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The South African National Defence Force Between Downsizing and New Capabilities

Dr. Greg Mills

THE CREATION OF THE South African National Defence Force (SANDF) since the advent of South Africa's nonracial democracy in 1994 has arguably been one of the most successful episodes in the transformation of the Republic's civil service. However, on the cusp of the new millennium, critical questions about the Defence Force's budget allocations, its personnel levels, and equipment raise concerns about its future abilities and roles.

This paper seeks to address the following questions. What is the background of the formation of the SANDF? What roles and responsibilities are envisaged for the SANDF? What are the future problems facing this force? Finally, what is the potential for international defence and, specifically, naval cooperation?

The Formation of the SANDF

Significant progress has been made in South Africa in, first, the integration of a large number of statutory and nonstatutory forces into a single, cohesive defence force; and second, the institution of systems of civilian control over the defence force. The latter was not, of course, a feature of the apartheid regime, particularly in the 1980s, when the old South African Defence Force (SADF) played such a pivotal role in shaping its own political destiny.

The process of military integration began with the conclusion of negotiations between, principally, the ruling National Party government and Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC)—even before the watershed 1994

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elections. The SADF was merged with forces of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei (the so-called “Bantustan,” or TBVC states—the nominally independent “homelands”), the armed wings of the ANC (known as Umkhonto we Sizwe, or Spear of the Nation), and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC, the forces of which were known as the Azanian People’s Liberation Army). The KwaZulu Self-Protection Forces (KZSPF) were also accommodated, as a result of a last-minute deal to include the Inkatha Freedom Party of Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi in the 1994 elections. The numbers involved are given in Table 1. It should be noted that only around fourteen thousand of the nonstatutory forces of the ANC and PAC presented themselves for integration.

Table 1
SANDF Integration

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

Structural Defence Transformation. In times of constitutional change, the structures of government, including those pertaining to defence and security, have to be altered to reflect the new decision-making process, especially if they are to become democratic. In the wake of the formulation of South Africa’s interim constitution, the ensuing democratic elections, and the formation of the new government, therefore, the immediate task was to address “the imperatives of transformation, namely, integration and rationalisation.”¹ This also had to take into account the future structure of the central organisation of defence, its relationship to the democratically elected government and parliament, and a “continued and drastically reduced defence budget with the concomitant attenuation of its force structure.”² The first fruits of these organisational endeavours by the SANDF under the new minister of defence and in association with other government departments were detailed in the 1994–1995 annual financial report of the Ministry of Defence, appropriately titled *The National Defence Force in Transition*.

One focus of the structural changes was that of the central organisation of defence—that is, the Ministry of Defence and the SANDF. These structural changes, approved by a Ministry of Defence steering committee, came into effect in March 1995. The outcome of these changes was considered a “balanced” structure. It was to be headed by the minister of defence, assisted by a deputy minister, who would exercise overall responsibility. The ministry itself was to encompass both the SANDF and the new civilian Defence Secretariat. The “balanced model” of the Department of Defence was essentially a bicephalous

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structure, with the armed forces (military) on the one hand and the Secretariat (civilian) on the other. The arrangement marked a radical departure from the past, when a civilian minister (often with prior military experience) had headed a ministry that was totally dominated by the military, had no civilian representation or involvement of any consequence, and was subject to virtually no effective system of financial or policy accountability.

The new structure therefore clearly accommodated the need for a strengthened civilian input and checks on military influence. This was the objective and thinking behind the creation of a new post, that of a civilian defence secretary.³ The person holding this position would also serve as the Ministry of Defence's accounting officer; be the principal adviser to the minister on matters of defence policy; and be responsible for a 650-strong Ministry of Defence civilian bureaucracy and administration as well as for the efficient management of the ministry as a whole. Nearly four years after the democratic elections of April 1994 this balanced model appears to be a success, though many defence force members apparently share a sentiment that there is a lack of understanding in the Secretariat of military matters, given that the policy posts are filled by civilians.⁴

On professional matters of doctrine and strategy, the Chief of the National Defence Force (CNDF) serves as the Chief of National Defence Headquarters within a Department of Defence. The responsibility of the CNDF is to exercise overall command of the nation's forces; tender advice to the defence minister and president on matters of military strategy and doctrine, resource allocation, programmes, and commitments; and also to plan, direct, and conduct military operations. Of particular significance is the CNDF's role in respect of the four branches of the South African armed services—and of their collective need to prioritise future equipment and resource requirements in order to fulfill the policies and functions defined by the ministry and by the strategies and doctrines formulated within the military.

Finally, effectively joining the two main arms of this structure is a third element, the Armaments Corporation of South Africa, Limited, or Armscor—the government armament procurement agency. It serves as the procurement executive for the armed services, but under the control of the minister and deputy minister of defence.

Political Control of Defence. In parallel with, but seemingly independent of, these inter- and intradepartmental and ministry discussions and structural alterations, a second process was in train during the defence transformation. The political requirement of the Government of National Unity (GNU)—to be in existence for a maximum of five years from the 1994 elections—and its parliamentary representatives was to ensure greater transparency and accountability in all matters pertaining to defence and security. This was not merely a matter of democratic principle; it was an essential requirement for

those who in the past had been subjected to a defence and security system that had been summary in its dealings with the population, largely unaccountable for its actions, and had regularly asked for, and received, significant sums of money. The SANDF, even in time of transition, would not be trusted in the absence of strong checks and balances.

Two other reasons made democratic accountability and transparency in defence imperative. The first stemmed from the traditions and practices of the African National Congress, which formed the majority party in the GNU. Under apartheid, when it had acted in both political and military opposition to the former South African government and the SADF, the ANC and its nonstatutory forces operated largely according to open, democratic processes and consultation when deciding policy, strategy, and courses of action. These were, in a manner of speaking, integral to its customary practice; anything else would be both alien and unacceptable. Thus the ANC promoted within the new South African government and parliament processes that would open up issues of defence and security. Some were incorporated in the interim constitution, whilst others would have to be established as a result of experience and precedent.

