states which resulted in an estimated one million deaths and \$60 billion in damage in the 1980s.

The document describes “growing” regional and domestic responsibilities that need to be shouldered by South Africa’s military. In addition to addressing core concerns about protecting national interests and ensuring proper accountability of the armed forces to government, the 2012 review also highlights the military’s regional role in peacekeeping missions in Africa; Tshwane’s broader foreign policy response to the African “strategic environment”; the role of the armed forces in the policing of national borders and the provision of support to civil authorities in times of crisis; and the role that the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) can play in contributing to the country as a “developmental state”.

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SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIERS BASED IN DARFUR, SUDAN, WHILE SERVING WITH THE AFRICAN UNION/UNITED NATIONS HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR (UNAMID), GO ON PATROL NEAR KUTUM ON 3 AUGUST 2010.

Image source - Military Photos.net
<http://www.militaryphotos.net/forums/showthread.php?p=64954-South-African-National-Defence-Force/page184>

1. Peacekeeping in Africa

The draft defence review emphasises South Africa’s political and economic integration into Southern African and African bodies that has led to “a vibrant engagement of the newly established regional and continental security architecture”, including the Southern African Development Community’s (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (OPDSC), and the African Union’s (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC). The document acknowledges that the United Nations (UN) has adopted a “more

assertive” role in African peacekeeping and describes a “conviction that regional and sub-regional organisations must take more responsibility for managing the conflict in their neighbourhoods”. In general, the review recommends that South Africa should pursue a multilateral approach – with SADC, the AU, and the UN – and also forge bilateral partnerships in Africa in order to promote peace, security, and development on the continent. Practically, the review recommends increasing South Africa’s cooperation with, and support for, security and defence agreements and mechanisms with partner nations and regional and continental bodies. It reiterates specific pledges on the level of ground, air, sea, and logistical support to be supplied by South Africa to the SADC Brigade (SADCBRIG), which forms part of the African Standby Force (ASF) for peacekeeping being established under the auspices of the AU. The promised South African military contribution includes two infantry battalions, the supply of a brigade tactical headquarters, and some mortar, engineering, signal, medical, and intelligence support.

Since the last defence review was conducted in 1998, South Africa has undertaken peacekeeping missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 1999 to the present, Burundi (2003-2006), and Sudan’s Darfur region (2004-present). South Africa is in 2012 a member of the SADC security troika, the AU Peace and Security Council, and the UN Security Council. In SADCBRIG, South Africa – like Nigeria in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Brigade (ECOBRIG) – provides key logistical support for the regional military formation, compensating for weaker member states which lack infrastructural capacity. The draft document partly acknowledges South Africa’s larger role in peacekeeping in Africa and decries the “mere one battalion” that was allocated to these efforts in the 1998 review. However, the draft review lacks detail on South Africa’s contribution to SADCBRIG. Members of the defence review committee also acknowledged during the consultation process in May 2012 that the country’s pledge of troops to SADCBRIG had been scaled down.

The draft document further fails to explain properly the division of labour between the UN and Africa’s regional organisations, as well as between the AU and Africa’s sub-regional bodies. Tensions have risen in both sets of relationships. The powerful UN Security Council has sometimes tried to shirk its peacekeeping responsibilities in Africa (for example in Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia, and Darfur) and to shift its peacekeeping burden to Africa’s under-resourced regional organisations. The review’s call for Africa’s regional organisations to take greater responsibility for peacekeeping on the continent thus risks absolving the UN from shouldering this burden.

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Tsepi Motumi, Director-General in the Department of Military Veterans, has said that civilian police (CIVPOL) activities have been increasingly integrated into peacekeeping missions since the 1990s and now represent an invaluable component. The new draft fails to address this important issue adequately. Nor does it consider how national armed forces weakened by HIV/AIDS can be integrated most effectively into regional peacekeeping efforts. An estimated 23 percent of the South African military is infected with the virus.

