



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS
Republic of South Africa

MEDIA ADVISORY

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MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS, HONOURABLE NOSIVIWE MAPISA-NQAKULA ATTENDS COMMEMORATION OF FIRST WORLD WAR

At the invitation of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, King Philippe, the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Honourable Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula MP, attended a World War 1 commemorative ceremony on behalf of H.E. President Jacob Zuma at Nieuwpoort and Ypres in Belgium on 28 October 2014.

The ceremony was held to highlight the role played by the then King of Belgium, King Albert I and Queen Elizabeth during the protracted trench war as well as to pay tribute to the suffering of all those involved in it, both civilian and military personnel. The solemn and moving ceremony was addressed by H.M. King Philippe, the German Chancellor, Madame Angela Merkel and a representative of the French Government.

South African soldiers were deployed for service in Europe under British Command between 1915 and 1918 where they distinguished themselves for their bravery in some of WW1's most famous battles in Belgium such as Paschendael, The Third Battle of Ypres and the Battle of the Lys. There are 860 known and unknown graves of South African soldiers exist in Belgium WW1 cemeteries and the remains of approximately 450 soldiers are presumed buried in Belgium's WW1 battlefields. The South African Government is considering the most appropriate way of honouring the remains of these combatants which lie on Belgian soil.

Minister Mapisa-Nqakula used the occasion to engage in fruitful bi-lateral discussions to strengthen defence co-operation with some of her counterparts who attended this historic event.

ENDS.

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