The other reason, less obvious but nevertheless present, stemmed from a natural tendency among those who have been denied power and influence and then gain it, to exercise it—for whatever motive—as widely and extensively as possible. Parliamentary committee review procedures and open consultative processes serve these personal agendas. Two parliamentary committees concerned with legislative oversight of defence were established in 1994: the Senate Select Committee on Defence, Safety, and Correctional Services, and the National Assembly Portfolio Committee on Defence. Both have “customary” powers, in that they were created from within each chamber, there being no provision in the constitution for their existence. They are also “portfolio” committees, in that they consider legislation governing defence issues and the defence budget, and pilot it through their respective chambers.

These restrictions do not apply, however, to the larger Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD). Provision for the JSCD was made through Article 228(3) of the interim constitution. The powers of the committee are extensive: it has competence to “investigate and make recommendations regarding the budget, functioning, organisation, armaments, policy, morale and state of preparedness of the SANDF and to perform such functions relating to parliamentary supervision of the Force as may be prescribed by law.”⁵ This is retained in the final South African constitution (which was signed in May 1997).

The power of the JSCD extends further, for when Parliament is in recess it is to the committee that the president has to account in the event that forces of the SANDF are employed for purposes or on operations associated with the terms of Article 227(1) (listed below) of the interim constitution. Today the JSCD’s membership of forty, drawn from the National Assembly and the National

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Council of Provinces (formerly the Senate), includes members of all political parties holding more than ten seats in the National Assembly. The driving issue behind the establishment of the JSCD was the integration of the armed forces. When this became a matter of dispute, the JSCD became involved, requested reports on progress, demanded the right of access to the armed services, and made recommendations.

During its relatively brief existence, the JSCD has concentrated first of all on the integration of nonstatutory forces into the SANDF and then on the South African Navy's request for four corvettes. Both were issues that exercised the committee, the former because it was directly relevant to the wider issue of racial integration and harmony, the latter because it recalled in its members' eyes the processes of the past, when there had been no public discussion on major items of procurement and public expenditure. The JSCD needed to raise the question of the weapons demands of South Africa's armed services, the relevance of these requirements in the light of security and other socioeconomic priorities, and the particular specifications of the proposed equipment.

Since its creation, the JSCD has developed its powers considerably. This has been the result of both improved knowledge of defence matters among its members (few of whom have experience in this field) and greater contact between the defence force and the committee. Through the minister, members of the JSCD are briefed on defence matters. By 1997, on the completion of the Defence Review force design process, there were four JSCD subcommittees: on transformation, civic education, language policy, and the defence industry. Specialists are called in as needed to brief members on these and related issues.

A further committee of potential importance in the context of both transparency and legislative defence oversight is the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) of the Cabinet. Its terms of reference are, first, to process arms export licences to ensure compliance with government guidelines and international treaty obligations; and second, to propose policy on the acquisition of weapons and military equipment for the South African armed services and the arms trade in general. Any major acquisition of weapons from an overseas supplier would be referred to this committee for approval.

Future Roles and New Equipment Purchases

In terms of the constitution itself, the "primary objective of the defence force is to defend and protect the Republic, its territorial integrity and its people in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of international law regulating the use of force."⁶

Constitutional Obligations. According to the constitution, the defence forces exist:

- (a) For service in the defence of the Republic, for the protection of its sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- (b) For service in compliance with the international obligations of the Republic with regard to international bodies and other states;
- (c) For service in the preservation of life, health or property;
- (d) For service in the provision or maintenance of essential services;
- (e) For service in the upholding of law and order in the Republic in cooperation with the South African Police Services under circumstances set out in a law where the said Police Service is unable to maintain law and order on its own; and
- (f) For service in support of any department of state for the purpose of socio-economic upliftment.⁷

The 1996 defence white paper "Defence in a Democracy" fleshes out, *inter alia*, the challenges of transformation, the role of defence forces, the nature of the strategic environment facing South Africa, human resource issues, policy relating to arms control and the defence industry, and the organisation of civil-military relations in the new South Africa.⁸ The white paper notes that

the ending of apartheid and the establishment of democracy have given rise to the dramatic changes in the external strategic environment from the perspective of South Africa. The country is no longer isolated internationally. It has been welcomed into many international organisations, most importantly the United Nations (UN), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Southern African 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 in Southern Africa in particular. There are expectations that South Africa will become involved in peace-support operations on the continent. South Africa does not now, and will not in the future, have aggressive intentions towards any state. It is not confronted by an immediate conventional military threat, and does not anticipate external military aggression in the short to medium term (+/- 5 years). . . .

The absence of a foreseeable conventional military threat provides considerable space to rationalise, redesign and "rightsize" the SANDF. The details of this process will be spelt out in the Defence Review.⁹

The white paper notes that "the size, design, structure and budget of the SANDF will therefore be determined mainly by its primary function," although provisions will have also "to be made for the special requirements of internal deployment and international peace operations."¹⁰ As a result, the SANDF is to maintain a core defence capability, with the ability both to deal with small-scale contingencies and to expand in size should the situation warrant it. This includes the maintenance and, where appropriate, the adequate upgrading or replacement of military equipment. Indeed, the constitution notes that the <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol52/iss1/5>

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SANDF "should be established in a manner that it will provide a balanced, modern and technologically advanced military force."¹¹

In the absence of a conventional military threat, the SANDF is thus to comprise a relatively small regular force and a "sufficiently" large part-time force. The white paper also notes that employment of the SANDF in support of the police is likely to persist, "because of ongoing public violence and the relative shortage of police personnel."¹²

The Defence Review of 1997, as approved by Parliament, proposed a SANDF force design as given in Table 2.¹³

Internal Security Functions. It is generally expected that any government's most fundamental duty is to provide for the security of its citizens. So-called "winning" nations are expected to display incremental improvements in meeting these basic needs, including economic prosperity, welfare, and the provision of individual security. In turn, the state should maintain a monopoly on coercive power in that society.

However, for South Africa, internal security, stability, and individual security are some way off. Indeed, the media both within and outside South Africa paint a picture of a worsening rather than an improving internal security situation, specifically with regard to criminal rather than political violence, and related to this, the government's ability to police effectively.