2. The African “Strategic Environment”

The draft review emphasises the centrality of Africa to South Africa’s foreign policy and refers to the developmental challenges facing the country, the region, and the continent, as well as global economic and political inequalities between North and South that need to be redressed. It acknowledges that most future conflicts will continue to be intra- rather than inter-state and ascribes this to widespread poverty, underdevelopment, and poor governance. However, its analysis focuses less on such “soft” security matters that are of concern to developing countries and more on “hard” issues such as “ethnic and religious extremism”; terrorism; weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and international crime that are prioritised by rich countries. In an increasingly globalised economy, the draft report foresees a “new scramble for Africa”. It also envisages technological might and private security companies playing a greater role in the “African battle space”.

Contrary to the draft review, it is highly unlikely that Western or other states would seek actually to wage wars to obtain resources and territory in Africa. The draft document also lacks in-depth analysis, particularly in separating the root causes of conflicts from their manifestation. It fails to detail practical steps that can be taken to engage the military in addressing the human security issues that it highlights. Instead of focusing attention on the imagined threat of rapacious foreign powers, the draft review should instead focus more on post-conflict peacebuilding, since over a third of all conflict countries in the post-Cold War era have relapsed into war as a result of inadequate reconstruction efforts.

Furthermore, the draft review’s examination of the “hard” security issues is incomplete: for example, North and East Africa are identified as areas of terrorist threats, but West African countries like Nigeria and Mali are also increasingly important in this regard. In general, the document adopts a largely Euro- and America-centric world view that looks increasingly outdated in the light of the rise of China, Brazil, and India – and South Africa’s own membership of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, China, India, South Africa) bloc, which represents 42 percent of the world’s population and 20 percent of its economic power.

The draft further downplays the destabilising role of private South African security firms in African conflicts, and contains little analysis of the reasons given for military interventions in Africa, such as the controversial “responsibility to protect” (R2P) concept under which the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) justified its military action in Libya in 2011.

3. Border Protection and Public Order

The draft review recommends a new approach to border control, claiming that as many as 15 percent of immigrants to South Africa are entering the country illegally, and emphasising that security vulnerabilities along borders and at ports will be exploited by international criminal gangs and, possibly, terrorists. The document calls for a greater role for the military in protecting

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AFRICAN UNION (AU) PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN SOMALIA DISTRIBUTE SUPPLIES OF MOSQUITO NETS AND MEDICINE AT A CAMP FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (IDPs), SOUTH OF THE CAPITAL OF MOGADISHU ON 24 AUGUST 2011.

Image source - Medical Daily
Photo - Feisal Omar/Reuters
<http://www.medicaldaily.com/news/20111213/8244/malaria-world-health-organization-mosquito-africa-mortality.htm>

South Africa's borders to prevent illegal immigration, reversing the position adopted in 1998, when SANDF withdrew from supporting the police in border operations. The draft also notes that the South African navy has a key role to play in combating increasing piracy.

SANDF's new mandate to help to control immigration limits its engagement to within 10 kilometres of the country's borders. However, the draft review lacks detail on how South Africa's military and police forces should cooperate with each other to fulfill this mandate. South African civil society representatives raised the need to consult properly with all concerned – particularly people living on the borders. The draft review was further criticised for adopting rhetoric that could be perceived to be criminalising immigrants from other African countries and for failing to address the issue of xenophobia in South Africa effectively.

The draft review also considers the threats posed to human security in South Africa by crime and growing violent social unrest. It foresees a limited public-order role for the military – in emergencies and on a case-by-case basis – in assisting the police. However, the report lacks detail on the criteria for, and the extent and nature of, such interventions. The government should prioritise interventions to stem poverty rather than armed action to control social unrest. The policy document acknowledges that the proposed public order mandate has "important implications" for the other domestic role proposed for the armed forces – to create "an enabling environment for development" – but fails to analyse what these implications might be.

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AFTER A WAVE OF XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE WAS UNLEASHED IN GAUTENG, RESIDENTS AT THE RAMAPHOSA INFORMAL SETTLEMENT TRY TO SALVAGE BUILDING MATERIAL BEFORE THE BLAZE OVERTAKES THEM ON 20 MAY 2008.

