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## THE CRITICAL COMPONENT: PERSONNEL STRATEGIES FOR THE SANDF TO 2000 AND BEYOND

by

James Higgs



THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
INSTITUTE OF  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
Established 1934

**The Critical Component:  
Personnel Strategies for the SANDF to 2000 and  
Beyond**

James Higgs

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Beyond**

James Higgs  
Director of Studies  
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THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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# Abstract

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This report contains the findings of a research project which examined the way in which the personnel strategies in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF ) are organised. A number of recommendations are made which are aimed at securing efficient, effective and democratically legitimate armed forces for South Africa. Section Four sets out the recommendations in the areas of: a public relations strategy for the SANDF ; the conditions of service which govern employment of personnel; a plan for retaining key personnel; a strategy for the adjustment of pay structures; a review of race representivity plans for the SANDF ; a strategy for reducing internal tension while reinforcing cultural identity and diversity; an overview of the rationalisation and retrenchment plans; observations on the health and fitness of the SANDF personnel; recommendations for increased efficiency in the administrative process and for the review of the current structure of support functions.

# Acknowledgments

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Many people who cannot be named have been supportive during the course of this research, and to them I owe a great debt of gratitude. Among those whom I can thank publicly, there are: Richard Morgan and Brigadier Murray Wildman of the British High Commission; Patricia Hewitson of the Australian High Commission; Major-General Joan van der Poel of the Directorate of Personnel, SANDF ; Major-General Jackie Sedibe, Director of Equal Opportunities, SANDF ; Major-General Andrew Masondo, Director of Corporate Communications, SANDF ; Lindy Heinecken of the Military Academy at Saldanha; Rear Admiral (JG) Peter Keene, Officer Commanding Naval Base, Simon's Town; Rear Admiral (JG) Jack Nel, Transformation Programme Director, South African Navy; Commander Chris Mertz, Training Commander *SAS Saldanha*; Dr Ian Hamill of the British Defence Advisory Team; the members of the British Military Advisory and Training Team, Pretoria; and Major-General (Retd.) Deon Mortimer; Dr Garth Shelton and Dr Philip Frankel of the University of the Witwatersrand.

The assistance of my colleagues at SAIIA with earlier drafts was greatly appreciated. In particular, Dr Greg Mills and Professor Martin Edmonds have been most helpful, and Anne Katz, André Snyders, Pippa Lange and particularly Nicola Prins have been instrumental in making it less imperfect than it would otherwise have been. The faults, of course, are my responsibility.

## ***Dedication***

*This report is dedicated to its subject; the men and women of the South African National Defence Force who are building the armed forces for the future.*

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 The Background

It can hardly be overemphasised that the creation of the SANDF has been one of the great success stories of the modern South Africa, and that major progress has been made in the transformation of this critical area of public service. Inevitably, a study of this kind will focus on the work that is still to be done, but it is worth paying tribute at the outset to the determination, commitment and sheer effort of the SANDF personnel who have made it their business to play a part in the long, difficult and sometimes frustrating process of building a Defence Force of which South Africa can be proud.

However, substantial questions remain about the tasks which it will be expected to fulfil, its budgetary allocations, its personnel structures and the equipment procurement programme.

This study seeks to address the following questions:

- To set the context in which the SANDF operates and to outline the approach of the study.
- To examine the stated rationale for the SANDF .
- To assess the challenges posed by the creation of the SANDF .
- To report on the current status of the personnel organisation in the SANDF .
- To extract and analyse the lessons which can be learnt from the experience of other armed forces.
- To define the issues which need to be addressed by a personnel strategy for the SANDF .

*This study aimed to provide policy recommendations that can make a constructive contribution to the debate about the future of the SANDF . Originally, the intention was that a number of case studies would be used to extract useful lessons for South Africa. This proved unworkable both because the details furnished by a full case-study would have been too discrepant from South Africa's circumstances to be helpful<sup>1</sup> and because, in certain cases, the relevant information was unavailable. Accordingly, comparative information used on occasion to illustrate a point or clarify an issue is derived mainly from the British Armed Forces. This study focusses exclusively on the full-time component of the SANDF.*

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<sup>1</sup>For more information on demobilisation in Angola, Chad, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Uganda and Zimbabwe see the executive summary of the World Bank Discussion Paper, *Demobilisation and Reintegration of Military Personnel in Africa* , reprinted in Cilliers, J (ed.), *Dismissed: Demobilisation and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Africa*, Institute for Defence Policy, 1996.

## 1.2 The Context

The 1990s have been a time of drastic change for the SANDF. Not only have they been faced with the radical downsizing and restructuring which have confronted many major actors in response to the end of the Cold War, but they have also been required to adapt to the revolution in domestic politics which ended the *apartheid* regime and installed a new government in power under the presidency of Nelson Mandela. The demands placed upon the armed forces have ranged from the integration of tens of thousands of personnel from a variety of statutory (mostly regular) and non-statutory forces (mostly irregular) and to the constitutional re-establishment of democratic control, to requests by other countries for South African participation in peacekeeping missions.

The newly created SANDF has embarked upon an immense task. First, it must attempt to create a common institutional culture which will be both acceptable to personnel drawn from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, and effective as a means of generating the *esprit de corps* upon which fighting forces depend for their unit cohesion. They must also recruit, train and deploy this force at a time when the resources allocated to the defence budget have come under severe pressure from the demands of other areas of government spending. The third aspect of this process of reformation has been to attempt to re-establish the legitimacy of the South Africa's armed forces with those whose treatment by the security forces of the state under the previous regime was what might be described as summary.

On analysing human resource strategies for armed forces, it is helpful to consider the contexts in which they take place and the kinds of models from which the new force structure might be derived.<sup>2</sup> The contexts include the international security environment from which perceived threat or risk is generated and to which it is the primary function of armed forces to respond, the internal circumstances where policy is driven by political, cultural and budgetary factors, and the inherited context in which the traces of previous regimes, policies and programmes are imposed upon contemporary policy-makers.

## 1.3 The International Security Context

If a defence policy is to be considered as the organisation of personnel and resources to threaten or deploy force, then its coherence is dependent on having its priorities clearly defined. In other words, in seeking to explain the reason for the existence of defence forces (and from such reasons, why forces should be structured or scaled in any particular way), foreign policy should be a productive field of enquiry.

The Sub-Council on Foreign Affairs appointed by the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) in 1993, developed an understanding of the political and security factors in the

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<sup>2</sup> See Dandeker C, Edmonds M, Higgs J & F Paton, *Bett and Beyond: A Reaction, Response and Commentary*, Bailrigg Memorandum 23. Centre for Defence and International Security Studies, (CDISS), Lancaster University, 1997.

international environment which was to influence South African interests.<sup>3</sup> The first of these was the recognition of the geopolitical imperative that close linkages would exist between African, Southern African regional interests and those of South Africa. Second, these interests could be threatened by deteriorating relations with neighbouring states caused by cross-border migration, flight of refugees, the transfer of weapons, drugs, and by nationalist, ethnic or extremist movements cascading across international borders. Following on from this assessment was the recognition that there was a need for 'measures to prevent conflict; the monitoring of events; becoming involved in preventive diplomacy; and ways to influence the emergence of a constructive new order on the continent in a positive and significant manner'.<sup>4</sup>

South Africa's Constitution outlined six functions for the SANDF:<sup>5</sup>

- in the defence of the Republic;
- in compliance with international obligations;
- for the preservation of life, health, and property;
- for the provision of essential services;
- for the upholding of law and order; and
- in support of any department of state for social upliftment.

The 1996 Defence White Paper, *Defence in a Democracy*<sup>6</sup>, discusses, amongst other things, the strategic situation within which South Africa must operate, issues of human resources and the structure of civil-military relations. The White Paper comments that South Africa<sup>7</sup>

*... is no longer isolated internationally. It has been welcomed into many international organisations, most importantly the ... UN [United Nations], the OAU [Organisation of African Unity] and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). South Africa is in fact expected to play an active role in these forums, especially with regard to peace and security in Africa and Southern Africa in particular ... South Africa does not now, and will not in the future have aggressive intentions towards any state. It is not confronted by any immediate conventional military threat, and does anticipate external military aggression in the short to medium term (± five years).*

It goes on to note that the 'size, design, structure and budget of the SANDF will therefore be determined by its primary function'.<sup>8</sup> Given a reduction in the defence budget measured as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 1988 and 1996 from 4.7% to 1.6%, spending has been reduced by almost two-thirds in nominal terms. This reduction

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs, *South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document*. Pretoria: DFA, 1996, p.5, cited in Edmonds M & G Mills, *Beyond the Horizon: Defence, Diplomacy and South African Maritime Opportunities*. SAIL/CDISS, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Defence in a Democracy: White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa*. DOD, May 1996.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter Four, *ibid.*. Cited in Mills G, 'The South African National Defence Force: Between Downsizing and New Capabilities?'. Paper delivered at the Australian National University (ANU), 15 January 1998.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*.

may well have been seen by some as an appropriate form of fiscal discipline to impose on a government department whose previously privileged position had enabled it to gain very substantial resources, but the constraints set by this limit make the expensive process of reform particularly demanding for the people who are implementing it.

As an institution with a high profile and a primary task to perform on which the survival of the state may at some point depend, the armed forces have a tremendous responsibility. There are other circumstances, in addition to the state of war, which can test the effectiveness of the military, such as their response to a national crisis, disturbance or hour of need. The conventional wisdom among analysts is that a military threat is not an immediate concern for South Africa. It is to be sincerely hoped that they are correct, but since the lead period for the completion of the processes of transformation which have now been embarked upon may be decades, it would be as well that the task should be started without delay.

#### 1.4 The Internal Context

It is not the purpose of this study to rehearse the evils of the *apartheid* regime, which were many, or to detail the history of the liberation struggle. However, since the majority of the SANDF is made up of those who either defended the old regime or sought to overthrow it, the weight of that history inevitably influences those who plan the future of the SANDF. For many who were involved in the struggle or observed it at close hand, the South African Defence Force (SADF) was inextricably associated with the *apartheid* system. Thus, the formation of the SANDF has been one of the most delicately balanced processes of institution-building that the new government has embarked upon, and one that in some ways represents in microcosm the task that confronts the whole country.

The nature of the balancing act is illustrated by the two entirely distinct and potentially conflicting imperatives for change to which the SANDF has had to respond. First, the social imperative for greater legitimacy has required the integration of eight statutory and non-statutory forces, the development of an institutional culture transformed from an *apartheid* state agency into a more transparent, accountable and representative organisation, and the reduction of the defence budget in line with the domestic priorities of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and, latterly, the fiscal imperatives of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic strategy. Primarily focused on issues concerned with personnel, this process has been dominated by the integration of a regular, white-led, high-technology, conventional force with irregular, guerrilla, predominantly black African, liberation movement troops. Furthermore, such has been the urgency of this process that it has been necessary to conduct the substance of it without waiting for the results of the second component of change, which concerns policy.

There is a functional imperative for the reformulation of foreign and security policy in the light of the end of the Cold War and the reintegration of South Africa into the international system. This has included a search for the appropriate principles to guide defence policy and the attempt to define the force structure and equipment which would be suitable to fulfil foreign policy objectives.