South Africa now leads the field of available comparative international measures of citizens murdered: in 1996, there were 61.1 murders per hundred thousand people of the population (about seven times the rate in the United States) and 119.5 rapes. Although the rates of most categories of crime went down between 1995 and 1997 (see Table 3), there is also evidence from victim studies of a decrease in crimes where reportage is not required for insurance claims. The public has responded to this increase in crime in a number of ways. Some people have simply voted with their feet and emigrated; during the first six months of 1996 the number of emigrants (7,811) was nearly double the number of immigrants (4,063). Others have armed themselves; some 4.1 million gun licenses have been issued by the state, more than 195,000 in 1996 alone.

Other responses have included a rise in vigilantism; calls for the reimposition of the death sentence; increasing use of private security forces (there are around 140,000 registered guards in South Africa today); and calls for the involvement of the SANDF in combatting crime, particularly in the absence of a conventional military threat. Indeed, in February 1997 the minister of defence, Dr. Dullah Omar, proclaimed his support for the deployment of the SANDF in the fight against crime.

New Purchases. Following preliminary approval of recommendations in the 1997 Defence Review regarding force structure and equipment requirements, a

Table 2
SANDF Force Design

| Personnel | |
|--|--------|
| Full-Time Force (FTF) | 22,000 |
| Part-Time Force (PTF) | 69,400 |
| SA Army | |
| Mobile Division | 1 |
| Mechanised Brigade (RDF) | 1 |
| Parachute Brigade | 1 |
| Special Forces Brigade | 1 |
| Group HQ | 27 |
| Light Infantry Battalions | 14 |
| Territorial/Motorised Infantry Batts. | 12 |
| Area Protection Units | 183 |
| SA Air Force | |
| Light Fighters | 16 |
| Medium Fighters | 32 |
| Light Reconnaissance Aircraft | 16 |
| Medium Signals Intel. Aircraft | -- |
| Long-Range Recon Aircraft | 6 |
| Medium-Range Recon Aircraft | -- |
| Short-Range Recon Aircraft | 10 |
| Remotely Piloted Squadrons | 1 |
| Combat Support Helicopters | 12 |
| Maritime Helicopters | 5 |
| Transport Helicopters | 96 |
| Transport Aircraft | 44 |
| VIP Aircraft | 9 |
| In-Flight Refuelling/Electronic Warfare Aircraft | 5 |
| Voluntary Squadrons (part-time reservist) | 9 |
| Radar Squadrons | 3.5 |
| Point Defence Squadrons | -- |
| Mobile Ground Signals Intel. Team | 3 |
| SA Navy | |
| Submarines | 4 |
| Corvettes | 4 |
| Strike Craft | 6 |
| Combat Support Ships | 1 |
| Minesweeper/Hunters | 8 |
| Inshore Patrol Vessels | 2 |
| Harbour Patrol | 39 |
| SA Medical Services | |
| CB Defensive Programmes | 1 |
| Medical Battalion Groups (FTF) | 1 |
| Medical Battalion Groups (PTF) | 1.5 |

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Table 3
National Crime Statistics
 (per 100,000 population)

| | 1995 | 1996 |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Fraud | 147.9 | 147.3 |
| Rape | 115.2 | 119.5 |
| Serious Assault | 535.8 | 545.6 |
| Robbery | 99.1 | 122.0 |
| Illegal Firearm Possession | 28.8 | 30.5 |
| Murder | 64.6 | 61.1 |
| Vehicle Theft | 245.0 | 229.0 |
| Drug-related Crime | 98.9 | 92.9 |
| Attempted Murder | 64.3 | 67.5 |

Source: *Star* (South Africa), 10 March 1997

Request for Information (RFI) was issued in September 1997 for U.S. \$3 billion worth of equipment for the SANDF. It had become clear that if the SANDF was to be able to undertake its constitutional obligations, additional equipment had to be acquired. As noted, however, and in contrast with the past, when defence procurements were largely decided by bargaining between service chiefs, these requirements were for the first time the product of a process overseen by parliamentary control and open to public scrutiny.

The items required in terms of the Defence Review are: four new corvettes (with helicopters) and four submarines for the navy; sixty light utility helicopters (to replace the Alouette IIIs in service); fifty main battle tanks (reduced from 108 due to financial restraints); and forty-eight jet fighters (to replace with a single type the Mirages, Cheetahs, and Impalas in service).

At the close of the deadline of the RFI on 31 October 1997, nine countries had put forward bids: Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Canada, Sweden, Russia, Italy, and the Czech Republic.¹⁴ The items were bid on by some firms as packages, but each bidder was to prepare for Armscor individual item proposals. Important aspects of the RFI were industrial participation or "offsets"* (separated into defence industrial participation, managed by the defence industry, and nonmilitary participation, managed by the Department of Trade and Industry) and "soft" (concessionary) financing arrangements. South Africa is seeking up to 100 percent (and more) offsets, including technology transfer and socio-

* *Offset*: "a collective term for various industrial and commercial concessions extracted from sellers by foreign governments or firms as conditions for purchasing military exports" (Dennis B. Wilson, "Balancing Efficiency with Equity in Foreign Defense Acquisitions," *Naval War College Review*, Spring 1995, esp. pp. 68-9 and nn. 1, 2).

economic projects, as well as grace periods for repayment (to start only in 2001) and favourable loan terms.¹⁵ From the initial bids, companies were shortlisted for each of the different categories of equipment required and, in December 1997, were notified of the impending Request for Quotation (RFQ) deadline of May 1998. Since that time, the LIFT (lead-in fighter trainer aircraft) project has been added to the packages, and the U.K., Italy, Russia together with Italy, and the Czech Republic have been invited to submit their best and final offers by 15 June 1998.

Each item has been ranked by the Department of Defence according to its military value, by the Department of Trade and Industry according to offset content, and by the Department of Finance with respect to financing aspects. The Cabinet is expected to give its answer in the second half of 1998. This decision may well include a proviso that the procurement be staggered over a number of years, or that only certain types of equipment with a high priority be purchased now and that nonessential items (such as, as some have argued, the tanks) be delayed.¹⁶

Problems Facing the SANDF

The South African National Defence Force now faces challenges in a striking variety of areas. Two of them are familiar to medium and larger naval powers around the world—funding cuts, and the competing demands of combat readiness and peace operations. Others, however, are specific to the circumstances in which the Republic of South Africa now finds itself: increased demands from the constitutional military obligation to assist in dealing with domestic crime and unrest, the uncertain future of the state defence-industrial organization, and the question of whether and how to establish naval ties with African and Indian Ocean nations. Not only will each of these problems be difficult to manage in the coming months and years, but each will establish the future character of the South African armed forces in some vital way. Collectively, their outcomes will clearly be of fundamental, defining importance. Thus the SANDF today faces stakes and uncertainties remarkable even in an era marked by rapid reorientation of national militaries.

