

SOUTH AFRICA'S MILITARY ON THE MOVE

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If one looks at the South African Defence Force (SADF), it becomes apparent that it is the strongest defence force in Africa based on trained manpower, organisation, weapons systems, mobilisation capacity and defence budget. The Republic of South Africa has the capability to procure and manufacture the overwhelming majority of its weapons and armaments through its existing parastatal, Armscor. According to *The Military Balance, 1986–87*, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, (IISS), South Africa has 250 Centurian/Olifant tanks, 1 600 Eland armoured cars, 1 500 Ratel infantry combat vehicles, 372 combat aircraft, 16 armed helicopters and 144 other helicopters. The SADF can mobilize over 400 000 personnel. Defence expenditures for 1985/6 were 2,27 billion dollars. The defence budget for 1986/7 indicates allocations of 2,012 billion dollars.

In September 1985, according to General Magnus Malan, Minister of Defence, South Africa was ninety-five percent self-sufficient in military production. In initiating its "preparedness programme" long before the 1977 mandatory arms embargo by the West, Malan said that the Republic was self-sufficient. This included the conception, design and development of armaments.

Speaking at the unveiling of the newest addition to South Africa's defence arsenal, the Cheetah fighter aircraft, in July 1986, State President P.W. Botha underscored the importance of technologically superior weapons systems when he said, "... we have come to expect that Armscor and the Defence Force ensure our security and we expect them to be at the forefront of technology." He also reiterated his theme that South Africa has developed its own highly sophisticated arms industry since the arms embargo against the Republic. He emphasized that Armscor had already achieved success in foreign marketing and "forcing the world to take cognizance of the unique ability which exists in South Africa ..." Corroborating Botha's statement is the 1987 Report of the U.S. Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on South Africa which states, "The South African Defence Force (SADF) occupies an important position in the country's power structure ... is the best trained and equipped military on the African continent. It

is widely believed that the South African government possesses the ability to develop a tactical nuclear weapon capability." The report goes on, "The military's political influence and direct participation in the highest councils of government have increased substantially ..."

The question of the arms embargo against South Africa has intensified the debate over whether, because of the embargo, South Africa is less dependent on outside sources, thereby forcing it to produce its own arms and thus creating a degree of independence heretofore not established previous to the 1963 and 1977 arms embargoes. Some pundits have argued that the arms embargo has not met the objectives of the international community but has managed to create a stronger SADF less dependent on the political whims of arms sales from external sources. The Secretary of State's Report followed this logic when it emphasized that South Africa has developed its own independent arms industry, which is now the third largest industrial group in the country, with some 16 000 employees. Furthermore, the Report states it is generally agreed that this would not have been possible without direct or indirect assistance from foreign sources (notably Israel, France and Taiwan).

With the foregoing in mind, the role of Armscor becomes of critical importance to those concerned with Southern Africa. So-called experts in our government should be analysing the role of Armscor in the military, political and economic structure of the Republic of South Africa (RSA). The interlocking industrial corporate structures that support Armscor, links with other national institutions and international states and/or bodies are the nexus of Armscor's sub rosa political power in Pretoria.

As a matter of hindsight, the United Nations arms embargo acted as a catalyst in the armaments production in South Africa.

Armscor generates interest as an integral part of the larger South African question. As such, the role of Armscor becomes critical in carrying out the policies of the South African Government. If South Africa is able to counter the mandatory arms embargo through circumventing the em-

bargo and/or satisfactorily manufacturing its armaments needs, a so-called mandatory arms embargo becomes mute.

Moreover, as the world's major gold producer, South Africa's economic position has been able to expand significantly into other industrial areas forming a solid national economic base reducing its vulnerability to foreign pressures. With this in mind, the Republic's armaments industry becomes increasingly important. It follows, then, that the scope, direction and role of Armscor, coupled with the domestic industry's interlocking structures, are important facets in answering the country's future security. The economic power, political will, public determination, technical expertise and zeal of the Republic coupled with its pariah status in the international community happen to be a unique subject that warrants continuous media coverage. Although various types of pressures are being exerted on South Africa, there is little visible evidence that the Republic is meaningfully modifying its policy on political franchise. A matter of concern is the possibility that sanctions and the arms embargo may have the opposite effect. A case can be made to show a cause/effect relationship of the arms embargo and the growing self-sufficiency of the South African Defence Industry. On the other hand, the broad scope of Armscor's programmes and the defence policy as outlined in the latest South African *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply*, are indicators of the Republic's determination to resist outside pressure and to "go it alone" in its pursuit of internal policy.