It is useful to note at this stage that the legitimacy of armed forces within democratic systems rests upon a number of pillars.<sup>9</sup> Each of these pillars raises questions about the performance and orientation of armed forces and it is on the consideration of these features that electorates, politicians and opinion leaders will make their judgements about the legitimacy of the institution. The pillars may be thought of as the conditions upon which legitimacy is either conferred on armed forces or withheld. They are based on the following principles:

- *Political Authority*: Do the armed forces serve a legal and legitimate political system which exercises authority over them?
- *Custom*: Have they built up a reserve of popular acceptance over a period of time? If not recently, is there a historical period when that reserve was stronger, and can its traditions be reformulated and applied in the contemporary context?
- *Utility*: If there is no requirement for the use of armed forces in their primary role, in what ways are they contributing to the national interest?
- *Effectiveness*: How well do they perform the tasks to which they are assigned?
- *Efficiency*: How sparingly do the armed forces use the resources they are allocated?
- *Participation*: To what extent do the armed forces broadly represent the people they are charged with defending? (Morally, in terms of the value system of the institution and of its individual members, and physically, in terms of the main ethnic groups and classes of the population?)
- *Symbolism*: Are the armed forces regarded as 'ours' by the people who pay for them and whom they serve? What level of trust and emotional commitment do the population feel towards the national defence forces?

Any personnel strategy for the SANDF will have to demonstrate awareness of these principles if the Defence Force is to be stable, legitimate and effective.

## 1.5 The Budgetary Context

Table 1 illustrates one of the principal structural difficulties confronting the SANDF: the shift in the distribution of the budget from what might be described as typical of industrialised armed forces in 1989/90 to the unbalanced distribution in 1997/98. The proportion of defence expenditure devoted to the personnel budget has nearly tripled, while the amount allocated to the capital costs of equipment replacement has fallen by nearly two-thirds in nominal terms.

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<sup>9</sup> See also Higgs J, 'The Conditions of Legitimacy of Armed Forces as a Social Institution'. Unpublished paper, Department of Politics, University of Lancaster, 1983; and Edmonds M, *Armed Services and Society*. Westview: Boulder, 1988.

	1989/90	1997/98
Personnel	1,879 (18%)	4,269 (45%)
Operating	4,018 (39%)	3,958 (41%)
Capital	4,367 (43%)	1,352 (14%)
Total	10,264	9,579

The rationale for the reallocation of resources provided by the political and social imperative for integration is examined below. However, allowing the current unbalanced situation to continue has severe implications for the capability of the SANDF to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities. Greg Mills<sup>10</sup> has pointed out the effect of this policy on the SA Navy, which has had its share reduced to 9% of the defence budget: the entire fleet is reaching a state of obsolescence simultaneously. In order to rectify this situation, the Department of Defence (DOD)<sup>11</sup> has produced a plan which seeks to restore the balance of spending to a ratio of capital to operational and personnel outlay of 40:30:30 (see Table 2). According to official projections, this balance should be arrived at by 2003/4, although in order to do so it will be necessary to reduce the personnel of the SANDF to a total number of about 70,000.

	98/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06
Pers.	5,334	5,477	5,155	4,478	4,190	4,050	3,889	3,889	3,889
Ops.	3,169	3,311	3,049	2,945	2,917	2,917	2,916	2,916	2,916
Cap.	1,076	808	1,227	2,173	2,489	2,754	2,916	2,916	2,916

It is one of the assumptions underlying this study that an understanding of the structure, lines of command, constitutional relations and the management of civil supremacy<sup>12</sup> over the armed forces is a foundation of good democratic practice and of constitutional government. Even where democratic government is in place, as some assume about the United Kingdom (UK), there may be room for improvement in efficiency.

<sup>10</sup> Mills G, *op cit.*.

<sup>11</sup> This data was supplied to the author by the Directorate of Personnel.

<sup>12</sup> A British civil servant on attachment to South African government service has noted privately that the doctrine of civil supremacy is not intended to imply that in all cases that civilians are in control.

## 2. The Challenge of Integration

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### 2.1 The Induction Process

In this paper a differentiation is made between the *induction* of personnel from the NSF, referring to their physical and administrative disposition within the force structure of the SANDF, and their *integration* into a coherent organisation which functions as a single unit. The process of the administrative induction of the components of the former non-statutory forces has been a powerful symbol of the art of the possible. If the individuals who had opposed each other with force could reconcile themselves to each other, then presumably even more might be possible in the rest of civil society.

Even before the elections of 1994 the planning of the new Defence Force was well under way. The Interim Constitution made provision for future defence forces through the TEC and its Sub-Council on Defence, so that the various political parties and their armed wings could have some confidence in the conduct of the SADF during the election, and some expectation of what would happen afterwards.

The Sub-Council on Defence drew its members from the African National Congress (ANC), Joe Modise and Ronnie Kasrils, the current Minister and Deputy Minister; from the SA government, General Liebenberg, the former Chief of the SADF; and the National Party was represented by the Deputy Minister of Defence. The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), was not represented as it was not part of the TEC; the PAC having rejected the principle of non-violence. This was to cause considerable administrative difficulty later.

The Joint Military Co-ordinating Council (JMCC) was established by the TEC in 1993 and was to report to the Sub-Council on Defence. The JMCC was to be alternately chaired by Mr (later General, Chief of the SANDF (CSANDF)) Sipiwe Nyanda and General Georg Meiring (General Nyanda's predecessor as CSANDF). Transkei was to be represented by General Matanzima (subsequently General Officer Commanding Eastern Cape Command). Venda Ciskei and Bophuthatswana were represented by Brigadiers seconded from the SADF. There were also two observers, one representing the Inkatha Freedom Party and the other a right wing political party.

The JMCC formed six work groups, organised according to SADF staff practice (Group 1: Personnel; Group 2: Intelligence; Group 3: Operations; Group 4: Logistics; Group 5: Finance; and Group 6: Other). Representation on the work groups tended to be dominated on the side of the statutory forces by the SADF, because of the relative ease with which they found ranking officers of technical expertise, and on the NSF side by *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK, meaning 'Spear of the Nation') because of their political skill.<sup>13</sup>

The JMCC briefed the work groups on their tasks and required report back, with results to be delivered to it every three or four weeks. The work groups would produce a proposal about particular problem, adjourn and then the individuals would report on the consensus

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<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to a retired General Officer whose name is withheld, who co-chaired one of the work groups, for many of the points made here in an interview in March 1998.



achieved to their seniors or 'principals' of the organisations of which they were representative (for example, MK, SADF, etc.). Quite often these principals would disagree with the decisions taken by their junior colleagues from the work groups, but they were not allowed to change their minds. When a work group presented a view to the JMCC, the various representatives would at least be forewarned of what was about to be put to them collectively. The JMCC would then decide whether to accept, amend or reject the work group proposals. It was then the task of the chairman of the JMCC to present their conclusions to the Sub-Council on Defence.

Given the wide diversity of views represented on the JMCC (spanning a political spectrum from the far right through to members of the South African Communist Party), it is not surprising that it had difficulty reaching decisions in the early stages. This process was described by one participant as 'utterly frustrating'<sup>14</sup> since so much work had to be done achieving consensus in the work groups, only to begin again if the issue was reopened by the JMCC. However this layered process also had certain advantages, as it often had the effect of binding together individuals from different origins in a common task or perspective.

An example of the process in action was the decision to appoint the British Military Assistance and Training Team (BMATT). The decision was taken to appoint a neutral body to monitor the implementation of the JMCC decisions. The JMCC decided on foreign help, and a suggestion was made to the Sub-Council on Defence that they should appoint a 'cocktail' of representatives from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and African states. The Sub-Council on Defence accepted the principle of foreign help, but rejected the 'cocktail' idea as too cumbersome. In the end the UK emerged as a candidate acceptable to the statutory force side as a western power, and to the NSF representatives because of the favourable impression MK had gained of BMATT teams in the Front-Line States (FLS) during the struggle.

A Certified Personnel Register (CPR) was established as one of the bases of negotiation for the way in which the integration process was to be implemented. The idea was that once personnel were on the Register, they would in due course become members of the new defence force. In other words, there was the appearance of an element of compulsory conscription in the process which might explain in part why 14,000 on the register declined to report to the assembly points.<sup>15</sup>

The NSF had not kept elaborate filing systems, which made the formulation of the CPR a painstaking process. Among the problems which had to be overcome was the fact that individuals frequently had a *nom de guerre* as well as their own name, and would quite often spell both in different ways. This meant that it was possible for the same individual to be entered onto the register more than once. Some individuals had one ID number, some two, while others had none at all. Since the CPR was computer based, it would not accept entries without a number, and this caused considerable delay and anguish.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Mills G, *op cit.*, 15 January 1998.

The process of induction was under way even before the 1994 elections. The SADF was to be merged with the forces of the nominally independent homelands, or TBVC states of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei, and the armed wings of the PAC — whose forces were known as the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) — and that of the ANC — MK. The success of Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi in including the Inkatha Freedom Party in the 1994 elections resulted in the induction of an element of the KwaZulu Self Protection Forces (KZSPF). Table 3 shows the numbers of personnel who presented themselves for integration.

SADF	110,000
TBVC States	6,000
MK (ANC)	26,000
APLA (PAC)	6,000
KZSPF	2,000

The integration process required that the NSF gathered at three assembly points: De Brug, Hoedspruit and Wallmannsthal. The last attracted the greatest number of former MK troops, whereas De Brug proved to be APLA soldiers' preferred destination. The criteria for integration included being of appropriate age and in good health. (Once candidates had been accepted, however, some illnesses such as HIV/AIDS were not taken as grounds for dismissal, partly with the intention of discouraging disclosure.)

The integration process required that individuals be assessed in some way so as to provide information on which to base an allocation of their appropriate position within the new SANDF, including the rank which they should be accorded. Normally, of course, paper qualifications would be the basis of the assessment, but the NSF claimed, with justification, that such an exercise would be biased in favour of former members of the SADF, since the opportunity for study for exams was somewhat limited for those who had conducted the guerrilla campaign.

There was an extensive and frank exchange of views between the SADF medical experts and the MK psychologists on the virtues of various psychometric tests aimed at assessing the potential of individuals to achieve a standard equivalent to 10 or 12 years of schooling (regarded as necessary for entry into the ranks at officer level). Eventually BMATT produced a test which initially seemed acceptable to all parties. Subsequently, the challenge became persuading personnel that it was not an SADF-inspired attempt to keep former NSF personnel out of the SANDF.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2.2 Ethos and the South African Defence Force

Leaving aside for the moment the unsavoury activities of some elements of the security forces, mainly between 1985 and 1993, the following section examines the ethos of the SADF to understand some of the current circumstances surrounding the integration process.

The ethos of an organisation is made up of its members' attitudes, values and practices which, taken together, form an institutional character or culture. A thorough knowledge of an institutional ethos will enable the cautious observer to understand the organisation's strengths, weaknesses and potential for change. The 'caution' referred to above is advised, because such knowledge is necessarily not readily quantified, never absolute, and the character traits identified can not be expected to apply in all circumstances, and certainly not to all individual members of an organisation. Nevertheless, the mercurial nature of the beast should not dissuade us from comment on its salient features.

The ethos of the SADF can be said to be derived from a variety of sources, including the Afrikaner culture, the irregular military experience of the Boers, the African cultures of those employed in the ranks, the regular force ethos of the British military, and British colonial experience.