Funding. In South Africa, the defence budget has dropped from 4.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1989–1990 (U.S. \$4.9 billion in 1997 values) to 1.6 percent in 1997–1998 (U.S. \$2 billion). As defence budgets shrink worldwide, much of the brunt of this reduction has fallen on equipment procurement rather than personnel and operational costs (P&O). In the same period, the capital project share of the SANDF's budget relative to P&O costs has fallen from 43 percent in 1989–1990 to 14 percent in 1997–1998 (see tables 4 and 5). Yet inevitably there are longer-term equipment and personnel costs

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attached to this cost-cutting strategy. The South African Navy (SAN) provides an example of what might happen if further funds are not allocated to equipment purchases.

Table 4
Defense Budget 1989–1990 to 1997–1998: Nominal Comparison
 (constant U.S. dollars, millions)

| 1989–1990 | | 1997–1998 |
|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| 391 (18%) | Personnel | 889 (45%) |
| 837 (39%) | Operating | 825 (41%) |
| 910 (43%) | Capital | 282 (14%) |
| 2,138.3 | Total | 1,995.6 |

Table 5
Defence Budget 1989–1990 to 1997–1998: Real Comparison
 (U.S. dollars, millions)

| 1989–1990 | | 1997–1998 |
|--------------|------------------|-----------|
| 891.3 (18%) | Personnel | 889 (45%) |
| 1905.6 (39%) | Operating | 825 (41%) |
| 2071.2 (43%) | Capital | 282 (14%) |
| 4,868.1 | Total | 1,996 |

The SAN's share of total defence expenditure has now shrunk to around 9 percent (from roughly 20 percent in the early 1970s). This is the result of years of budget neglect. The land and air forces' domination of the budget stems from the needs of the border wars of the 1970s and 1980s; hence the present lack of both surface vessels and submarines. Currently, the SAN has no blue-water surface combat capability; its high seas coverage is limited to its two combat-support vessels, the SAS *Drakensberg* and the SAS *Outeniqua*, plus one (at any given time) of its three *Daphne*-class submarines. Maritime patrols are currently undertaken by a modified turboprop version of the venerable DC-3 Dakota, and Puma helicopters are utilised in the air-to-ship role. The Navy's nine *Warrior*-class strike craft will all need replacement shortly after the turn of the century; despite upgrading, the weapon systems of these vessels are of the "fire and die" variety.¹⁷ It is notable that even if the Navy were to acquire both submarines and corvettes, its total budget share would rise to no more than 15 percent and its capital equipment share from 6 percent to around 25 percent.

The manner in which the overall budget is apportioned has also affected capabilities. As noted earlier, the ratio of capital expenditure to personnel and operating costs has declined, from 43 percent in 1989–1990 to 14 percent today. In nominal terms, the SAN's expenditure breakdown from 1989–1990 to 1996–1997 has altered as indicated in Table 6. However, in the face of pressing

social demands, it is unlikely that the South African public will stand for an increased overall budget allocation. Indeed, the SANDF is already bracing itself for a probable cut of a further U.S. \$100 million for 1998–1999. This might compromise the reequipment plan, and the uncertainty created through defence budget cuts is even now causing a hemorrhage of technical and other middle-ranking personnel, making it difficult to bring new equipment into service anyway.¹⁸

Table 6
South African Navy Expenditures: Nominal Comparison
(constant U.S. dollars, millions)

| | Personnel | Operating | Capital |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| 1989–1990 | 57.5 | 32.5 | 38.3 (29.87%) |
| 1996–1997 | 96.5 | 93.6 | 18.3 (8.8%) |

The needs of the Navy—as well as of the other service arms—will thus probably have to be funded from within the current budget. As the SANDF reduces its forces from the current strength of 95,545 (including 21,119 civilians) to 70,000 (including a roughly 25 percent civilian component) by 2001, there will be a need to examine force design and infrastructure critically to see, in the words of one service chief, “what goes in and what comes out of the tap.”¹⁹ This will possibly mean that the bulky and expensive army headquarters, in particular, will come under close scrutiny. Currently the Army receives around 40 percent of the defence budget. An amount of three times the Navy’s entire annual budget is allocated to maintaining Army Headquarters and the nine army command headquarters.²⁰

The budget situation may also affect the SANDF’s internal role. The SA Army has recently warned that it may soon be forced to suspend operations in support of the police due to a lack of funds. Following severe budget cuts, the Army has considered recently the discharge of seven thousand short-service personnel, who form the bulk of deployable peacetime forces.²¹

Even by post-Cold War international standards, the envisaged overall 30 percent cut in manpower is severe and could have repercussions for the morale and operational abilities of the SANDF. There are, as a result, a number of key questions that will have to be addressed by policy makers in the course of devising a personnel strategy for the SANDF. First, in terms of South Africa’s Defence Review the ratio of personnel expenditure to operational and capital outlay should be 40:30:30, with twenty-two thousand fighting troops. It is currently debated whether this is a realistic strategy in terms of international practice and South Africa’s own personnel and financial limitations. Put another way, it is unclear what the optimum “quality-quantity” curve for developing nations like South Africa should be. Given the sharpness of the retrenchments

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and reductions needed to “rightsize” the SANDF, it is also unclear whether there are comparable international examples that can be learnt from.²² Second, it is uncertain how South Africa’s demographic realities will impact on the balance between a technologically advanced SANDF (which is a constitutional obligation) and the need to provide greater employment in a country where there is already 35 percent unemployment and even what South Africans term “jobless growth.” What, it has been asked, is the optimum relationship between the provision of training services and the need to ensure a military return on personnel investment? Third, the optimum civilian-military breakdown within SANDF is also a matter of speculation, including the extent to which the SANDF should outsource its support services.²³

A Controversial Internal Role? Unsurprisingly, the issue of military involvement in crime prevention has been a contentious one. Many senior officers are unhappy with such a role, arguing that pulling the armed services into an internal policing role would blunt their military effectiveness and warfighting capabilities. Public perceptions of the internal deployment of the military, however, are generally positive.

