



defence

Department:
Defence
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Media Statement

Embargo : None

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE ON THE 100TH YEAR COMMEMORATION OF THE SINKING OF SS MENDI AT ARMED FORCES DAY 21 FEBRUARY 2017.

The 21 February 2017 marks the 100th Year of the sinking of the SS Mendi, a steamship of the Elder Dempster Line, which was chartered by the British Government as a troop carrier to serve in World War 1.

On February 1917 during World War 1, the SS Mendi was transporting 823 members of the 5th Battalion, the South African Native Labour Corps to France, when she was struck and almost cut into half by a much bigger ship, the SS Darro, which was bound for Argentina.

616 South Africans – of which 607 of them were black troops died in the disaster. The men on the ship of the South Africa Native Labour Corps came from a wide range of social backgrounds.

South Africa has adopted 21 February of every year as Armed Forces Day in recognition of all those who lost their lives in the most devastating military accident in the history of our country and those that have continued to serve the country with distinction, willing to sacrifice their lives for the good of the Republic.

This year, Armed Forces Day will be commemorated in in Durban, with President Jacob Zuma and Commander-in Chief of the South African National Defence Force presiding over the event.

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Lefapha la Boiphemelo . Umnyango wezokuVikela . Kgoro ya Tshireletso iSebe lezoKhuselo . Department of Defence . Mhasho wa Tsinledzo UmNyango WezokuVikela . Ndzawulo ya swa Vusirheleri . Lehapha la Tshireletso Departement van Verdediging . LiTiko leTekuvikela