The SADF ethos can be traced back to the formation of the Union Defence Force after the British victory in the Anglo-Boer war, 1898-1902. It drew on both British and Boer military traditions. The second of these emphasised hierarchy, respect for authority, team spirit, and some other attitudes which might be traced to the Boer tradition, such as the value placed on Christian beliefs, self-reliance and the capacity to prevail against the odds. The ethos was encapsulated in the idea that in times of emergency the citizen should take up arms and commit his horse, servants and self to national defence, and was institutionalised in the commando system.<sup>17</sup>

During the Cold War many in the SADF took on the concept of communism as 'anti-Christ', an image that became all the more convincing because it was propagated by sectors of the Dutch Reformed Church, a source from which information was generally accepted uncritically by some of the Afrikaner community. Notwithstanding the value judgements which might be placed on this aspect of the Afrikaner belief system (and noting that such beliefs were not exclusive either to Afrikaners or to South Africans), it acted as a motivating force for a core of members of the Permanent Force of the SADF and contributed to a highly cohesive *esprit de corps* as they closed ranks to deal with the perceived threat. The culmination of this perception in the military was the adoption of the idea of 'total onslaught' and the state response to this: the 'total strategy'.<sup>18</sup>

The SADF modelled itself on the British military tradition of firm discipline, enforced without qualification, and strict observation of what are taken in many regular forces to be

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<sup>17</sup> Cawthra G, *Securing South Africa's Democracy: Defence, Development and Security in Transition*. London, 1997, p.97.

<sup>18</sup> *The Defence White Paper of 1977* refers to a total strategy to co-ordinate the foreign, defence and internal policies of South Africa to respond to the total onslaught. Cited in Heineken L, 'The Soldier as Employee: The Compatibility of Labour Rights with Military Service'. MA dissertation submitted to the Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town, 1997.

the external symbols of internal self-discipline such as drill,<sup>19</sup> conformity to dress regulations and good timekeeping. While these aspects of military tradition still prevail in the modern British Army (the stronghold of which might be said to be the five remaining regiments of foot guards), considerable efforts have been made over the last 30 years to ensure that the disciplinary system is not the principal motivation on which orders are carried out, but rather the framework in which personnel operate. Current best practice in forces where soldiers are educated and socially aware is for leaders to explain the reasons behind an order. This attitude has not so far been regarded as an invitation to a discussion, but it does recognise the need for engaging the intellectual and emotional resources of soldiers in the task to be performed. Where the SADF's attitudes have been influenced by a British military command ethos, that ethos is derived more from the conscription based armed forces of the 1950s than that which exists in the highly technological UK all-volunteer force of the 1990s.

It is not sufficient to describe the SADF ethos as exclusively European. While its leadership structure (and therefore its command culture) was certainly dominated by whites, Africans constituted a large proportion of the rank and file. A number of distinct groups were represented. The army contained Zulu battalions and 'Bushmen' (San) units as well as those which spoke predominantly Afrikaans or English. The method of maintaining a language distinction is likely to have been derived from the British Army's belief that men fight best when they operate as an enlarged family, and this illusion is most easily generated among those who hold significant sections of their value system in common. Philip Frankel noted that race is not necessarily a reliable indicator of common cultural background when he described the SADF as an:<sup>20</sup>

*... essentially white institution in ethos, manpower and command structure. Within these racial parameters the South African military is dominated by the Afrikaner segment of the white elite in a society where, despite the role of race in building elite cohesion, communal politics waged between English and Afrikaner are still significant.*

Kent Hughes Butts and Steven Metz argue that the transition to democracy might have been severely hampered had the SADF succumbed to the elements that were rumoured to be considering mutiny or even attempting a coup led by officers of junior ranks.<sup>21</sup> After the activities of the security forces in the preceding years, it was not surprising that an attempt from within the military and police to destabilise the transition process was investigated.<sup>22</sup> Analysts speculate that the reason no such attempt was made was that the SADF leadership was reluctant to commit itself to such drastic action. Other factors which may have contributed were the decision made by State President FW de Klerk to suspend or dismiss

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<sup>19</sup> The Israeli Defence Force is an important exception: drill is accorded a low priority and yet high discipline and cohesion are maintained.

<sup>20</sup> Frankel P, *Pretoria's Praetorians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. p.13.

<sup>21</sup> Butts K. & S Metz, *Armies and Democracy in the New Africa: Lessons from Nigeria and South Africa*. PA, USA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.

<sup>22</sup> Goldstone R, *Africa Confidential*, 23 September 1994, pp.1-3.

23 white officers (of which six were generals), or the unwillingness of the rank and file to take action at the time of Nelson Mandela's release from prison.<sup>23</sup>

The willingness that existed within the SADF to protect the *apartheid* government if called upon to do so does not seem to be in doubt. What is more interesting is the extent to which the SADF was an acquiescent tool of the state, accepting its authority without sufficient critical enquiry. The question which remains for students of SADF ethos is the extent to which its institutional culture reflected *apartheid* values, as these are the attitudes with which the SANDF transformation process will have to engage.

### 2.3 Ethos and the Non-Statutory Forces

Elements of the particular ethos that can be attributed to non-statutory forces (NSF) are: their irregular nature; the anti-*apartheid* revolutionary struggle in which they were engaged; the stage in their historical development at which a particular individual became politically active; the ideological basis of the struggle; the extent and ethos of the training which these forces received from foreign states; and the African cultural origin of most of the individuals concerned (predominantly, but not exclusively, Xhosa).

Considerable diversity existed within the NSF, with more than one observer<sup>24</sup> noting generational differences between those who became politically active in the early 1960s, mid-1970s, mid-1980s and 1990s. Whether political radicalism increased as the new generations of activists became involved is not clear, but it is the case that the irregular nature of their military service gave them an entirely different background to that of their conventional force contemporaries. Indeed many of those who entered non-statutory force service in the last months of the struggle seem to have had little or no military training, and have subsequently incurred the disdain even of their comrades as *Klipgoeiers* (stonethrowers).

The ideological basis of the struggle often included a strong element of Marxism, and this was reinforced when training was located in Communist states. Some 23 states<sup>25</sup> hosted the training of NSF, from as far away as Cuba and the Soviet Union to the close proximity of Lesotho. The diversity of the experience gathered under this variety of training regimes must have included the advantage of the range of skills available and the disadvantage that procedures were not easily standardised.

It seems likely that the long term impact on members of the NSF of their ideological perspective was less significant in terms of military ethos than attitudes to issues such as those associated with the role of women in military organisations, the function of the commissar or political officer and the sensitisation to race issues. Major-General Jackie

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<sup>23</sup> It is also clear from interviews with retired SADF personnel that a considerable part of the decision not to engage in a campaign of assassination and armed resistance was due to the markedly conciliatory tone that Nelson Mandela adopted after his release.

<sup>24</sup> Interviews with serving members of the SANDF in February and March 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Military History Museum, Johannesburg.

Sedibe reported<sup>26</sup> that in her experience the training of women alongside men in the Soviet Union was a great advantage in the breaking down of prejudices, because women could demonstrate to their colleagues that even if they could not in all cases match the men in physical strength, they had other skills to offer in areas such as communications and command.

The role of the commissar or political officer is one that was integral to the NSF during the struggle against *apartheid*, and there is considerable evidence that it is affecting the command ethos of the SANDF. This is an issue which provokes considerable controversy between the proponents of the western military ethos and those supporting the commissar system. Major-General Andrew Mosondo<sup>27</sup> has pointed out that those following western systems have the idea that the commissar undermines the authority of the Commanding Officer (CO). The proper function of the commissar is to act as a second in command, to know the preoccupations and concerns of the troops, to be approachable by them, and to give support and advice to the CO. The proponent of western military ethos may be convinced by this argument, but will remain highly suspicious of another aspect of the commissar system — the role of advising the higher chain of command on the state of such matters as the morale of the unit.

Having noted such objections, though, one retired former SADF general has suggested that there is potential for applying the system to African troops.<sup>28</sup> He was at first shocked when he accompanied General Nyanda on inspections of units and heard the general being cross-examined by private soldiers on the decisions that the three-star general had taken, and even witnessed his being told that a certain decision was not a good one. On reflection, though, the observer had come to the view that this practice was not only a useful exercise in communication from the lower echelons up the chain of command, it also had the effect of acting as a useful safety valve for the service personnel.

The struggle against the *apartheid* regime by its nature sensitised individuals to race as a political issue. In such circumstances the ANC had to take some care to avoid the trap of reverse racism, whereby whites in general rather than the *apartheid* regime in particular were cast as the enemies of the people. There was considerable success in guarding against this circumstance, partly because of the positive experiences of many MK operatives in the training organisations of the Soviet Union's armed forces, and also because of the skill of Nelson Mandela's balanced rhetoric and the utilisation of whites within the organisation and, subsequently, in government.

However, this balanced approach did not entirely neutralise the traumatic impact of combat on some individuals, who carried the psychological impression<sup>29</sup> of the enemy into post-*apartheid* life. The attitudes that some MK and APLA personnel had towards whites

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Major-General Jackie Sedibe, Director of Equal Opportunities Policy, SANDF HQ, 21 April 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Major-General Andrew Mosondo, Director of Corporate Communications, SANDF HQ, April 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, Pretoria, March 1998.

<sup>29</sup> For a sample of previously unpublished songs of war, see appendices. These are included as an example of the attitudes which had to be accommodated within the integrated SANDF.

were to affect their ability to accept integration into the SANDF, as the armed forces were still dominated by members of the former SADF.

## 2.4 Ethos and the SANDF

Since ethos is in part a product of time and common experience, it is not surprising that in the short life of the SANDF its ethos tends at present to be a collection of its multiple constituent parts rather than possessing a single new and distinct character. This feature also reflects what one SANDF officer referred to as the 'stove-pipe character' of South African society, whereby the different sections of the population exist in relative isolation from each other. The extent to which the SANDF ethos remains the aggregate of its parts will be a concern for military planners in the long term, because the distinctions may represent fault lines along which the pressure of operational duty could cause problems for the cohesion of units.

For some of those from the former NSF, there has often been a sense of being overwhelmingly 'absorbed' into SADF culture rather than merged on equal terms into a new system. In part this can be explained by the smaller numbers of the former NSF, and the fact that they were having to make the transition into an *in situ* conventional force structure from an essentially guerrilla formation. Nevertheless, many ex-NSF members had trained in the conventional formations of foreign forces, and there is a possibility that the applicability of transferring SADF ethos was not always considered carefully enough. The use of the Afrikaans language has been one area of such contention; another the feeling of some that their training and experience with the NSF were not being sufficiently valued by SADF colleagues. An example of the latter would be the perception that a promotion for a former NSF individual was as the result of affirmative action as he or she had not served the 'normal' time in the rank in the SANDF, whereas in fact the equivalent had indeed been served on NSF duties.

One feature of SANDF ethos observed by the author during numerous interviews with senior officers is common to both its main constituent parts (former SADF and NSF members), and that is what might be called 'battle culture'. Battle culture can be thought of as the attribution of very high priority to the values, skills and capabilities of all aspects of high- and low-intensity war-fighting and, conversely, the attachment of relatively low prestige to the concept of operations other than war (including peacekeeping and military assistance to government ministries other than the DOD). Battle culture is a key component in the maintenance of the professional standards necessary to defend the state against attack, but in the post-Cold War, post-apartheid security environment, it needs to be broadened to increase the value ascribed to operations other than war.

## 2.5 Demobilisation

The 1993 Interim Constitution allowed for all members of MK and APLA whose names appeared on the Certified Personnel Register, or 'Namelist', to enter into service with the SANDF under certain conditions. For those who were too old, in insufficiently good health, or who chose other employment, a Demobilisation Act was signed into law on 1

December 1996 which authorised demobilisation benefits, including those payments which had already been paid without formal authorisation.

Category	Years of Service	Amount Paid	Numbers
A	22-23	R42,058	171
B	18-21	R34,313	144
C	12-17	R28,721	534
D	5-11	R20,201	1,049
E	0-4	R12,734	2,003
Z	Unspecified <sup>31</sup>		242

The total paid for the demobilisation of 4,143 personnel at December 1997 represented R82,752,639. The process was designed to be complete within one year of the enactment of the Demobilisation Act.