Major General F. du Toit (Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations) has argued in this regard that if South Africa is to achieve a condition of internal security and stability, a two-pronged approach is required. First, there is a need for social upliftment in pursuance of social justice, economic development, and democracy. Second, there is a need to employ all the means at the disposal of the government (not simply the military on its own) and of the private sector to combat the threats that are destabilising South African society.²⁴

The Army has approximately eight thousand soldiers deployed countrywide on tasks that include vehicle and foot patrols along vulnerable border areas and in township flash points; the protection of remote farms; vehicle checkpoints; and joint action with the South African Police Services (SAPS). During 1996, the Air Force flew 1,737 sorties to combat crime; it spent 3,339 hours patrolling the country’s borders, and 564 more helping the SAN patrol the coastline. The SAN spent 939 hours patrolling the coast, during which it assisted in the inspection of seventy-three ships.²⁵ The cost was an estimated billion rand, U.S. \$170 million, out of the defence budget.

The constitution provides for the employment of the SANDF to maintain law and order in cooperation with the SAPS when the latter is unable to maintain the situation on its own. Problems here include adequate training and equipment for the armed forces in this role, the potential undermining of the image and legitimacy of the SANDF, and the burden that this task places on an already stretched defence budget.

In summary, the SANDF will have to prioritise those areas of criminal policing in which it becomes involved and which, as General du Toit puts it,

constitute a threat to the constitutional nature of the state. It would have to concentrate on serious crime, particularly the proliferation of illegal weapons and offenses (such as car hijackings) requiring air support in response; border security problems, including the influx of illegal immigrants across South Africa's borders; stock theft and attacks on farms; all forms of smuggling, including drugs and weapons; the expansion of paramilitary forces; violent political unrest; and threats to the environment, especially marine resources.

A Future for the Defence Industry? Inasmuch as the SANDF is the South African armaments industry's largest client, the defence budget issue raises the question of what might happen in the near future to that industry—specifically to the procurement agency, Armscor, and the state industrial wing, known as Denel (an acronym of “detonics” and “electronics”), created from Armscor on 1 April 1992. The industry's future is caught up in its past (it was once a leading “sanctions buster,” heavily involved in the protection of the apartheid regime) and also with current government policy—which has to balance the demands of a moral commitment to the upholding of human rights with those of domestic economic growth and employment. With an estimated eight hundred corporations employing some fifty thousand people (down from 160,000 in the late 1980s), the South African arms industry accounts for 1.2 percent of gross domestic product and about 5 percent of national manufacturing output.

It was to address this policy balance that the government established, as noted, the National Conventional Arms Control Committee, which reviews applications to market weapons and also applications to export them (for instance, a controversial proposal to sell arms to Syria and Saudi Arabia). Between 1 April 1994 and 9 February 1998, South Africa sold arms worth R3,253 billion to 110 countries. India was the country's single biggest arms client, with purchases worth R637 million over this period. This does not reflect current deals, which include: the U.S. \$460 million sale to Malaysia of Rooivalk attack helicopters (which may now well be canceled or postponed, given Malaysia's current economic woes);²⁶ and the U.S. \$30 million contract for the supply of remote-controlled pilotless drones to Algeria, announced in January 1998.²⁷

Despite increasing commercialisation, Denel's survival hinges increasingly on its ability to export, and its best sales lie in offensive weapons. South Africa's international isolation effectively created an indigenous capability to produce weapons that in some cases—such as the Rooivalks and the G-5/G-6 howitzers—are leaders in their class.²⁸ In 1992–1993 Denel's sales to the South African security forces (including the Police Services) amounted to 63 percent of its income, with 17 percent from exports (despite international sanctions) and 11 percent from commercial operations. By 1995–1996 this had shifted to 45 percent from the South African security forces, 30 percent from exports, and 17 percent from commercial operations.²⁹ Sales to the security forces were worth

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U.S. \$320 million in 1995–1996, as against U.S. \$800 million in 1989.³⁰ Exports were mainly artillery, avionics, fuses, and anti-landmine technology.³¹

As a result of the continuing fall in the South African defence budget and the consequent change in ratio of personnel and operating expenditure to capital outlay, Denel has signalled an intention to increase its global market share from its current level (under 1 percent) to 2 percent, raising its value to roughly U.S. \$500 million and creating fifty thousand new jobs. The corporation has opened offices in Paris, Abu Dhabi, Tel Aviv, Moscow, Kuala Lumpur, Beijing, and New York. In this effort the government will face pressure from human rights lobbyists, though this is expected to be offset by the support of the populace in view of the likely economic benefits.³² In a recent South African foreign policy survey, 52 percent of respondents were of the opinion that South Africa should sell arms under strict conditions, 38 percent were against the country selling arms at all, and 9 percent said that South Africa should sell arms to anyone who can pay.³³

Peace Support Operations. Interestingly, 83 percent polled in the recent survey were in favour of South Africa being seen as helping the United Nations in its peacekeeping activities. South Africa's armed services are likely, in fact, to increase the scale and scope of that role. Although there are currently no external conventional military threats to South Africa, it may be expected that the Republic will increasingly be willing to participate in peace support operations, particularly in Africa. This is acknowledged in the defence white paper, which notes that "as a fully fledged member of the international community, South Africa will fulfill its responsibility to participate in international peace-support operations."³⁴

South Africa's willingness to take up this task has been highlighted by the trend in African states to take a more active role in determining their own fates—what South Africa's deputy president Thabo Mbeki has described as an "African renaissance"—and a decreasing interest on the part of the Western community (since Somalia) to become involved in peacekeeping in Africa.³⁵

