



**Welcoming remarks by Cllr Nkosenhle Madlala on occasion  
AFD Press Conference  
08 February 2017  
Durban Natural Science Museum Research Centre**

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

Programme Director,  
Councillors  
Members of the SANDF  
Security Cluster  
Government officials  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
Sanibonani,

We would like to take this opportunity and welcome you to this press conference. We welcome the members of the South African Defence Force to this press conference which is set to make public announcement about the upcoming celebration of Armed Forces Day and Centenary of the Sinking Ship of the SS Mendi.

We would like to thank our the President of the Republic of South Africa and Commander-in-Chief of the South African National Defence Force who proclaimed that 21 February each year to be observed and commemorated as Armed Forces Day. We also thank our government for bringing this event here, especially when we commemorate the centenary of the SS Mendi.

SS Mendi represents the courage of many black South African soldiers and their fellow white officers who drowned aboard the SS Mendi. The ship sank after being struck and almost cut in half by the SS Darro in the cold waters of the English Channel near the Isle of Wight on 21 February 1917. They were on their way to France to assist the British during the First World War.

Among 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.

In our democratic era as led by ANC in its efforts of fostering nation building, we celebrate Mendi as an act of heroic. It is one of the highest orders that are awarded by His Excellency – the President of the Republic. We award and honour our citizens for their heroic acts of bravery. SS Mendi is about citizens who have performed an extraordinary act of bravery that placed their lives in great danger, or who lost their own lives including in trying to save the life of another person, or by saving property, in or outside the Republic of South Africa.

Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the chairperson of African Union said: "Efforts of Africans to address the problems facing their continent resonate with the aspirations of those brave warriors who perished on the SS Mendi for a better Africa."

It was our South African defences that displayed their heroic acts during the floods in Mozambique. This year it will be exactly 17 years when a Mozambican woman gave birth to her daughter in a tree above raging floods.

As the world watched the drama unfolding, viewers saw a SA Defence Force crew airlifting the mother and her infant to safety. A young beautiful girl named Rosita was born and she became a symbol everything good about the army - the humanity, the technique, the values that are inculcated in the members of the defence force.

Programme Director,

It is in this logic that we have made a national call for a Durban military base. We have seen how this province have been prone to national disaster, while we are experiencing drought we are highly likely to experience natural disasters. We believe that the army has all the skills to save other Rositas. We cannot risk a situation where the army is only found far away from this city.

Further noting that it is our army that has been working in Africa, ensuring peace processes. We are experiencing high violence in hostels, and we need Army because it has all the skills of ensuring peace. The mayor is steadfast in her view that we need Durban army base. In fact we are appealing to our national government to bring back to Durban army base. It will not just service people of eThekweni Municipality but other areas too. It will save more Rositas like it did in Mozambique. We think our national government must consider it.

Programme director,

Durban is ready to host the armed forces day. We have published through our communication the number of roads and areas that will be affected. It will be a brief disturbance. We expect more people to be flocking into our city.

The Armed Forces Day is about  
To unite all South Africans behind the SANDF.  
To allow the SANDF an opportunity to interact with communities including people from townships and rural areas.  
To demonstrate the military combat readiness against threats and as well as to support government during peace time.  
It is about us and our heroes

Durban has a capacity to host and hold international and national events. We have best infrastructure and facilities that are able to host event of this nature. We have the sea that can be used by our navy and other forces.

We also have highly skilled personnel who will be able to ensure that this events is a success. The mayor has set up a task team

that will be working the SANDF in ensuring that all things are done accordingly.

We will be working together with all the parties involved.

With those few words I thank you.

Siyabonga.