



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

VICE-ADMIRAL J. MUDIMU

**ADDRESS AT THE MEMORIAL FOR SANDF MEMBERS WHO
LOST THEIR LIVES IN SERVICE OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE
KRUGER NATIONAL PARK**

11 APRIL 2013

We are gathered here today, a Nation in pain, hearts heavy with grief and sorrow, and eyes dry with unshed tears.

Today our collective being cries out in silent protest, mourning the passing of so many of our sons and daughters of our soil, men and women who surrendered their lives, assenting to the final sacrifice in service of our nation, and in devotion to our people.

We have spent the last week in contemplation of those thirteen soldiers who died in the Central African Republic – distanced by geography from those whom they loved, and from the Nation of their birth.

These members of the SANDF had paid the ultimate price demanded of the true military professional, and surrendered their lives in devotion to Africa, and in devotion to securing peace and security for an African child.

souls could bear no further loss, the seemingly inhuman test arose, and our hearts broke yet further.

These lost young warriors had sought to serve our Nation in protecting our natural resources from unscrupulous and violent poaching and theft.

Their presence in the Kruger National Park, and the courageous endeavour they were embarked upon, is a visible and a most important affirmation of the strategic recognition within our Department that we have a critical responsibility towards the integrated and sustainable management of our environmental assets.

These assets, be they our wildlife, our maritime resources or other non-renewable resources, are indeed national assets, and need to be managed and protected accordingly.

Endeavours focused at preserving these national assets have thus become important components of the international and

The protection of these assets constitutes a task of enormous strategic ramifications, demanding acts of commitment and modern-day heroism rarely seen in defence forces of old.

An indeed, recent events in the Kruger National Park have demonstrated this in a most painful and heart-breaking manner. And so we weep, and in memory of these lost warriors, our eyes welling with unshed tears, we commemorate:

- Captain Jacobus Andries van Rensburg;
- Captain MP Chabalala;
- Sergeant Paulus Shongela Ndishishi;
- Sergeant GP Ruiters and
- Lance Corporal Bheki Petros Cele

All surrendered their lives, paying the ultimate price of those called to the Profession of Service.

We will remember them.

humanity, representing our life's journey, and our deepest quest.

It is these which resonate in the words of Stephen Bantu Biko, a hero and a martyr of our time, who once reflected that "*it is better to die for an idea that will live, than to live for an idea that will die*".

And indeed, if these principles which so clearly capture the passion which frames the narrative of our Nation, a narrative of sacrifice, of service, of living and dying in the deepest expression of love, love for our nation, love for our people, and love for the cause which binds us.

We call to mind the many heroes and heroines of the decades past, who have committed their lives to serving our nation, and in so doing, have assented to paying the ultimate price, surrendering life in an act of deepest love, their spirits infused with creating possibility and their hearts beating only the

frames the tragic loss of our sons and daughters in the Central African Republic, and of those brave warriors in the Kruger National Park, and of all those warriors of every generation who have surrendered their lives so generously.

These warriors of our time, were they not enthused with those most sacred principles of humanity – life, death, sacrifice, service, love?

Like Stephen Bantu Biko, like Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, like the legion of warriors who have preceded us, were they not enthused with the passion to be found in a life devoted serving a cause beyond self, in recognition of the playground of possibility to be found in the future?

Colleagues, friends, fellow Mourners.

As our nation weeps in silent protest at the terrible loss of life in the Kruger National Park, let us affirm once again that this is the

Ours is a military community which has, at its heart, concepts such as devotion to duty, a willingness to sacrifice self for other, and a love for our Nation and its people, demonstrated in standards of discipline and professionalism beyond compare.

We cannot function as a group of individual demi-gods, each pursuing his or her own agenda.

Families of the Bereaved,

This morning we acknowledge with you the great pain and loss of your brother, your son, your loved one. Know that we share your anguish and heartbreak, we too mourn with deep intensity the loss of our men and women, who while perhaps young in age, were wise and devoted to our Nation beyond measure.

We have pledged ourselves to our continued commitment and journey of service, so that their names are honoured, their spirits freed and the longing of their hearts recognised.

Colleagues, friends, fellow Mourners,

The bodies of our young warriors have found their rest, but their legacy is not silenced.

They call to us, they command our assent and our commitment to the principles which enthused their lives.

We can surely do no other.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.