As a result, the idea of a pan-African force has become, in the space of the past twelve months, both more acceptable and more necessary. At one level this has found expression in the American-led proposals for an African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), under which a ten-thousand-strong eight-battalion force is envisaged. Despite French reservations, the G-7 nations agreed at the Denver summit in June 1997 to support the ACRI. South Africa has responded coolly to the U.S. proposal, given concerns over leadership and control of the force as well as the political implications of leaving African peacekeeping to Africans, in defiance of the spirit of multilateralism; however, seven African states (Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, Malawi, Mali, and Tunisia) have volunteered troops to the ACRI. It is expected that around four hundred U.S.

instructors will be involved in training next year. In late May 1997, 120 soldiers, mainly from the U.S. Army's Third Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, arrived in Uganda and Senegal to start training 750 soldiers from each state.³⁶

South Africa (like Nigeria) is not expected to participate in the ACRI. However, the SANDF has allocated two battalions as peacekeepers, signalling a willingness to end the country's isolation in this regard. Also, in May 1997 three hundred South African soldiers participated in a groundbreaking exercise organised by the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe in eastern Zimbabwe. Code-named BLUE HUNGWE, it was the first time that South African troops had participated in a military exercise with other African states, all fellow members of the fourteen-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Currently, the South African government is drafting its policy paper on peace support operations. Unsurprisingly, two critical questions arise. When should South Africa become involved in peace support operations? How should it engage?

A too-easy answer to the first question would be, "When South Africa's national interests are threatened." But that provides little guidance in an era when the division between the substance and process of foreign policy and diplomacy is barely discernible; in other words, "how to do it" may in practice largely determine "what to do." Also, if South Africa is to become involved in areas that affect its (broadly defined) national interest, as outlined above, then it could find itself enmeshed in virtually every African conflict. There is little doubt that South Africa's national interests are served by the currently improving international impression of Africa, created in part by continental attempts to come to grips with its own problems.

However, there are both resource and political limitations on South (and southern) Africa's ability to engage with every continental conflict situation. The need for South Africa to pick its times and places carefully before involving itself in peace support operations (whether at the level of humanitarian assistance or that of the full spectrum of peace support operations) is highlighted by sensitivity over a perceived South African hegemony in Africa, a high-profile diplomatic role that is not always backed up by results—as in President Nelson Mandela's largely unsuccessful attempt in April 1997 to engineer a solution to the Zairian impasse aboard the SAS *Outeniqua* off the coast of Congo-Brazzaville.

It may be expected, however, that South African involvement in peace support operations will precede the operationalisation of the Southern African Development Community's security arm, the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, which was created in 1996. The Organ has been beset by internecine difficulties, making its goal of a regional peacekeeping capability under its auspices difficult to envisage at present.

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Cooperation across the Indian Ocean

The mutual hemispheric concerns of South Africa's antipodean partners raise interesting collaborative possibilities. Some of these are currently being addressed through the operation of the Valdivia Group, involving other countries from the so-called "Deep South"—Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, New Zealand, and Uruguay. Cooperation with like-minded states in multilateral fora could add value, a "multiplying effect," to their individual weights on issues of mutual concern.³⁷ Cooperation in the embryonic Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) may occur around trade and investment issues (for example, in the World Trade Organisation) and maritime concerns, especially resource security, the repair and building of ships, the environment, safety at sea, piracy, pollution, and search and rescue. Indeed, given the combination of a paucity of southern African naval capabilities and the immature ties that exist in the Indian Ocean rim, joint procurement on a triangular or even quadrangular basis could be considered.³⁸ As the Chief of the South African Navy, Vice Admiral Robert Simpson-Anderson, has argued,

One of the more ambitious possibilities that needs to be mooted is that of South Africa entering into shipbuilding programmes with other African countries. Besides the obvious savings brought about by quantities of scale, there are the possible longer-term savings for the region—simplifying and unifying logistics requirements, standardisation of equipment and training, and lower maintenance costs brought about by localised maintenance facilities, to name but a few. Ships built under this programme could possibly be an extension of the new corvette programme that the SA Navy is pursuing (an African version of the Anzac frigate?), or smaller craft such as a regional replacement for the Fast Attack Craft that most African navies operate. An increased, viable sea-going capability would help strengthen the navies considerably, and in turn strengthen the countries that depend so much on their maritime lines of communication.³⁹

Table 7 shows how little naval capacity now exists in southern Africa.⁴⁰ Clearly the political and economic advantages of such a procurement would be greatly increased if this were truly a *joint* endeavour, involving potentially substantial offsets and job-creation schemes.⁴¹

Table 7
Southern African Naval Capabilities

| | Personnel | Ships | Defence Budget (U.S. dollars) |
|--------------|-----------|-------|-------------------------------|
| Angola | 2,000 | 2 | 295 million (1996) |
| DR Congo | - | - | est. 250 million (1997) |
| Mauritius | 500 | 1 | 61 million (1996) |
| Mozambique | 100 | - | 72 million (1996) |
| Namibia | 100 | - | 73 million (1996) |
| Seychelles | 200 | - | 10 million (1997) |
| South Africa | 9,090 | 24 | 2.13 billion (1997) |
| Tanzania | 1,000 | - | 89 million (1996) |

* * *

South Africa, like most of the developing world, faces an environment dominated by nonconventional (nonmilitary) security challenges. These include the need to provide economic growth and socioeconomic uplift; curtail poverty and crime; deal with the environmental fallout of rapid economic and population growth and of uncontrollable urbanisation; arrest the flow of drugs, illegal migration, small arms, and the operations of crime syndicates; and to combat a growing global political unipolarism wherein changes in ways of addressing global multilateral issues—such as reform of the United Nations—are, from the viewpoint of the developing world, too often held hostage to national issues by the world's last remaining superpower, the United States.

Not surprisingly, then, question marks still exist for the role of the SANDF in a new South Africa. Is it to be principally a low-tech source of employment and training, mainly involved in internal security issues, or a high-tech deterrent against outside threat, as the constitution demands? How will it use the equipment currently destined for its branches, and will it have the skilled manpower to do so? Finally, without suggesting that the two are mutually incompatible, how will it balance its relationship with its established partners in the developed world to the north, and with its newer allies in the southern African region and elsewhere to its geographic left and right?