Table 5 shows the shift in personnel race structure of the SANDF for the first three years of its existence. It confirms that the component of African personnel rose from just over a third of the SADF to over half of the 100,000-strong SANDF. It also indicates that over the same period white representation fell from just under half to less than one third of the SANDF, while Asian representation remained steady at around one percent of the total and Coloured personnel fell by over a quarter to less than 12%.

	African	White	Coloured	Asian	Total
SADF	32,241	37,539	13,412	860	84,052
April 1994	38.36%	44.6%	15.96%	1.02%	100%
SANDF	56,257	30,619	11,806	981	99,663
May 1997	56.45%	30.72%	11.85%	0.98%	100%

Table 6 shows the origin of the currently serving membership of the SANDF, and among the interesting facts which emerge is that less than half of the personnel are from the SADF. The SANDF figures denote personnel of no previous military affiliation and indicate a recruitment rate of about 1,850 per year from this sector. If this rate is sustained, 'SANDF only' personnel will outnumber former MK in the year 2000 (albeit at very junior levels).

<sup>30</sup> Figures supplied by Directorate of Personnel, SANDF, 1998.

<sup>31</sup> In cases where the category is said to be unknown this was usually as a result of an adjustment being made to the registered gratuity due to departmental or other debt.

<sup>32</sup> Figures supplied by Directorate of Personnel, SANDF, 1998.



**Table 6: DOD Composition by Former Force of Origin**

Former Force Origin	1 May 1997	January 1998
SADF	44,514	40,110
SADF Civilian	20,002	18,245
MK	11,919	11,811
SANDF <sup>33</sup>	7,565	9,202
APLA	4,239	4,852
Bophutatswana	3,383	) 6,000
Transkei	3,073	
Ciskei	1,394	
Venda	1,258	
KZSPF	1,459	1,799
SANDF Civilian	857	988

It is worth examining some of the immediate prehistory of the forces that were to make up the SANDF. In the case of MK, the figures submitted to the JMCC of the TEC put its strength at 28,000. However, as Tsepe Motumi has pointed out,<sup>34</sup> the definition of an MK soldier is far from clear-cut. Those who received formal training, usually outside South Africa, numbered no more than 12,000, while others whose training was less formal and took place within the country, may have included members of Self-Defence Units (SDUs). It is also clear that MK included members who might best be described as 'political officers', whose function was closer to that of commissar than of the conventional service man as understood in western armed forces. Others were drafted into MK to provide support in the run-up to the election, had little education or training and were not much more than street 'heavies' or hooligans.

Inevitably, however, such a complex and interconnected process as the amalgamation of eight forces was going to run into some difficulties, especially when the induction was into an organisation which was Afrikaner-led. One of the early issues which required attention arose when MK advisers began the process of proposing ranks for their personnel. It is not surprising that the criteria by which they chose to assess individuals did not necessarily coincide with the formal qualifications that had been required in the statutory forces. In such a situation MK might rank an individual as a Lieutenant-Colonel due to his standing within the organisation, but the statutory forces might assess his command experience as equivalent to that of a Lieutenant — in other words, the difference between being qualified

<sup>33</sup> These figures represent the recruits with no association with a former force, who might be thought of as the new generation of the SANDF. At the current rate, and not allowing for the impact of retrenchment, the new generation will outnumber all former force components of the SANDF except the SADF by the turn of the century.

<sup>34</sup> Motumi T, 'The Spear of the Nation — The Recent History of Umkhonto We Sizwe' in Cilliers J & M Reichardt (eds.), *About Turn: The Transformation of The South African Military and Intelligence*. Midrand: Institute for Defence Policy, 1995; and in an interview in SANDF HQ in February 1998 where he is a member of the Personnel Division of the Defence Secretariat.

to command a platoon of 30 men or a fighting unit of perhaps 600. The result was often a compromise in which the individual would be given the rank of major. Even at this level, bridging training would be necessary to make the service person effective in the post to which she or he was allocated.

Some problems have been reported to stem from a lack of formal education; others are put down to difficulties over language, although SANDF officers have referred to the latter as a smoke-screen to cover the lack of success of some in the training process. The question of language is clearly not an issue confined to the former non-statutory forces, since some retraining of statutory forces' officers has taken place with a requirement that it be conducted in English. For some Afrikaner officers — whose spoken English tends to be less fluent than their aural understanding — this has been an obstacle.

## 3. Current Issues in SANDF Personnel Strategy

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### 3.1 Legitimacy, Image and Public Relations

Many of the issues which are dealt with below are directly or indirectly affected by the perception of the legitimacy of the SANDF (which will from here on be referred to as 'the image of the SANDF') held by politicians, opinion leaders and the voting general public. In the newly democratic South Africa, the limits of what is politically possible in terms of pay, allowances and retention incentives are set by politicians who make judgements on the relative merits of the SANDF's claims on the public purse versus those of other public policy objectives. More specifically, the SANDF must recruit from the civil population, and the motivation of the person they attract will depend partly on prevailing social conditions, such as the rate of unemployment, but also on the expectations of what kind of way of life the Defence Force offers. In an era when the SANDF must seek recruits from new areas of society to maintain its legitimacy, these expectations will be formed from whatever information or image happens to be encountered.

As indicated in section 1.4 above, the image of the SANDF will tend to be formed from one or more of the following areas of experience: the legitimacy of the political authorities; recent history; the utility of the SANDF in the pursuit of state policy, its effectiveness on operations and its efficiency with state resources; the degree of social participation in the make-up of the SANDF; and the extent of public faith in its symbolism.

The legitimacy of the South African political authority was established to broad satisfaction in the general election of 1994. While this aspect of civil-military relations should never be taken for granted, it currently presents the most democratic and positive feature of the South African political landscape of recent times, and a strong basis on which to build.

For many, the SANDF's image will be influenced by the association of the SADF with the recent political history of *apartheid* in South Africa, specifically the deployment of troops in townships in a role which was perceived as being a direct agency of the oppressive state. This alone presents the SANDF with a major challenge in the area of public relations and image projection which so far has not been confronted head on. Several township dwellers reported to the author that while it was now quite accepted that neighbours in the SANDF go to and from their work in uniform, their first reaction to seeing that sight was still a mixture of fear and loathing. Although this difficulty appears not to apply to the SA Navy and SA Air Force, the fact that the SA Army retains essentially the same uniform as its predecessor (notwithstanding changes to some rank insignia), causes difficulties in projecting a positive image to outsiders. (It is interesting to note that ex-NSF members serving in the SANDF did not report this as a major concern.)

There are difficulties in creating a new image for the SANDF. The massive budget cuts referred to in the opening section have severely undermined the technical capacity of the Defence Force. Its ships are between 24 and 47 years old<sup>35</sup> and 'flogged to death' in the words of one admiral, and, according to another, Rear-Admiral Evert Groenewald, Director

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<sup>35</sup> Steenkamp W, 'SA's Lame Duck Army', *The Sunday Argus*, 28 June 1998.

of Naval Operations, unable to defend successfully against an attack by three modern warships.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the equipment and current capability of the SANDF in its primary role do not present an image of the kind of winning, can-do organisation that will attract the brightest and best recruit. This situation may to some degree be ameliorated when the equipment purchases due to be announced at the end of 1998 are commissioned into service.

In the meantime it is necessary to address the perception of the efficiency of the SANDF. In part because of the circumstances of budgetary, equipment and personnel shortages mentioned above, the effectiveness of the SANDF has been somewhat eroded. Other incidents which have no observable explanation have contributed to the perception of lowered efficiency. (The theft of weapons from unguarded convoys is one example of what might be called unforced errors.) **It is necessary to demonstrate clearly to the public and to service personnel that the latter situations are being rectified while the reduced effectiveness resulting from circumstantial causes is both temporary and being managed, and that efficiency can still be maintained.** (If the work done over a period is halved, but achieved with only 40% of the original resources, productivity has increased significantly.)

All armed forces are concerned with preparing to fight a major conventional battle as a first responsibility. However, in the light of the widely held assumption that the SANDF will not be called upon to fulfil this role for the foreseeable future, it is necessary for the institution to be seen to be engaging its skills and energy in whatever national endeavour is currently preoccupying the country. Without this engagement, the Defence Force risks acquiring the image of an expensive anachronism. Rocky Williams, Director of Operations Policy in the Ministry of Defence, puts it this way:<sup>37</sup>

*It seems likely that the South African armed forces of the future will increasingly be configured around non-traditional roles and secondary functions, and that these roles will encompass, in addition to the 'primary function', regional security, peace operations, a variety of internal stability tasks, protection of the civil power against unconstitutional action, border protection, and maritime protection.*

The preoccupations of the South African government and the electorate might be summarised as 'The National Crime Prevention Strategy', the vision of the 'African Renaissance' and support for reconstruction and Development'.<sup>38</sup> The recent visit of General Nyanda to Richmond, Kwa-Zulu Natal to examine what contribution the SANDF could make to the stabilisation of a situation which had resulted in the brutal murder of several local residents is exactly the kind of concern which is useful in this respect.<sup>39</sup> The deployment of a Defence Force unit was a positive contribution, although the use of SANDF intelligence investigators to assist the police may in the long run prove fraught with difficulties over areas of responsibility overlapping with the police and the burden of giving

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Williams Dr (Col) R, Director of Operations Policy, South African Ministry of Defence, 'Against Meta-Narratives?: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Modernism within contemporary South African Defence Thinking', *Strategie Oorsig Vir Suider-Afrika/Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, XX, 1, May 1988, p.35.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>39</sup> 'Defence, Police Confident', *The Citizen*, 21 July 1998.

evidence in court. General Nyanda also noted that a shortage of funds limited the SANDF's capacity to act.<sup>40</sup>

**It is recommended that a publicity campaign be devised to communicate the progress in transformation in the SANDF and its newly defined constitutional status.** While acknowledging the mistakes of some former SADF members, it would emphasise the honourable record of South Africa as the Union Defence Force in both World Wars (including the significant parts played by black Africans), the actions in support of United Nations in Korea in 1953, in Mozambique in 1994 and Angola the following year, and, perhaps more contentiously, mention the recent role of some its members in the struggle for freedom.

**It is also necessary to communicate the fact that simply because there is no urgent need for the utilisation of the SANDF in its primary role now, it is necessary to maintain a critical minimum mass of personnel skills, expertise and equipment because conventional national defence may be required in the future.** Many South Africans may not be aware that without that minimum critical mass, there is no hope of regenerating the technical competence and organisational cohesion required in the time that will be available in a national crisis.

**Perhaps most important of all, it is necessary that as many people as possible are made aware of recent positive news about the SANDF.** If SANDF helicopters take injured people to hospital as they did in July 1998 when a bridge under construction collapsed in Mpumalanga, it would be immensely beneficial to have television pictures of the evacuation. This area was improving in the second half of 1998, as the assistance of SANDF to the bomb victims of the attack on the American embassies was widely covered by news organisations. If these organisations need transport for camera crews, the SANDF should find a way of providing it. If the co-ordination with civil news crews is too complex to arrange, it should be possible for SANDF aircrew to provide video footage for news agencies.

Television is an immensely hungry medium which continually requires feeding with fresh material. **If television companies were offered the opportunity to make more 'fly-on-the wall' documentaries on military life, this would provide an invaluable chance for the SANDF to improve its public relations.** Naturally, they will have an interest in filming 'behind the scenes' aspects which will not always be flattering, but they will, with a little management, at least be realistic images which will reassure the public about SANDF openness and stimulate the interest of potential recruits who will then be better informed about the reality of military life.