Image source - Mail & Guardian Online
Photo - Paul Botes, M&G
<http://photos.mg.co.za/original/0.33575300%20121297672.jpg>

4. The Developmental State

The draft *South African Defence Review 2012* is subtitled, "Defence, Security and Development", and advocates a role for the military in support of the South African "developmental state" – the harnessing of national resources to the benefit of the population. The report outlines the importance of the SANDF in safeguarding national security – for example, by protecting the country's 50 million inhabitants from attack. Beyond that, the review's proposals for the engagement of the armed forces in promoting a "developmental state" are limited to addressing: the virtues of military service in socialising and educating young adults and enhancing the national skills-base; the economic benefits that might flow from military procurements to local businesses and national industry; and the support that military engineers and medical staff, as well as the air force, can sometimes provide for civilian projects.

However, the report lacks sufficient substantive detail in this area with its authors acknowledging that they were unable to access the appropriate papers on developmental state policy which are held by government departments outside the defence portfolio. The South African National Defence Union (SANDU) called for the review to promote new leadership of the armed forces, including a capable human resources director, and to offer proper opportunities for development to recruits. There was also a call to



diversify the staffing of SANDF, particularly at the middle level which is still dominated by former members of the apartheid army. Military academy staff members stressed the importance of strengthening the institutions that train the country's soldiers. Campaigners against the R30 billion arms deal that the South African government struck in 1999 with Western arms manufacturers, argued that national development would be best served by tearing up that contract, returning the equipment, and claiming a refund on the grounds that the suppliers had failed to deliver promised multi-billion rand "offsets" guaranteeing work and services to South Africans. These campaigners also recommended closing state arms supplier Denel, which they characterised as a drain on the public purse, and regarded the defence review, in part, as an attempt to legitimise the arms deal. Another view argued that Denel created much-needed jobs for South Africa. It was further noted that the draft review remains almost completely silent on the issue of gender; and the review committee has acknowledged the need to consult with women's groups on this important issue.

Recommendations

Ten key recommendations emerged from the policy advisory dialogue:

1. The review's definition of national interest is too broad and should be narrowed to focus on ensuring the security and prosperity of South Africa and Africa, as well as enhancing the continent's role and influence in global security, political, and economic affairs;
2. In line with South Africa's unique peacekeeping responsibilities as a regional hegemon, the new defence policy should place greater emphasis on the country's obligation to promote regional security, and mandate sufficient capacity accordingly;
3. The Romano Prodi report on peacekeeping submitted to the UN in 2008 recommended that the world body fund and then take charge of regional peacekeeping missions in Africa after six months. The new defence review should stress the need for peacekeeping operations to be ultimately placed under UN command, based on lessons learned by South Africa during AU missions in Burundi and Darfur which were eventually taken over by the UN in 2004 and 2007 respectively;
4. Countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are the main contributors to UN peacekeeping and have often benefitted from reimbursements from the world body in maintaining their equipment. The draft review should thus engage with the potential benefits from peacekeeping rather than just its costs;

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11

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“The report should detail the military’s proposed role in relation to the “developmental state” so that the public and experts can comment properly on this key goal”



THE SOUTH AFRICAN NAVY REVIEWS FLEET NEEDS AS ANTI-PIRACY PATROLS HIGHLIGHT CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS IN MARCH 2012.

Image source - Africa Defence Journal
<http://africadefensejournal.wordpress.com>

5. The review should analyse more fully the justification and motives for external interventions in African conflicts, particularly those led by Western powers;
6. The report should focus more attention on post-conflict peacebuilding and seek to allocate more resources to this vital area to ensure that demobilised fighters have alternatives to conflict. The role of the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) will also be critical in promoting effective peacebuilding, and this should be fleshed out in the review;
7. South Africa could continue the trilateral cooperation it has undertaken with external donors such as Sweden, the Netherlands, and Belgium in the Great Lakes region to leverage more resources for peacebuilding in African conflict zones;
8. New policy should recommend clear limits on the role of private military companies in Africa, including regulation of such firms by the South African government;
9. The report should address the need to synchronise operational procedures between military and police staff both in peacekeeping interventions and domestic actions to maintain public order. Within South Africa, the review should specify the terms and conditions of the military’s role in maintaining public order, paying particular attention to formulating appropriate responses to outbreaks of xenophobic violence; and
10. The report should detail the military’s proposed role in relation to the “developmental state” so that the public and experts can comment properly on this key goal of national defence policy, and the review can claim fully the popular mandate that it seeks.