

# Webinar on the military footprint in South African society

## Outlining of the growth in domestic military deployments in South Africa

Francois Vreij, Research Coordinator SIGLA  
Faculty of Military Science, Stellenbosch University

27 June 2024



Photo by Stefan Els



Stellenbosch  
UNIVERSITY  
IYUNIVESITHI  
UNIVERSITEIT

## Scope

- Backdrop
- On good governance: The state of the South African nation
- Domestic perceptions of the SANDF
- Decline in SAPS and intelligence driven policing
- Actor proliferation in the policing domain
- Growth of secondary roles for the SANDF
- The SANDF in society: A secondary role defence establishment?
- Summary

# Backdrop

- Post 1994 - lower the visibility, popularity and funding of the military
- Contest between primary and secondary roles
- Prioritizing the responsibility to protect and develop society
- Normative departure: Military directed towards its primary role
- First reality: Growing external footprint in secondary roles
- Second reality: Domestic matters increasingly assumed a military profile
- 2022 - Safeguarding the nation as a priority for the SANDF: Domestic drift



# Good governance: State of the South African nation

- The human security imperative as a catalyst for security governance
- The state of the nation: HSRC report 2022
  - A vulnerable SA society largely embedded in poverty and inequality
  - Requiring care and ethical service delivery set on a security footing
  - Security provision must avoid coercion and force towards SA society
- Pointers from Afrobarometer, Mo Ibrahim Index, Global Peace Index point to the opposite
- Low provision of L&O resonates with low count on SDG 16 regarding building of and confidence in strong institutions
- Trust in Police, Judiciary, SA Parliament and fighting corruption trending downwards
- RSA in the bottom quadrant of the 2022 Global Peace Index for Safety and Security

# Domestic perceptions of the SANDF

- 2021/22 HSRC - Survey of public perceptions of the military
- Public trust and pride higher counts than other indexes
- Perceived military effectiveness declined after COVID-19
  - Fairness, successfulness, professionalism, discipline
  - A more critical stance regarding public confidence in the SANDF
- Aligns with a post 2022 inclination to expand the domestic role of the SANDF
- Red flagged: greater military footprint in an apprehensive, vulnerable society

# Decline in SAPS and intelligence driven policing

- Societal perceptions of SAPS lower and declining
- Disconnect between policing and (crime) intelligence and community policing
- **‘The Police needed the community, and the community needed the Police. But it was clear Community Policing was at its weakest and there was little to no trust between the police and the communities’ (SAPS, 2022).**
- **‘Crime too much for the police to handle – Cele’ (Die Burger, 6 May 2024)**
- Viewing the SAPS as a corrupt security institution (Global Corruption Barometer 2019)
- SAPS failing to respond timely to high level reports on Public Order Policing (PoP)
- Lack of continuity and leadership in police senior management circles
- Growth in PoP capabilities in a society requiring community policing
- Who steps into the void?

# Actor proliferation in the policing domain

- Filling the policing void: Actor proliferation of policing ‘agencies’
- Actor diversification: Policing militias?
  - PoP vs community policing vs the numbers game
  - municipal police with varying success
  - security wardens in vulnerable sectors of society,
  - PSC actors as a growing actor in support of police service delivery
- A patchy landscape with weak intelligence led policing
- Selling mixed crime statistics as a success story
- Enter the military



# The growth of secondary roles for the SANDF

- The apex public good: Security and upholding the rule of law
- The SANDF in domestic roles: Shifting RSA outlooks on defence priorities
- Persistent underperformance of policing vs attraction of the ‘soldier stand-in’ option
- Slow recovery of intelligence services including crime intelligence
- Operational ‘pulling’ of soldiers into unfamiliar setting of vulnerable societal sectors
- **Risk** - Professional deployments : Failure & messy and unethical deployments
- Convergence of:
  - Disrupted slowly recovering intelligence services,
  - Numerically growing but fragmented and weakly led SAPS
  - Underfunded and overstretched SANDF pulled into the domestic security void



# The SANDF in society: A secondary role defence establishment?

- Max 73,000 soldiers on standby (PMG 2020)
- Estimated cost of R34 billion (PMG 2020)
- Operations Notella and Ligcoco (COVID-19)
- Operation Prosper (support to government departments - the SAPS in particular)
- Operation Chariot (disaster aid and relief)
- Operation Arabella (search and rescue)
- Operation Corona (border safeguarding)
- Operation Vimba (support to the Department of Health)

- COVID 19 lockdown 2020-2022
  - 70 000 @ est 1.66 bil
- Looting, riots, crime prevention 2021-2022
  - 25 000 @ est 870 mil
- Infrastructure protection 2022-2024
  - 880 @ est 257 mil
- EFF national shutdown 2023
  - 3 000 @ est 166 mil
- Illegal mining - 2023-2024 -
  - 3300 @ est 492 mil
- 2024 Elections 2 826 @ est 60 mil
  - [\[TimesLive 2024\]](#) [\[Biznews 2024\]](#)

# Summary



1. A vulnerable South African society vs institutional failure to ensure the apex political good
2. Domestic confluence of the defence, policing and intelligence sectors
3. Political shifts: Prioritising secondary domestic roles of military support

Combination of:

- *Unresponsive and weakly functioning SAPS on policing service delivery*
- *A slowly recovering intelligence community for intelligence services*
- *Constrained & underfunded military adjusting to growing domestic mandate*



**R2P**

SANDF : an ad hoc domestic security actor to bridge policing and intelligence disjunctures towards strong institutions to protect South African society??

## Questions?





Thank you  
Enkosi  
Dankie