In an interview with the author, Major-General Andrew Mosondo articulated the SANDF Communications strategy as having a dual approach. He pointed out that in order to have an effective external image-building process it is necessary to create internal cohesion by various forms of communication. Only once there is a sound basis can an image be projected with a confidence that will make it credible and sustainable.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

It is clear that the tight budgetary situation is a major constraining factor on any concerted public relations effort, which would not just be a cosmetic exercise but a substantial strategy for re-establishing public confidence in the armed forces. It would also contribute to improving the quality of the recruits that the SANDF can attract.

### 3.2 Recruitment

The recruitment issues which are being dealt with currently fall into a number of areas which may be grouped as follows: engaging the interest of potential recruits in service life in the Defence Force; recruitment strategies; attracting high calibre personnel; the educational level of recruits; their motivation; the preconceptions of recruits about military life; the socialisation of new recruits into military culture. (Race representation, the adaptation of military culture to new social priorities and the Civic Education Programme are addressed separately in sections below.)

It is in the area of recruitment policy that the SANDF are having to cope with some of the most direct effects of rapid social, political and strategic change.

In the past the National Service System, with its compulsory conscription, provided a continuous flow of high quality personnel, of which a small proportion of motivated and militarily socialised individuals could be recruited as SNCOs and officers. Not only did the SADF get a chance to examine potential recruits under the most arduous of conditions, but the individuals concerned could determine their own attitudes to military life and culture. Since the end of the National Service System, this method of selection has disappeared, and with it the capacity to recruit on the basis of a record of service, which will often have tested the 'candidate' under operational conditions. For one officer who observed this system and the more current system of entry, the latter was described as 'pot luck' given the relative scarcity of information on current candidates.<sup>41</sup>

With the end of National Service the SANDF was immediately presented with a difficulty: it had to attract potential recruits actively, whereas before it was only necessary to receive the product of the National Service System. To recruit personnel who thrive in military life it is necessary that young people not only have an awareness of the existence of the SANDF, but also of its nature, purpose and the kind of career that it offers. Some of these features are described in the Constitution, and others are encapsulated in what might be described as the concept of 'military culture'.

However, although the potential recruits may be aware of constitutional affairs, they are unlikely to become knowledgeable about military culture without a carefully developed programme of action. In many western armed forces, the introduction to the experience of military culture began for some in a family where one of the parents served. While familial connections have been reduced in significance for recruiting, it has been noted in the UK armed forces that early contact with military culture is important in persuading potential recruits to consider joining the military.

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<sup>41</sup> Interviews, Cape Town, July 1998.

A major source of recruitment in the UK at one time was the Junior Leader units, where young men joined at age 16 and were trained and socialised before being deployed to line regiments in time for their eighteenth birthday. When the Junior Leader units were cut back in the early 1990s, recruiters found that by the time some of the best potential recruits were able to enter training in their eighteenth year of age, they had already found work and were unwilling to change direction. Other sources of early contact with the military, such as the cadet system and the network of University units, have also proved invaluable in capturing the interest of the recruit before decisions about employment have been finalised.

The SAN found the problem of lack of public awareness of life in the Navy particularly difficult; whereas many had seen the Army in action (even if only in the negative context of support to the police during the *apartheid* era), only a small number had any experience of the Navy, or had even seen it operating in media reports.

The personnel recruited into the SANDF fall into two distinct groups: those who have professional qualifications which are often acquired outside the Defence Force, such as doctors or engineers; and those who join the SANDF at entry level and then acquire their training and qualifications subsequently. Most of the first group, particularly doctors, will stay for two or three years, but they constitute only approximately 1,000 posts. The rest are derived from the second group and of them, only two percent will arrive after 12 years' schooling with matriculation grades of A, B or C, 10% with grade D and the remainder with Grade E or borderline fail. It is in this area that the SANDF are now having to cope with one of the most disastrous long term effects of the *apartheid* system, the Bantu education programme (which one white general officer referred to as a 'terrible legacy').<sup>42</sup>

The problem for recruiters is not so much one of quantity as quality, with the Army reporting that there were 20,000 applicants for 750 private soldiers' posts in 1998.<sup>43</sup> The Navy reports that of their entrants to SAS Saldanha, 78% say that employment is the principal reason for joining the service. This figure which will largely be attributable to an unemployment rate of the order of 40% and the fact that one salary is often used to support a number of members of an extended family.

As the competition for high calibre young South Africans in the Defence Force intensifies, the image potential recruits have of military life becomes critically important. The pressures to achieve race representivity in the civilian market place are increasing as a result of forthcoming legislation such as the Employment Equity Bill. The issue for the SANDF becomes focused around how to recruit high quality personnel, particularly from the black communities, where the image of the military is indistinct, occasionally negative, and military life is known to be hard.

The UK's experience in the early 1990s demonstrated that there is often confusion in the mind of the public about how an organisation can be simultaneously recruiting and retrenching, with the result that there was a significant undermanning in the British Army for a period. To avoid a similar problem, the SANDF might be well advised to seek

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<sup>42</sup> Interview, Pretoria, May 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Figures supplied by the Directorate of Personnel, July 1998.

professional advice, not only in the area of recruitment advertising itself, but also in the context of image-building generally.

**The SANDF should extend its cadet organisation into the desired catchment areas for recruits, using training staff selected from recently retired personnel as the seeding mechanism. In practice these organisations will be best placed in schools with a close connection with townships.** This would have the advantage of not only securing the interest of the potential recruit at an early age, but it would also act as an important point of contact between the local community and the SANDF in a non-confrontational setting. It might be that in the long term some community projects could be organised through the low-profile presence of the cadet organisation. Weapons training would not be envisaged in the short term because of potential political sensitivities, although instruction in drill might be considered.

**In order to attract high quality officer recruits, it is recommended that a number of probationary commissions are offered to school leavers with a confirmed university place.** The system, known in the UK as the Short Service Limited Commission, gives the candidate first-hand experience of military life for one year or two years as a probationary second lieutenant. These individuals are not deployed on active duty, but are given the opportunity to participate fully in unit life. (In the UK some individuals have even elected to spend their time training for and passing such arduous courses as that which qualifies them to wear the green beret of the Royal Marines.) They then attend university without further obligation to military service.

Sometimes such individuals decide they enjoy military life and return to undergo full military training; others are equipped to inform their student peers about their military experiences and perform a useful function as communicators. Their views, whatever their experience, will be based on first hand knowledge rather than the mythology that can develop around an organisation which has had a high profile in the past but which, since the end of National Service in the early 1960s, has had few voices to advocate it.

**An incentive for recruitment of quality graduate officers is the offer to undergraduates of bursaries which cover fees and a living allowance.** This arrangement, which has been found effective in the UK, entails an obligation on the bursary holder to serve in the forces for a period roughly equivalent to the length of time covered by the bursary. While this system is currently available in the SANDF, the number of bursaries offered could be increased to attract recruits to the officer corps from the previously disadvantaged communities. In the short term, a version of this system could be applied retrospectively, so that an excellent candidate in the final year of study could have a sum paid to relieve student loans incurred during the early years of study.



### 3.3 Conditions of Service

The conditions of service which the SANDF would like to offer personnel are on the following terms:

Service Type	Duration	Proportion of SANDF
Short Term Service	2 - 6 Years	30%
Medium Term Service	10 - 15 Years	30%
Long Term Service	Retire Aged 60	15%
Civilian	Retire Aged 60	25%

It is planned to have the Short Term Service made up of two- or three-year, contracts, which could be transferred to Medium Term Service in the event of a suitable service record and an appropriate vacancy. **It will be necessary to provide suitable terminal bonuses to be paid on completion of service** to act both as incentive to servicemen to fulfil the obligation for the duration of SANDF membership and as reward on completion of duty. **It will be necessary to provide pension benefits to those completing Medium and Long Term Service.**

Given the fact that civilian employees generally incur less *per capita* non-wage costs (such as training, transportation and operational allowances) than military personnel, there may be some difficulty in restricting the civilian component of SANDF personnel to a level as low as 25%. While intuitively one expects most members of a defence force to be uniformed, the more functions that can safely be civilianised, the more military personnel can be released for duties requiring the specialist skills in which they have been trained.

The retirement age of 60 for the Long Term Service personnel presents an area of contention for an organisation which wants simultaneously to maintain maximum flexibility while also offering satisfactory career incentives. **It is proposed that 60 is regarded as a maximum age for retirement, with standard retirement benefits becoming available at age 55 for officers and with benefits available at age 40 for other ranks.**

### 3.4 Retention

Retaining personnel with key skills in the Defence Force is not a new problem, nor an exclusively South African one. In the case of engineers, for example, this specialism was often in short supply in the SADF. The skills groups currently under-represented include pilots, engineers and the principal warfare officers whose responsibility it is to co-ordinate a ship's fighting systems, air-traffic controllers and the technicians who service aircraft and ships.<sup>44</sup> One well-placed source suggested that there is only one individual remaining in the SAN who is qualified to train principal warfare officers, a situation which will have

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<sup>44</sup> Steenkamp, *op cit.*, and interviews with SANDF personnel, May and June 1998.

serious repercussions on the capacity to regenerate personnel expertise when new equipment is commissioned.

There is increasing evidence that the difficulty of retaining key personnel in the SANDF has now reached a critical point. This could be defined as the moment when significant sections of the capability of the SANDF are in danger of becoming non-operational due to personnel shortages. Colonel Machiné of the SAAF reported that there was now such a shortfall in air-traffic controllers that the watch stations on the northern borders could no longer be manned for 24 hours a day.<sup>45</sup> These shortfalls are due partly, but not entirely, to the pay compared to what might be earned in alternative employment (see below). Just as significant for some individuals are other factors. The pilot who has no aeroplanes to fly, or no fuel to fly them, will make career decisions based upon where he *will* be given the chance to satisfy the singular appetite of the aviator. The engineer who has no challenging task to engage her (perhaps because the interesting engineering has been contracted out), will look elsewhere.

It may be that some of the critical technical skills required to train the next generation of SANDF submarine commanders and principal warfare officers may be recovered by re-employing, as civilian contractors, trainers who have left the service. A second option would be to negotiate training packages from foreign armed forces as part of the procurement of equipment from overseas. The least complicated option would probably be to identify those individuals regarded as holding critical skills and offer them a retention bonus in exchange for a minimum fixed period of further service. The necessary money could be derived from the discontinued Merit Bonus scheme, with the advantage that criteria for payment would be less subjective, agreed at a higher level of command and seen to be more equitably distributed. The disadvantage would be that individuals holding such skills are unlikely to be distributed equally between race groups.

### 3.5 Pay and Allowances

A new salary grading system was introduced with effect from 1 July 1996 as part of an adjustment package agreed by the Central Chamber of the Public Service Bargaining Council. The system was designed to address a number of salary-related problems which had developed in the public sector, including:<sup>46</sup>

*... the backlog in salaries, a compacted salary key scale, inappropriate career pathing, unaccountable differences in salaries in the Public Service, the large wage gap that exists between the lowest and highest paid public servants and salaries which are below salaries which are payable in other public sector institutions.*

Pay is an area which is causing some concern for a number of reasons. First, SANDF remuneration is directly linked to the public service pay structure, which causes some difficulties in providing the flexibility necessary for an administrative structure which needs to contend with three main career categories of length of service (as outlined in section 3.3). Second, it is already clear that without the establishment of an independent pay

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<sup>45</sup> Cited in Steenkamp, *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Implementation Instruction: New Salary Grading System: 1 July 1996, CSP/DSS/R/104/1/B(GRAD).

review body, such as the kind which currently exists within the UK, there will be pressure to form some kind of association to negotiate over pay increases.