Certain events acted as catalysts in Armscor's creation in response to the RSA's increased security and defence requirements. International criticism, domestic turbulence in the black communities, the insurgency in Namibia, sanctions and the arms embargo hastened the necessity for a monolithic coordinating body for the domestic control of weapons systems. Thus, the result was the rising prominence of Armscor with the attendant industrial, political and economic power. Commandant Piet Marais, chairman of Armscor, speaking on the number of people employed in armaments production, emphasized that Armscor was "the third or fourth biggest employer in South Africa".

Where does South Africa stand in relation to existing weapons systems, the ability to maintain these systems and state-of-the-art technology? There is factual and discernable evidence by

international defence analysts that Pretoria's armaments industry is a growing phenomena. Like so many efforts by the U.S. and others, sanctions and embargoes are not having the desired effect. In fact, blacks are increasingly being economically deprived and South Africa is becoming stronger, economically and militarily.

When will we learn to be more adept at persuasion through covert efforts rather than circus events performed in Washington? It becomes critical that the holy bandwagon of South Africa "bashers" start doing their homework and concentrate on the results of their actions rather than the lemming-like pursuits of misled mindless moralities.

Opinions expressed by individual contributors do not necessarily reflect the official viewpoint of the SADF.

Persoonlike menings in die loop van 'n artikel uitgespreek, word nie noodwendig deur die SAW onderskryf nie.

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Colonel McWilliams was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Marines upon graduation from LaSalle College in 1957. After completing the Basic School in 1958, where he was the Edson Trophy winner, he reported to the 5th Marines, Camp Pendleton where he served as a rifle Platoon Commander and assistant operations officer and then as the Commanding Officer of Company A when his unit transplanted from the First Marine Division to the Third Marine Division. Later in his tour on Okinawa, he served as Aide-de-Camp to the Commanding General.

Returning to the United States in 1960, Colonel McWilliams was assigned to the 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company where he served as a Pathfinder Team Leader, Reconnaissance Platoon Commander, and Company Operations Officer until 1963, with his duties carrying him throughout the Caribbean, Africa, and Indian Ocean areas. In 1963, then Captain McWilliams, completed French Language School and served his first tour in Vietnam as an Infantry Field Advisor, 3rd Vietnamese Marine Battalion. From the Orient in 1963 Colonel McWilliams moved in 1964 to England where he acted as a Company Commander, Instructor and Student with the

Royal Marines during an exchange tour. While on this tour he completed the rigorous commando course as the honour graduate.

From 1965 to 1968, he was assigned as an instructor and Student Company Commander at the Basic School, Quantico, and it was during that tour that he was promoted to Major. In early 1969, after completing the course of instruction from the Armed Forces Staff College, Colonel McWilliams returned to the Republic of Vietnam where he served as the Battalion Executive Officer of the First Battalion, Ninth Marines.

Assigned to the Navy ROTC Unit at Villanova University, he was the Assistant Professor of Naval Science for two years. While at Villanova, Colonel McWilliams was ordered to Washington, D.C. to be the Marine Corps Aide to the Chief of Naval Operations in 1972. Later he was transferred to Headquarters Marine Corps until 1975 when he was selected to attend The Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, where he was a distinguished graduate. He returned to the Third

Marine Division as the Battalion Commander, Third Battalion, Ninth Marines. After leaving Okinawa in 1977, Colonel McWilliams was assigned as the head Politico-Military Division, Studies, Analysis and Gaming Agency, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Pentagon. In 1980 he was transferred as Head, Officer Assignment Branch, Headquarters, Marine Corps. Colonel McWilliams returned to Japan in May 1982 to be the Commanding Officer, 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. Presently, Colonel McWilliams is assigned to the Naval Council of Personnel Boards.

His personnel decorations include the Silver Star, Defence Superior Service Medal, Navy Marine Corps Medal, Bronze Star Medal (2 Gold Stars in lieu of 3rd Award), Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal and Purple Heart (Gold Star in lieu of 2nd Award).

He received a BA degree from LaSalle College and a MA in Political Science from Villanova University. He is currently a PHD candidate in African Studies.