Notes

1. South African Ministry of Defence (SAMOD), *The National Defence Force in Transition: Annual Report Financial Year 1994–1995* (Johannesburg: 1st Military Printing Regiment, 1995). Foreword by the Minister of Defence, J. Modise, p. i. This section of the paper is based partly on research done while producing (with Martin Edmonds) *Uncharted Waters: A Review of South Africa's Naval Options* (Johannesburg: SAIIA/CDISS, 1996).

2. *Ibid.*, foreword by Chief of the National Defence Force, General G. L. Meiring, p. 1.

3. The establishment of a civilian defence secretariat is provided for in the Constitution, Chapter 11, Article 204.

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4. The defence secretary, Pierre Steyn, noted in mid-1997 that defence was in his opinion not yet under the control of civilians, as the white paper and Defence Review had not been translated into a manageable defence plan, programme, and budget for strategic decision making, performance, control, and accountability. Moreover, General Steyn noted that his dependence on military staff and the weakness of his civilian staff undermined the performance of the civilian defence secretariat. He argued that civilian control would become a reality only when the boundary between the defence secretariat and the SANDF was clearly drawn, leaving a balanced distribution of functions between the secretary and the chief of the SANDF; when the line and staff capacities of the secretariat and the SANDF were constituted with predominantly civilian and military capacities, respectively; and when separate career, management, and development systems for civilian and military functionaries under the control of the secretariat and the SANDF, respectively, had been commissioned. See *Citizen* (South Africa), 16 April 1997.

5. Republic of South Africa, *Government Gazette* (Cape Town), vol. 343, no. 15466, 28 January 1994, p. 150.

6. Chapter 11, Article 200 (2).

7. Article 227(1), Interim Constitution.

8. See *Defence in a Democracy: White Paper on National Defence for the Republic of South Africa*, May 1996.

The white paper was the result of a lengthy process of consultation that began in June 1995 with the publication of a draft document (which was subject to comments and input from political parties, defence industry, analysts, members of the public, Parliament, and the JSCD) and concluded with the presentation of the final document to the Cabinet on 8 May 1996.

9. See *ibid.*, chap. 4.

10. See *ibid.*, chap. 5.

11. Interim Constitution, Article 226.

12. *Defence in a Democracy*.

13. Fighter, helicopter, and transport numbers do not include aircraft at flying schools, which are part of (and are costed with) the support structure. The long-range maritime patrol aircraft will, for reasons of cost, not be equipped with full surface and subsurface weapons systems, although they will be fitted to accommodate them. This will enable upgrading of combat capabilities when required. This information was supplied by the SANDF, January 1998.

14. The (rough) details of some aspects of the various bids in October 1997 were: Britain/ Sweden—JAS39 Gripen jet fighter/trainer (twelve two-seater and thirty-six single-seater), four F-3000 corvettes (with Lynx helicopters), Challenger-2 main battle tanks (MBTs), and four *Upholder* submarines; France—four *La Fayette* or *Surcouf* corvettes, two secondhand *Daphne* submarines (to supplement the SAN's current three in service) or four joint Spanish *Skorpene* submarines, Cougar maritime patrol helicopters, Eurocopter EC135 light utility helicopters, LeClerc MBTs, and Mirage 2000 or Mirage F1 jets; Germany—four Meko 200 corvettes and four 206/9/212 submarines and four 509A corvettes, plus twenty CASA military aircraft; Canada—sixty light utility Bell 425 helicopters, and *Halifax* or *Vigilant*-class frigates/patrol vessels; Italy—MB339CD jet trainers, four corvettes, and Agusta helicopters; and Russia—150 T80U MBTs, K-28/K-27 helicopters, four Kilo-class submarines, *Gepard* frigates, and 150 MiG-29 fighters. The following entries made the respective short lists: Corvettes were shortlisted from Germany (Meko 200SA), France (*La Fayette*), Spain (Project 590B), and Britain (F3000) (Italy's offer was rejected as unsuitable for South African waters). Fighters from Germany (AT2000 RSA), France (Mirage), and Sweden/Britain (Gripen) were shortlisted, though neither Britain's Hawk nor the Russian MiG-29 made the cut. (Russia's countertrade offer apparently did not meet the minimum requirements, and there were also concerns about long-term logistics reliability.) Canada's Bell, Italy's Agusta, and the French-German Eurocopter were still in the race to provide the light helicopter replacement for the Air Force's Alouettes. The French LeClerc and the British Challenger tanks were shortlisted. Italy (MB3391D), Russia/Italy (Yak-AEN 130), and the Czech Republic (Aero Vodchody L159B) were all asked to submit offers for the LIFT. See *Business Day* Johannesburg, South Africa), 7 January 1998, and <http://www.sacs.org.za/cgi-bin/vdkw.cgi/x92d59f3-275/search/5078180/42>. U.S. companies were not invited to tender because of the criminal settlement going on at that time between Denel and the U.S. government. In February 1997, Armscor was convicted in the United States of violating U.S. arms export controls during the apartheid era. In return for Armscor agreeing to subject itself to the jurisdiction of U.S. courts and paying substantial fines, a settlement was engineered.

15. The South African government tender proposal reportedly modifies standard international military acquisition practice, wherein the purchasing country makes a 30 percent down payment upon signing the contract and then makes pro rata payments as the systems are developed, manufactured, and delivered. The minimum countertrade requirements have been increased from 55 percent to 80 percent of the value of the contract. See "No Shortage of Countries Eager for SA's R10bn Arms Deal, Despite Onerous Terms," *Sunday Independent* (South Africa), 2 November 1997. See also "Offsets Is the Name of This Bidding Game," *Business*

Day, 28 November 1997. Interestingly, the British bidders have proposed that South Africa pay for the equipment in gold. See *Business Day*, 25 June 1997.

16. For details of the nature of industrial and military participation offsets, see "New Weapons Coming into SA's Sights," *Sunday Independent*, 18 December 1997. Also, "S. Africa to Weigh Up Balance of Packages," *Jane's Defence Contracts*, October 1997. As an example, the Swedish offer involves the supply of heavy rolling stock worth up to U.S. \$85 million to the South African parastatal, Transnet, to account for more than half of the civilian offset requirement. See *Business Day*, 9 January 1998.