A third aspect of pay levels which needs careful investigation is the linkage between difficulties in retaining certain specialist skills and the relatively low pay levels, especially when the pay is compared to what might be earned within the labour market or even in the service of, for instance, other Commonwealth navies, as some expensively trained submariners are finding out. Fourth, poor pay in the SANDF was historically compensated for by rapid advancement. The need to balance the rank structure so as to lessen its middle rank 'bulge' also entails an appropriate adjustment in pay levels.

Fifth, the table below shows the starting pay for a major to be R78,141, whereas in the United Kingdom he can expect more than three times that amount at a current exchange rate of more than ten Rand to one pound sterling.<sup>47</sup>

Serial	NCO	Office	Lower	Upper
1	n/a	n/a	17,100	18,294
2	Pte (Std 8)	n/a	20,079	21,807
3	Pte (Std 10)	n/a	23,526	25,704
4	L/Cpl	n/a	28,882	29,928
5	Cpl	2Lt	32,988	34,296
6	Sgt	Lt	40,836	25,852
7	S/Sgt	Lt	50,868	56,106
8	WO2	Capt	63,963	71,055
9	WO1	Maj	78,141	89,757
10	WO SA Army	Lt Col	98,463	106,941
11	WO SANDF	Col	115,413	131,523
12	n/a to SANDF			
13	n/a	Brig	163,260	177,486
14	n/a	Maj Gen	191,712	212,400
15	n/a	Lt Gen	233,079	256,857
16	n/a	Gen	303,591	332,205

<sup>47</sup> At the end of 1997, a South African citizen passed out of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and joined a British Army regiment. The loss of skill to the SANDF and South Africa may be indicated by the fact that he was awarded the Sword of Honour as the best cadet to be commissioned from that intake into the British Army.

<sup>48</sup> Service Conditions and Benefits of Members of the SANDF. Paper supplied by the Office of Brigadier-General Fred Fieldhouse, HQ SANDF, 24 April 1998.

Sixth, the lack of distinction between remuneration for operational and non-operational service means that two individuals can be paid the same when one may be risking life and limb on a mission away from home and family, whilst the second stays safely in a depot minding stores. The potential for disaffection arising out of such a situation is self evident.

It is recommended that: an armed forces pay review body be formed to provide systematic recommendations for military remuneration and allowances; the public service pay structure be amended to recognise the 'unlimited liability' characteristic of military life, and its intended earlier date of retirement; and that the ranges of pay offered within each rank be adjusted so that they overlap.

Table 9: Allowances Available in the SANDF	
Allowance	SANDF R rate/month <sup>49</sup>
Danger	200.00
Special Danger <sup>50</sup>	300.00
Flying	1,690.70
Flying Instructor	2,665.00
Flying Technician's	1,091.25
Deprivation <sup>51</sup>	300.00

### 3.6 Race Representivity

The problem of achieving the dual requirements of broad representivity and operational efficiency as laid down in the Defence Review (1997) is substantial, but not insurmountable. It is thought by some that there will be some decline in operational efficiency as personnel who have not served a full career in conventional force structures take up positions of authority.

This situation is being alleviated in a number of ways. First the move towards representivity is being done gradually, which is most important as it allows time for the other mechanisms to be brought to bear. The posting of personnel on staff courses has some benefit (or rarely does any harm, in the words of one SANDF officer), but is time consuming, rarely contains elements of accelerated learning and, if overseas, can mean that the student attended, rather than was rigorously stretched by, the course. This tendency not to stretch students on courses overseas can occur where the candidate has insufficient language skills in the host nation's language of instruction, or where the course is highly orientated towards locally originated students and foreigners can have different standards of success or failure applied to them. While this approach is sometimes an appropriate response to the additional challenges foreign students will encounter in language, culture and climate, it can at other times allow foreign students not to reach the same standards as local students. If the course is specifically designed for the students and

<sup>49</sup> Figures supplied by the Directorate of Personnel, SANDF, July 1998. See also SANDF Restricted Document Implementation Instruction, *op.cit.*.

<sup>50</sup> Paid in addition to the danger allowance.

<sup>51</sup> It is expected that this allowance will be available to submariners and strike craft crew shortly.

their SANDF requirements, it can be particularly useful, although usually expensive. Removing officers from the South African context in which they operate can have an alienating effect, therefore it is preferable to make use of overseas specialists and advisers in-country. Dr Iain Hamill, acting as the British Military Defence Advisory Team (BDAT), has been cited as an example of this practice successfully applied.<sup>52</sup>

The representativity in the SANDF of the main population groups has become a touchstone to the political authorities for measuring the legitimacy and extent of progress in the process of transformation. In his opening address to the South African Army conference, the Deputy Defence Minister, Mr Kasrils, noted that four of the nine Territorial Commands are held by black generals (three of them former Transkei Defence Force Officers), and five of the senior ten generals are black, a ratio of 50:50 which is a better representivity of blacks than is found in any of the other public services.<sup>53</sup>

However, he went on to comment that the military also reflected the same prejudices that are found in the country at large. While 70% of SANDF personnel are black, only 22% of the officers were black in 1997, a figure which had grown to 29% by 1998. Also noted were the following:<sup>54</sup>

*Of brigadier-generals, only 13 of 40 are black;  
32 of 241 colonels;  
112 of 736 lieutenant-colonels;  
310 of 861 majors;  
428 of 1028 captains; and  
876 of almost 2,000 lieutenants ...  
582 sergeant-majors.*

This was referred to as 'an enormous disparity given our country's demographic and political reality'. He also commented that the change in balance as lower rank levels were reached was 'unsurprising', noting that:<sup>55</sup>

*of sergeants, about 2,500 are black out of 5,000. And as we near the base of the pyramid, there are about 9,500 black corporals and lance corporals out of a total of 10,800. But most obvious of all at the lowest rank level, of all privates, 25,000 are black and a mere 400 white.*

Major-General T Matanzima, at the time General Officer Commanding Eastern Province Command, outlined a policy to rectify the imbalances contained in this. He cited the *Defence Review* as the authority for the stipulation that the new South African army would be broadly representative of the population mix of the country, 'on each managerial level and within each rank group'.<sup>56</sup> The demographic composition mentioned in the *Defence Review* and the actual population mix are cited as in Table 7:

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<sup>52</sup> Interview, Major-General Joan van der Poel, 3 March 1998.

<sup>53</sup> The Hon. Mr R Kasrils, Opening Address by the Deputy Minister of Defence at the Institute for Security Studies Conference, 'The SA Army in Transition — Continuity in Change', Pretoria, 11th of June 1998.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>56</sup> Matanzima, Major-General TT, 'The Changing SA Army: Human Resource Challenges'. Paper delivered at the SA Army Conference, 11th June 1998, *op cit.*.

Table 10: Race Representation Nationally and in the SA Army		
Race	National Composition	SA Army Representation
African	64.68%	71.00%
White	24.35%	19.00%
Coloureds	10.22%	9.84%
Asian	0.75%	0.16%

The race descriptions above are employed here because they are those used by the official documentation. The author notes that there are anomalies contained in this method of race description which give rise to some disagreement. The labels clearly refer to groups of races, but the contention arises out of the apparent exclusivity of the terminology. For example, there is often a complaint that whites and others think of themselves as African and that their forebears have lived in Southern Africa for generations. One might respond that while this is so, the race of origin remains European or Caucasian or Asian, which raises the question of why the label 'white' is used instead. It may be that the simplest solution to this difficulty would be to revert to the use of the term 'black' instead of African. **It is recommended that a system of race labelling be adopted which carries the consent of the broadest possible constituency.**

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss in detail the pros and cons of the affirmative action in employment debate, about which there is a considerable amount of material elsewhere. It is worth noting, however, that the Employment Equity Bill will place a responsibility on large organisations to employ a certain percentage of blacks. The figures in the table above show that the SANDF have very little difficulty in meeting this requirement, although Table 10 confirms that the distribution within the rank structure is significantly skewed.

The methods being used to 'restore the historic imbalances' are listed as: adjusting the population mix of new recruits; at middle management level, identifying individuals suitable to be put on a fast-track for promotion from sergeant to staff sergeant, lieutenant and captain; and at senior management level, adopting a long term strategy that recognises the experience which the ranks major to general require if standards and operational preparedness are to be maintained.

The SA Navy<sup>57</sup> reports that the August 1998 intake of recruits to SAS Saldanha will have a racial composition of more than 95% black African. This will make the task of the trainers in preparing the recruits for working in a multi-racial environment all but impossible. It is recommended that, as far as possible, trainees are sent to recruiting establishments in intake groups with multiple racial representation, so as to facilitate the process of team-building in a multi-racial environment.

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<sup>57</sup> Interview, Cape Town, July 1998.

The method of adjustment of the population mix of new recruits to the Voluntary Military Service aims to arrive at a race composition of the male and female leader group as follows:<sup>58</sup>

Race	Quota	Previously
African	64.00%	± 30.00%
White	24.00%	± 60.00%
Coloured	10.00%	± 10.00%
Asian	0.75%	± 0.01%

The use of this quota system would, over the course of a generation of recruits, certainly result in the SANDF being representative of the race groups in society. However, it should be noted that the rigid enforcement of such a system will cause anomalies in the long term. For example, barring the unlikely event of the ratios of applicants' racial origin matching the quota available, some applicants from an 'oversubscribed' quota group with appropriate qualifications will not be recruited, while their peers from an 'undersubscribed' quota group will be accepted.

A second problem may arise from the requirement to maintain recruitment in certain essential skills. If, in the case of the SA Army, it was found that there was a shortage of engineers and that engineers come from an oversubscribed quota group, recruitment shortages would be exacerbated.

**It is recommended that: while the race make-up of recruits to the SANDF is continuously monitored, that the strategy of recruitment by race (quotas) is not implemented, and that the racial make-up of recruitment intakes sent to training establishments is kept mixed.**

### 3.7 Promotion

Promotion is an area in which some unrealistic expectations were raised in both the political authorities and in some individuals. In part this can be attributed to the practice in the SADF of promoting individuals because they deserve higher pay and not because a post requires filling. This problem, which still exists for the SANDF, arises when the pay range available to any one rank does not overlap above or below. The resulting 'rank inflation' has the effect of devaluing the authority of higher ranks in the eyes of both SANDF personnel and overseas professional observers.<sup>59</sup> It also distorts the preferred rank distribution profile. If, for example, a mechanism could be found for paying a senior and very experienced major, more than a newly appointed lieutenant colonel, this difficulty would be alleviated.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>59</sup> Bennett, Rear Admiral CH (SAN Retd.), 'Bureaucracy and State Savings: Rank Inflation Continues', *African Armed Forces*, July 1998.

**It is recommended that the upper and lower pay ranges available to each rank be extended so that they overlap those of adjacent ranks.**

Since the formation of the SANDF, accelerated promotion has also been used to redress some of the representivity issues mentioned above. At the moment, promotions from the rank of major and below are being dealt with at the arm of service level, at colonel and above at Defence HQ, and at colonel in command, brigadier and above are approved by the Minister. BMATT is seeking to implement an agreed system for promotion which will address concerns that are already being expressed about the transparency, openness and structure of the promotion system. To this end the Deputy Military Secretary from the UK MoD has been to SA and made a presentation on the Board System at the end of March.

