



the sandf

Department:
Defence
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: 24 January 2017

EMBARGO: None

**SUBJECT: ARMED FORCES DAY CELEBRATIONS AND THE CENTENARY
COMMEMORATION OF THE SINKING OF THE SS MENDI IN DURBAN,
KWAZULU NATAL: 21 FEBRUARY 2017**

¹In 2012, the President of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and Commander-in-Chief of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) proclaimed that 21 February each year will be observed and commemorated as Armed Forces Day (AFD). President Jacob Zuma will officiate in this 6th segment of Armed Forces Day celebrations. As the main functionary, he will take the salute from the South African National Defence Force during the military parade. It is a day on which the South African population honours men and women of the South African National Defence Force by affirming its support and gratitude to them for upholding the constitution of the Republic and defending the territorial integrity of the Republic and protecting its people.

The Chief of the South Africa National Defence Force (C SANDF), General Solly Shoke has authorised the hosting of the Armed Forces Day Celebration 2017 and the Centenary commemoration of the sinking of the SS Mendi to be held concurrently on Tuesday, 21 February 2017 at Moses Mabida Stadium in eThekweni, KwaZulu Natal Province and the English Channel in England respectively. The proceedings are scheduled to commence at 10h00.

The Armed Forces Day was implemented to achieve several objectives which are as follows:

- To unite all South Africans behind the SANDF.
- To allow the SANDF an opportunity to interact with communities.
- To expand public understanding of the military's role and its purpose to society.
- To showcase the latest military equipment and technologies used to protect the Republic and its Citizens.
- To demonstrate the military combat readiness against threats and as well as to support government during peace time.

During the AFD 2017 parade and the centenary commemoration of the sinking of the SS Mendi on 21 February 1917, the President will lay a wreath in honour of the fallen heroes of the South African Native Labour Corps (SANLC) who perished on the morning of Saturday, 21 February 1917.

²Among the black Africans lost were some prominent men such as the Pondoland chiefs Henry Bokleni, Dokoda Richard Ndamase, Mxonywa Bangani, Mongameli and the Reverend Isaac Wauchope Dyobha.

¹ <http://www.gov.za/speeches/armed-forces-day-2016-21-february-2016-2-feb-2016-0000>, accessed 28 November 2016.

² http://www.navy.mil.za/newnavy/mendi_history/mendi_hist.htm, accessed 23 January 2017.

The wreath laying ceremony will be followed by a medal parade wherein the Commander-in-Chief will bestow various military medals to deserving SANDF members including the awarding of a 40 Years Service medal to the Chief of the SANDF, General Solly Shoke.

Various other supporting activities have been planned as part of the celebrations and these activities include the following:

- **Media Launch – 08 Feb 2017**

Will be hosted on Wednesday, 08 February 2017. The venue and other related arrangements will be communicated in due course.

- **Arrival of Mechanized Columns - 14 Feb 2017**

A convoy of the various types of military vehicles and support elements will arrive in Durban in preparation for the main events and other supporting activities. The convoy will use N3 highway from Pietermaritzburg and drive through the City Centre.

- **Fan Park grand opening - 16 Feb 2017**

(Durban Old Drive Inn @ corner Sandile Thusi & Sylvester Ntuli Streets)

The Fan Park is open to public until 21 Feb 17 & will provide live-link to view adjacent events on television big screens. Opening daily from 09:00 - 18:00.

- **Live Capability Demonstration - 18 Feb 17**

(The New Beach - next to Addington Hospital).

Open to public. The demonstration will commence at 14:00 and last for 1 hour.

- **Armed Forces Day Gala Music Concert - 18 Feb 2017**

(Durban City Hall (Dr PRIXLEY KaSeme Street or old West Street).

The public is advised to get their free admission tickets at Durban City Hall Information Counter as well as Lords Army Military Unit in City Centre. Gates open at 17:00 and the event starts at 18:30.

- **CISM Fun Walk / Run - 19 Feb 2017**

(Beach Front)

The event will start at Blue Lagoon at 06:00 and end at uShaka Marine. The event is open to the public who wish to participate.

- **Night Shooting Capability - 20 Feb 2017**

(Blue Lagoon (Durban North).

The demonstration will commence at 19:00 and last for up to 45 minutes. It is open to the public, guests. Attending members of the public to be seated by 18:30

- **Armed Forces Day Parade - 21 Feb 2017**

(M4 road - podium at the back-end of Moses Mabida Stadium).

Members of the public are invited. The parade will commence at 10:00.

- **Grand Closure - Capability Demonstration - 21 Feb 2017**

(Blue Lagoon (Durban North) directly after the parade)

The public is allowed to come and view the demonstration. Those who can't make it to the parade and/or capability demo will have an opportunity to view all proceedings at the Fan Park through big screens projection (live-feed).

³Like so many other military disasters, the story of the *SS Mendi* is a story of supreme courage in the face of death and valour shown between brothers toward each other in dire circumstances. The courage displayed by these men has remained a legend in South African military history.

Members of the media are invited and encouraged to submit their names to Colonel Ronald Maseko for accreditation purposes in order to gain access to cover the AFD 2017 celebrations activities. The names should include the following details:

- Full Name and Surname
- Country of Origin
- Identification Number
- Type of Identification (ID / Passport /)
- Media House (employer)
- Area of Residence and Employment (Durban / Pretoria etc)
- Specify occupation title (e.g. Journalist / Photographer / Editor etc)
- Contact Detail (Office and Mobile numbers)

These details should reach Colonel Ronald Maseko no later than Friday, 27 January 2017. Accreditation centres will be opened from Thursday, 02 February 2017 until 21 February 2017 in Durban (Natal Mounted Rifles) and Pretoria (Air Force Base Waterkloof). Please note that no member of the media will be assisted at these centres without prior vetting of the required information as specified herein above.

Ends.

Issued by: Defence Corporate Communication
(**Defence Headquarters**)
Pretoria

Enquiries: Mr Sipiwe Dlamini
(**DOD Head of Communication**)
083 645 4294
sipiwe.dlamini@dod.mil.za

Brigadier General Mafi Mgobozi
(**Director Defence Corporate Communication**)
082 380 0724
mmgobozi@yahoo.com

Colonel Ronald Maseko
(**Senior Staff Officer Media Liaison**)
083 410 1665
sandfmedialiaison@gmail.com

³ http://www.navy.mil.za/newnavy/mendi_history/mendi_hist.htm, accessed 23 January 2017.