17. For details of the SANDF's and SAN's upgrades to weapon systems, see *Jane's Defence Systems Modernisation*, June 1997.

18. See *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 10 December 1997, p. 18.

19. Interview, Robert C. Simpson-Anderson [VAdm., SAN], Pretoria, 4 March 1997.

20. The nine army headquarters grew from just four in the 1980s due to the implementation of the Botha administration's National Security Management System. See "Time Has Come to Give Navy a Fairer Slice of the Budget," *Business Day*, 15 October 1997. There are also thirty-five army group headquarters, set up in the early 1980s to provide counterinsurgency coverage.

21. *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 11 June 1997.

22. These issues are the focus of a study on *Personnel Strategies for the SANDF* being undertaken during 1998 at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).

23. A number of the aircraft maintenance and testing functions have recently been outsourced.

24. For a detailed discussion of these issues, see Greg Mills and Mark Shaw, "Crime and Policing in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *South African Yearbook of International Affairs* 1997 (Johannesburg: SAIIA, 1997), pp. 214-24.

25. See *CSANDF Internal Communication Bulletin* 3/97, 17 January 1997. Also, Major General F du Toit, "The Role of the South African National Defence Force in Internal Security," *ISSUP* [Institute for Strategic Studies University of Pretoria] *Bulletin* 2/97.

26. In 1996 the minister in charge of the NCACC, Professor Kadar Asnal, said that trade with Iran, Kenya, and the Koreans was under review, while Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan, and Zaire were blacklisted. Algeria and Malaysia are on the list of approved buyers. The deal for selling tank-firing guidance systems worth an estimated U.S. \$650 million to Syria in 1997 came to naught when the United States expressed anger. The vetting process has come under considerable criticism in South Africa. For example, critics have argued that the refusal to sell howitzers and helicopters to Turkey was more on account of Ankara's record against the Kurdish group PKK (an ANC ally) than its human rights record. The on again/off again sale of weapons to Rwanda at the time of war in eastern Zaire was also criticised, as was the (pre-1994) sale of small arms to that country. The same is true for Indonesia. After his visit to Indonesia in mid-1997, President Mandela said that in spite of the East Timor controversy, Indonesia was on the approved list of client countries, though for "defensive" weapons only. See *Business Day*, 14 November 1997. As a result, parliamentary opponents have described South Africa's arms sales policy as a "drunken zig-zag." See "Arms Sales Can Hit SA's Moral Stature," *Business Day*, 24 October 1997.

27. See "Algerian Army Chief Visits SA after Deal with Denel," *Business Day*, 16 February 1998. See also, "Arms Sales Hit by Asian Crisis," *Sunday Times* (South Africa), 28 June 1998.

28. The G-5/G-6 family of 155 mm artillery systems has been widely exported. The South African Army has seventy-two G-5 and forty-three G-6 systems. Of the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, three use Denel artillery: Oman operates twenty-four G-6s, Qatar twelve G-5s, and the UAE seventy-eight G-6s. Denel is currently competing to meet requirements in Kuwait (for forty-eight G-5s) and Saudi Arabia (eighty G-6s). The same technology is also being marketed as a 155 mm tank turret, which India has tested on a T-72M1 chassis. See *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 10 December 1997.

29. See *F&T* [Finans and Tegnieis] *Weekly*, 9 May 1997.

30. Information supplied by the South African High Commission [i.e., embassy], Canberra, December 1997. For a detailed summary of the South African armaments industry, see Ravinder Pal Singh and Pieter D. Wezeman, "South Africa's Arms Production and Exports," *SIPRI Yearbook* 1995 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), pp. 569-83.

31. See *Business Day*, 14 January 1997.

32. For a highlighting of the moral dilemmas of the South African arms trade, see "The Moral Dilemma of Frankenstein," *Business Report*, 3 September 1997.

33. See *Pretoria News*, 3 December 1997.

34. *Defence in a Democracy*, chap. 5. The white paper notes that "operations in Southern Africa should be sanctioned by SADC and should be undertaken together with other SADC states rather than conducted on a unilateral basis. Similarly, operations in Africa should be sanctioned by the Organisation of African Unity." It also notes that "South Africa's consideration of involvement in specific peace-support operations will not be limited to the possible deployment of troops. The involvement could also take the form of providing

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equipment, logistical support, engineering services, communications systems and medical personnel and facilities."

35. The term "African renaissance" was first used in his speech at the U.S. Corporate Council on Africa, Chantilly, Virginia, April 1997.

36. There are doubts in South Africa as to why U.S. Special Forces have been tasked to do this, given their apparent lack of knowledge or experience of peace support operations. See in general Derek J. Christian [Capt., SAN], "The African Crisis Response Force: A Critical Issue for Africa," *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1998, pp. 70–81.

37. These issues were the subject of a conference held at the South African Institute of International Affairs with the support of the Australian High Commission and Chilean embassy, 11–12 November 1997, "Looking Sideways: The Specifics of South-South Co-operation."

38. The navies of southern Africa have already held initial talks about a joint shipbuilding programme focussing on patrol vessels to complement the planned patrol corvettes of the SAN and on smaller strike craft to replace those in service with other navies of the region. See "Southern Africa Discusses Joint Shipbuilding," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 26 November 1997.

39. Robert C. Simpson-Anderson [VAdm., SAN], "The South African Navy as Part of the African Renaissance: Setting the Pace for the Future," paper given at a conference on "The South African Navy and African Renaissance," Simon's Town, 23 October 1997.

40. It is not clear how many of these vessels are serviceable. "Ships" are defined here as oceangoing vessels, usually over a thousand tonnes. See *The Military Balance* (London: ISS/Oxford Univ. Press) and *Jane's Fighting Ships 1997*.

41. Embryonic defence technology cooperation in the Indian Ocean region could expand upon the ties already created through the Australian Specialised Vehicle Systems, known as the Taipan, in which the South African company Reunert is a shareholder. Such collaboration might, for example, in the future link purchases of South African artillery and helicopters to wider (regional) technological and production cooperation. Wider bilateral Australian–South African defence ties could also potentially involve mine-clearance systems and peace support training.

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