### **3.8 Language and Cultural Diversity**

The policy on official languages in the SADF allowed for the alternate use of English and Afrikaans in successive months. This sometimes led to a somewhat farcical situation in which correspondence was delayed until the preferred month. Which languages are to be given official status in the SANDF is an emotive issue because of the association of Afrikaans with the discredited regime and the fact that English is not the first language of the majority of personnel. General Mosondo also pointed out that English can have connotations of oppression for Afrikaans speakers. Be that as it may, the prevalence of English as an international language has established it as a *lingua franca* for the language of command. Major-General Mosondo has been emphatic that effective communication depends on ensuring the message is understood, whatever the language used.<sup>60</sup>

Opinion surveys suggest that, among officers, both 49% of African language speakers, and 62% of Afrikaans speakers, experience lack of respect for their home language, while 27% of English speakers encounter less difficulty. In the SA Army and SA Medical Service, 63% and 54% respectively experienced most frustration regarding respect for their language, while the SA Navy and Air Force expressed less (both 43%).<sup>61</sup> Clearly, this is an issue on which none of the people will be satisfied all of the time, and care should be taken that language policy is as flexible as possible. An example of the sensible practice currently used in the SA Navy is to use the language of choice by the majority in the group until one person expresses difficulty with that language, at which point the 'default' language of English is adopted. This policy would both be flexible at the local level in encouraging the use of a language likely to have the vocabulary to deal with technical complexity, and be useful to the SANDF in multinational operations.

A more fundamental issue is that of the divergent cultural traditions of the constituents of the SANDF. However, it may be that this issue is not as problematic as one might have thought. One observer has asked what the policy of the SANDF will be over the allocation of quarters to second and third wives, and this particular issue has been addressed by an agreement in which the preferred wife is nominated by the serviceman as the only

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<sup>60</sup> Interview, Pretoria, April 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Heineken L, 'Inequality and Diversity: SANDF Officers' Attitudes Towards Integration, Affirmative Action, Gender and Language'. Paper presented at the South African Sociological Association Congress, 30 June-3 July 1998, Centre for Military Studies, University of Stellenbosch.



beneficiary of entitlements. Nevertheless the range of strikingly different customs is well illustrated by this point, and raises questions about the management of such diversity.

The British way of managing multi-racial colonial forces such as the Indian Army was to create units in which the rank and file were largely made up of a single ethnic group, such as Gurkhas or Sikhs. This method was adopted for a number of reasons; including the idea that different customs, traditions and eating preferences are logistically and administratively difficult to honour within a group of men living so closely together, and the deeply held belief that *esprit de corps* is stronger in culturally homogeneous units. Thomas and Karnad suggest that this argument is weakened by the fact that ethnic groups were never segregated in the Royal Indian Air Force and Royal Indian Navy, and that the policy of divide and rule could be the explanation.<sup>62</sup> Alternatively, if one accepts that the character of fighting is somehow different in armies; that armies 'equip men to fight, whereas air forces and navies seek to man fighting equipment', then the original concern for maintaining *esprit de corps* may be justified.

Cultural diversity was therefore accommodated within the British Army by making sure that officers were educated in the customs, language and traditions of the troops of their unit. Meanwhile, the integrity of the command ethos was maintained by keeping the officer corps a predominantly British preserve. This tradition of making sure that officers know the traditions of their men continues in the modern British Army, most obviously with the Gurkha regiments. However, the principle of cultural (as opposed to racial) diversity is maintained with the policy of particular infantry units continuing to look to specific catchment areas for new recruits.

The modern Indian Army uses both communally distinct and mixed units. Thomas and Karnad report that the preservation of some unmixed units is in part due to the concern of the High Command to maintain combat effectiveness. The infantry regiments are predominantly Sikh, Dogra, Jat, Gurkha, Maratha, Rajput, Mahar or Kumaoni. The older armoured regiments, such as 17th Horse, Skinner's Horse and Central India Horse have within them separate Sikh, Maratha and Rajput tank squadrons. Even the units created since Independence, such as the 63rd Cavalry, have mixed and separate squadrons. Political pressure for a more integrated army led to the creation of the only new infantry unit since partition, the Brigade of Guards. Its symbolic purpose, representing a unified and integrated state at elite level, was furthered by raising the Brigade from a battalion from each of the existing regiments.

In pursuance of the value attributed to cultural diversity in the SANDF, in November 1995 the Minister of Defence, Mr Joe Modise, decided that all members of the DOD should receive training and education in what was called civic education. Among the declared purposes of this programme were: the intention to generate respect for the values of a democratic South Africa; the building of cohesion, loyalty and discipline around a common set of values of the SANDF; the enhancement of the legitimacy of the SANDF in the eyes of both the public and military personnel.

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas R & B Karnad in Dietz H, et al (eds.), *Ethnicity, Integration, and the Military*. Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991.

In his foreword to the civic education manual,<sup>63</sup> Mr Modise outlines the programme's objectives (amongst others) as:

- To contribute to ensuring that the functioning of the Department is consistent with constitutional principles, democratic values and the law.
- To contribute to ensuring that military personnel treat each other and members of the public with respect and dignity.
- To maintain and enhance military professionalism.
- To contribute to preparing the SANDF for service in respect of South Africa's international obligations.
- To contribute to building patriotism, loyalty, unity, discipline, morale and combat readiness within the SANDF.

In the education manual, the terms of reference of the Task Group on Civic Education, which set up the Civic Education Programme (CEP), include the following:<sup>64</sup>

- To define the objectives, content and curricula of a programme on 'defence in a democracy'.
- To make recommendations regarding the methodology of the programme, the training of SANDF instructors and the inclusion of civilian trainers.
- To investigate the form and content of comparable programmes in other countries.

The structure of the CEP manual is indicated by the chapter titles:

- Key Features of the Democratic Political Process
- The Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- Civil Military Relations
- International Humanitarian Law
- Respect for Cultural Diversity
- Military Professionalism in a Democracy

The CEP is a carefully organised and academically based approach to the vital subject of ensuring a democratic South Africa. However, service personnel report some difficulties with its implementation. These include the claim that what may seem a contemporary issue

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<sup>63</sup> Modise J, Minister of Defence, Foreword to the *Civic Education Manual*, Department of Defence, September 1997.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.i

of social interaction worthy of extensive exploration to those for whom *apartheid* was an everyday struggle (whether defending it or fighting against it), is perhaps only a matter of passing historical interest to recruits whose political consciousness has been chiefly formed since 1994.

Secondly, officers in the Navy have noted an important distinction concerning the significance of the location of the CEP instruction in the training process. In training establishments there is some difficulty reported in building a team from a disparate group of recruits if, in the middle of the process, they are introduced to a programme which highlights racial differences, the history of *apartheid* and examples of some of its vicious manifestations and social injustices, and then allocates too little time at the end to emphasising commonalities and rebuilding the team. One observer of this process referred to it as making the whites feel guilty and blacks angry without providing a mechanism for resolving these undercurrents. On the other hand, it was also noted that because of the 'stove-pipe' nature of South African society, where social interaction is still limited, knowledge held by one social group about the customs and traditions of others is superficial.

However, the commanding officer of a formed unit noted that very similar undercurrents were too frequently masked behind a smile. For him, the mechanism of a workshop run with the help of professional conflict resolution specialists had been a very useful tool in releasing the pressure of such resentment. His team was already built; what he was looking for was ways of addressing emotional fault lines under its surface. While uncovering them led to the generation of emotional heat, the result was a team which better understood its various component parts and was more likely to function efficiently in the future.

**It is recommended that the education of recruits in training establishments about the customs and traditions of their fellow South Africans is enhanced and that the CEP manual is revised to include a detailed chapter for this purpose; that the impact of the CEP in training establishments is carefully reviewed to ensure that it contributes to the process of team-building and that teams representative of the major race groups are formed under the Directorate of Corporate Communications, and expertly trained to visit units and provide workshops to personnel to assist in the internal communication of cross-cultural tensions.**

### 3.9 Gender

One of the striking differences between the NSF and the SADF is over the employment of women. Whereas in the SADF women were excluded from combat musterings such as armour, infantry and pilots, in the NSF they were frequently employed on missions, where a woman was regarded as less obtrusive. In part this reflected the traditionally much more diversified and operationally-orientated employment of women in special units and irregular forces.

In accordance with the new constitutional requirements for the eradication of discrimination, combat musterings were opened to women in 1994. Since then, considerable progress has been made in improving the representation of women, both in the full-time force as a whole and in the senior ranks of the SANDF. Between November

1996 and May 1998, the proportion of women rose from 11% (8,467 women out of 77,432) to 19% (9441 out of 72,695).<sup>65</sup> This is a very high rate of representation by international comparison. Over the same time frame, the number of female major generals has increased from nil to two, and colonels from 25 to 34.

The role of women in combat is controversial in the SANDF, as it is in many armed forces. Lindy Heinecken reports divisions of opinion in both public polls and in surveys of SANDF attitudes as to the appropriateness of women in combat duties.<sup>66</sup> There is a considerable body of work on this issue in Europe and the United States, and this will be useful in assisting the SANDF in formulating its own approach to this subject.<sup>67</sup>

### 3.10 Professional Representation

The findings of a survey of officer opinion among the staff college students of all four arms of service on the need for a representative association to articulate their views were that 68% supported the idea (rather than that of a trade union).<sup>68</sup> There is clearly also a recognition that while there is a need to have a voice, it is also necessary to avoid the confrontational style that currently characterises South African labour relations in the workplace. Fears were expressed to the author that if associations were allowed, they would be formed along officer/NCO and racial lines, a situation which would be unlikely to assist cohesion.

Mr Kasrils also noted in his speech to the SA Army conference that while the government's position was firmly against the formation of SANDF unions, the popular pressure for the representation of soldiers' interests would be difficult to resist if cases of maltreatment continued to come to the attention of his office.

### 3.11 Rationalisation and Retrenchment

In the social context of high unemployment, the forthcoming rationalisation and retrenchment process is one of the most sensitive political issues, not least in the run up to the election in May 1999. The SANDF is seeking to retrench some 24,000 personnel in order to restore the balance between capital expenditure, currently running at 14% of the defence budget, and personnel and other running costs, which take up the remainder. Rather than 'become an employment bureau for the government', as one SANDF observer put it, the SANDF needs to implement a retrenchment strategy as an urgent priority, in order to promote and sustain the capability of high-technology, advanced armed forces, potentially unique in Africa.

It was also suggested that if the government wants an insurance policy then it is necessary to invest in it. There is real concern in the Defence Force that the SANDF will not be

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<sup>65</sup> Lindy Heinecken cites these figures in *Inequality and Diversity*, *op cit.*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, British Military Studies Group (BMSG), 'Women in the Armed Forces: Britain in Comparative Perspective'. Report by BMSG in collaboration with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 1991.

<sup>68</sup> Heinecken L, *op cit.*.

allowed to carry out its rationalisation, for two reasons. One is the political implication of large numbers of retrenchments of voters prior to an election; the other is the fear that retrenched soldiers might turn to crime.

One of the areas in the age/rank structure of the SANDF which represents a divergence from the ideal is shown in Table 12.

Records show that the median age of the ex-SADF African male privates (only 11 of the 6946 shown above are female) is 28. The SANDF suggests that the ideal median age for the rank is within the age range of 18 to 25. Only 853 of these privates fall within this span, while 6,082 are outside it. This represents what the SANDF call a 'feeding problem', where, if individuals are not progressing up the rank structure over time, they could present something of a log-jam in the personnel structure.

