

THE DEFENSE FORCE IN SOUTH AFRICA – 100 YEARS

Pretoria, 19 June 2012. An exhibition of works of art stretching over 100 years concerning the Defence Force of South Africa (1912 – 2012) can be seen at the 20.20 Gallery at the Voortrekker Monument as of 19 June. The gallery is situated in the main office complex at the Monument.

Unique works of art from the First and Second World Wars as well as the Bush War can be seen. These works of art have been loaned to the Monument by the friendly cooperation of the Ditsong National War History Museum in Johannesburg. Some busts of singular role players from the collection of the Voortrekker Monument and the Heritage Foundation are also on display.

Die Defence Act was proclaimed on 14 June 1912 and the Union Defence Force was officially founded on 1 July of that year. The Act was largely the work of Gen. Jan Christiaan Smuts.

The Union Defence Force would consist of Permanent Force members, the active Citizen Force under command of Gen. Christiaan Beyers, the Coast Guard Garrison and the SA Division of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserves. The Union Defence Force would quickly be confronted with labour unrest on the Rand. When the First World War broke out in 1914, Louis Botha made the undertaking that the Defence Force would protect the Union of South Africa – a step that would lead to open rebellion amongst several prominent commanders who found it difficult to fight on the side of Britain (a country with which they were at war in the Anglo Boer War merely a decade before).

Sir Pierre van Ryneveld played an important role in the founding of the South African Air Force. The South African Defence Force at sea was founded in 1940 and the Force at Sea would later be renamed the South African Navy.

The Union Force also took part in the Second World War and later the Korean War. When the Republic was founded in 1961 the Union Defence Force was renamed the South African Defence Force. It quickly became the best defence force in Africa during a period where African Nationalism and Communism threatened Western ideologies. The Bush War lead to the increasing militarization of the country. As the war escalated, Krygkor and the private sector expanded. That lead to the local manufacturing of many weapons and weapon systems.

When South Africa became a democracy in 1994, the SA Defence Force's name was changed to the South African National Defence Force.

The exhibition can be seen in the Gallery on week days from 08:00 to 15:30 and will be open until the end of August 2012.

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