



the sandf

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SUBJECT: SITUATION REGARDING THE SANDF CONTINGENT IN THE CAR

Fellow compatriots as you are all aware that in the recent days there have been speculations into what had happened to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) members deployed in Central African Republic. It is my wish to put this matter to rest by giving you this briefing.

We all know that the SANDF has been in CAR since 2007 following a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries.

You will recall that in December 2012 the Central Africa Republic rebels threatened to attack and overthrow the government Central African Republic, the SANDF deployed a support and protection team to protect the SANDF contingent that has been in the CAR for training and capacity building purposes.

Following the peace agreement which was signed in Libreville on 11 January 2013, the SANDF was informed that previous arrangements are still valid.

This therefore allowed the SANDF to resume its training and capacity building commitments.

However, on the 19 March 2013 the security situation changed with the five ministers of the government of national unity (GNU) were held “hostage” in Sibut by the rebels which led to the disintegration of the Government of National Unity.

The sequence of events concerning the SANDF is as follows:

On 22 March 2013 a Section of the SANDF went to conduct a reconnaissance mission and they came under an ambush of about 1KM long manned by CAR rebels. The SANDF returned fire to protect themselves and their equipment.

On Saturday 23 March 2013 the SANDF came under attack from the rebels in the outskirts of Bangui. The SANDF fighting force of about 200 members faced a rebel force of more than 3,000 that advanced towards Bangui on two main axis. This was a high tempo battle that took nine hours more than thirteen hours.

During the night of 23 March, the rebels continued with sporadic fire on the SANDF positions. In the early hours of 24 March 2013 the rebels indicated their willingness to enter into a cease fire arrangement with the SANDF and an uneasy truce prevailed. It is worth mentioning that the CAR rebels apologized for having exchanged fire with the members of the SANDF and indicated that they regret that this had transpired.

A period of calm ensued and the SANDF then started with the re-organisation and assessment of battle casualties. After assessing the aftermath of the situation, it is with regret that the SANDF announces the following casualties:

- Deceased: 13

- Injured: 27

- Missing in action: 1 (search and rescue operation is still on)

All the injured personnel have been evacuated to 1 Military Hospital and are in stable condition. Those who were slightly injured were given medical attention within the mission area and were able to carry on with their responsibilities. The rest of the force that is in CAR is in good state and is receiving all the support that they deserved.

The discipline and caliber of the SANDF members deployed in the CAR is highly commended and they are the real South African heroes. I personally, as the Chief of the South African National Defence Force I want to praise the SANDF members for having conducted themselves valiantly in the face of overwhelming opposition.

I would like to convey our sincere and deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and their loved ones.

I want to appeal to all fellow South Africans of all races, political and religious

denominations to give support to the families of the bereaved and heroic members of the SANDF who fell in action.

I thank you.

Ends.

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