Force Origin	APLA		MK			SADF		
	African	Col	African	Col	As	African	Col	Whi
WO1	1	-	4	-	-	4	17	131
WO2	-	-	5	-	-	15	72	94
S/Sgt	2	-	15	-	-	45	57	30
Sgt	20	-	73	-	-	220	97	80
Cpl	45	-	218	1	-	814	210	150
L/Cpl	48	-	136	1	3	679	146	36
Pte	1,292	2	3,017	10	10	6,946	898	99

The abbreviations used here are: Col = Coloured; As = Asian; Whi = White.

The Service Corps has suffered considerable difficulties, many of them not of its own making, since it was given the task of retraining some of the most disadvantaged of the former forces with a view to preparing them for re-entry to civilian life. As a result of the slow progress of the trainees, the fact that many declined to move on when their originally allotted course was completed, and the very limited resources available, the Corps has not been able to fulfil the vision that some had for it. Not the least of its problems is the fact that it attracted funding from Taiwan to the tune of R146 million,<sup>69</sup> which seems unlikely to materialise as a result of South Africa's decision to recognise the People's Republic of China at the expense of relations with Taiwan.<sup>70</sup>

Over the course of 1998 it has become clear that the Service Corps has learnt lessons from its experience. When permission is granted to initiate the retrenchment process, it will act as a co-ordinator of services and courses which will actually be provided by civilian training organisations. This will enable the training to be specifically designed for the individuals being retrenched.

<sup>69</sup> Molebeledi P, 'SANDF to Train Laid Off Soldiers', *Business Day*, 13 August 1998.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

However, this policy should not ignore one valuable resource which the SANDF can call upon. Its own retired personnel can give useful advice to those of their successors who are approaching retirement. (With the benefit of hindsight, it was also probably unwise to attempt to prepare soldiers for civilian life with a staff of predominantly service personnel.)

**It is suggested that the Service Corps be given full support in the preparation of personnel for return to civilian life.**

It is important that the personnel that are retrenched in the next phase have the opportunity to prepare themselves adequately for civilian life. **It is proposed that the government issue vouchers for adult education courses at civilian institutions to cover the cost of fees, and a small allowance for those who request access to further education.**

### **3.12 Health and Fitness**

The health of SANDF personnel is important, not only for its own sake but because it obviously has implications for the operational efficiency of the organisation. It is a sensitive issue, particularly with regard to HIV/AIDS. 1994 data shows that the rates of infection in the population are expected to reach seven per cent of adult South Africans by the end of 1998, and some regions, such as KwaZulu Natal, have rates considerably higher. The SANDF cannot hope to isolate itself from a social crisis on this scale, but it is examining steps to reduce the likelihood of recruiting HIV-infected personnel. The precise nature of these measures or their legal status, is not clear at the moment, but there is no intention to terminate the service of the HIV-infected, which would contravene the law.

### **3.13 Administrative Procedure**

The bureaucratic process is used as a vehicle for consensus-building within the department, a necessary development after the highly directed approach of the previous government. However, it seems clear that while 'signals' are often sent from the top of the Department, they will sometimes not be acted upon or lost in transit. This could be addressed if **the bureaucratic procedure in the decision-making echelons of the Department of Defence was supported by a more rigorous process of minute-taking in committee and the compilation of action lists whereby named individuals are given specific tasks to be completed by a due date.** The verification of, and reference to, those minutes serves as an audit of progress for the chair of the committee. This would help to assert the authority of the leadership of senior echelons of the Department as well as ensuring that the agenda of the political authorities is the guiding principle for departmental policy.

It has also been suggested that the formal bureaucratic process is occasionally made redundant or contradicted by decisions taken on alternative, party political networks. This feature, a politician visiting from overseas noted, is not an aspect which is peculiar to South Africa.

### **3.14 Personnel Structure of Support Functions**

At present each of the arms of service operates separate personnel structures in the areas of financial, legal and intelligence support. Notwithstanding any decisions which may be taken in respect of the developing emphasis on joint operations, it is likely that this represents a considerable duplication of effort which will be increasingly difficult to justify as the SANDF becomes a smaller organisation. While no doubt there are operational reasons which could seek to justify the current *status quo* for the SA Navy, SA Air Force and SA Army, it is difficult to ascertain what the justification might be for the separate support functions of the SA Medical Service in a post-*apartheid* South Africa.

**It is recommended that a review of support functions is undertaken with a view to the creation of structures with more emphasis on joint capabilities.**

## **4. Towards a Personnel Strategy for 2000 and Beyond: Considerations for Policy**

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In summary, it is recommended in the areas of:

### **Public Relations**

1. That a publicity campaign be devised to communicate the progress in transformation in the SANDF and its newly defined constitutional status.
2. That the current lack of urgent need for the deployment of the SANDF in its primary role now, does not exclude the possibility of a requirement for national defence in the future, and the necessity of maintaining a critical minimum mass of personnel skills, expertise and equipment is communicated to opinion leaders and the civil population.
3. That as many people as possible are made aware of recent positive news about the SANDF.
4. That television companies are offered the opportunity to make more 'fly-on-the wall' documentaries of military life, with the aim of increasing public awareness and knowledge of the SANDF and broadening its recruiting base.

### **Recruitment**

5. That the cadet organisation is further developed into the desired catchment areas for recruits, using training staff selected from recently retired personnel as the seeding mechanism. In practice these organisations will be best placed in schools with a close connection with townships.
6. That a number of probationary commissions (of one or two years' duration) are offered to school leavers who have a confirmed university place to attend after the termination of the commission.
7. That high quality graduate officers are attracted by offering more bursaries to undergraduates which cover fees and a living allowance.

### **Pay**

8. That the upper and lower pay ranges available to each rank be extended so that they overlap those of adjacent ranks.
9. That suitable terminal bonuses are paid on completion of service.



10. That an armed forces pay-review body be formed to provide systematic recommendations for military remuneration and allowances.
11. That the public service pay structure be amended to recognise the 'unlimited liability' characteristic of military life, and its intended earlier date of retirement for most service personnel.

### **Conditions of Service**

12. That pension benefits are paid to those completing Medium as well as Long Term Service.
13. That the maximum age of retirement be regarded as 60, with standard retirement benefits becoming available at age 55 for Long Term Service personnel and at about age 40 for Medium Term Service personnel.

### **Retention**

14. That individuals regarded as holding critical skills are identified and offered retention bonuses in exchange for a minimum fixed period of further service.

### **Race Representivity**

15. That a system of race labelling be adopted which carries the consent of the broadest possible constituency.
16. That while the racial make-up of recruits to the SANDF is continuously monitored, that the strategy of recruitment by race (i.e. quotas) is not implemented.
17. That the racial make-up of recruitment intakes sent to training establishments is kept mixed.

### **Cultural Diversity**

18. That the education of recruits in training establishments about the customs and traditions of their fellow South Africans is enhanced and that the CEP manual is revised to include a detailed chapter for this purpose.
19. That the impact of the CEP in training establishments is carefully reviewed to ensure that it contributes to the process of team-building.
20. That teams representative of the major race groups are formed under the Directorate of Corporate Communications, and expertly trained to visit units and provide workshops to personnel to assist in the internal communication and easing of cross-cultural tensions.

## **Retrenchment**

21. That the Service Corps be given full support in the preparation of personnel for return to civilian life.
22. That vouchers for adult education courses at civilian institutions are issued to retrenched personnel to cover the cost of fees and a small allowance for those who request access to further education.

## **Administrative Procedure**

23. The bureaucratic procedure in the decision-making echelons of the Department of Defence was supported by a more rigorous process of minute-taking in committee and the compilation of action lists whereby named individuals are given specific tasks to be completed by a due date.

## **Personnel Structure of Support Functions**

24. That a review of support functions is undertaken with a view to the creation of structures with more emphasis on joint capabilities.

## 5. Selected Reading

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## 6. Glossary

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AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
AK	AK 47 Assault Rifle
BMATT	British Military Assistance and Training Team
BMSG	British Military Studies Group
BDAT	British Defence Advisory Team
CEP	Civic Education Programme
CO	Commanding Officer
CPL	Corporal
CPR	Certified Personnel Register
CSANDF	Chief of the SANDF
DOD	Department of Defence
FLS	Front-Line States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JG	Junior Grade
JMCC	Joint Military Co-ordinating Council
KZSPF	KwaZulu Self Protection Forces
L/CPL	Lance Corporal
MK	<i>Umkhonto we Sizwe</i>
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSF	Non-statutory forces
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PTE	Private
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAAF	South African Air Force
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community

SADF	South African Defence Force
SAN	South African Navy
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SDU	Self-Defence Unit
SNCO	Senior Non-Commissioned Officer
S/SGT	Staff Sergeant
TEC	Transitional Executive Council
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WO1	Warrant Officer, First Class
WO2	Warrant Officer, Second Class

## 7. Appendices

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### Songs from the era of struggle:

There is a good life in Lusaka

There is a good life in Lusaka  
Because they are trained to kill Boers!  
Join the struggle!

There is a good life in Namibia  
Because they are trained to defeat the SADF  
Join join  
Join the struggle!

*and in Zulu ...*

*Elusaka baphila kamnandi  
Batrayina isibhamu sokushaya amabhunu  
Joyina lomzabalazo!*

*Enamimbia baphila kamnandi  
Batrayina isibhamu sokushaya iSADAFU  
Joyina joyina  
Joyina lomzabalzo*

**We are older than you SADF**

We are older than you SADF  
That's it!  
We are older than you Malan  
That's it!  
Where have you seen an insult like this  
This insult needs a gun  
This insult needs an AK  
That's it  
We have never seen a thing like this before!

We are older than you SADF  
That's it!  
We are older than you De Klerk  
That's it!  
We have never seen an insult like this  
This insult needs a gun  
This insult needs an AK  
We have never seen a thing like this before!

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- SAIIA Yearbook, 1998/99*, edited by G Mills (1998)
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- South Africa into the New Millennium*, edited by G Mills (1998)
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14. *The Critical Component: Personnel Strategies for the SANDF to 2000 and Beyond* by J Higgs (1998)
13. *The South African Defence Industry and New Thinking on Security* by A Zacarias (1998)
12. *The Foreign Relations of South Africa's Provinces* by D Geldenhuys (1998)
11. *Taking Southern Africa into the 21st Century* by A Handley & B Thoka (1998)
10. *Non Aligned Against What? South Africa and the Future of NAM* by A Handley (1998)
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7. *Regional Integration: Latin American Experiences* by C Mutschler (1998)
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4. *South & Southern Africa: Lessons from Emerging Markets* by C Mutschler (1997)
3. *The Illegal Drug Trade in Southern Africa* by G Oosthuysen (1997)
2. *US-South Africa Relations and the 'Pariah' States* by G Mills et al (1997)
1. *India and South Africa: The Search for Partnership* by G Mills (1997)



## About the Author

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James Higgs is currently serving as the acting Director of Studies at SAIIA. He took up a visiting research fellowship at SAIIA in February 1998, having taken leave from his post as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Defence and International Affairs at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom. He is a member of the secretariat of the British Military Studies Group (BMSG), a research associate of the Centre for Defence and International Security Studies (CDISS) at Lancaster University, a fellow of the American Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society (IUS), and a member of the European Research Group on Military and Society (ERGOMAS). He graduated from the University of Lancaster with a BA (Hons) in Politics and from Queens' College, Cambridge with a degree of M.Phil in International Relations.

Working with Professor Dandeker, Head of War Studies at King's College London, he has co-produced *six reports on matters ranging from the employment of women in armed forces, and the reorganisation of British armed forces personnel policy to the future of military cultures.*

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