

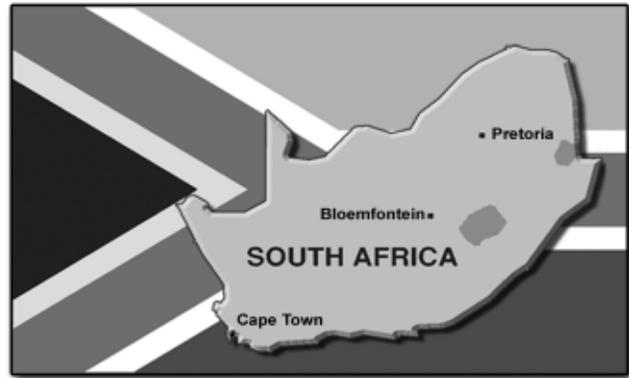
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# Regimental Exchange With the South African Military Police

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*By Lieutenant Colonel Anthony D. Zabek*

In January 2003, the US Army Military Police Corps added to its history by engaging with the Military Police Agency (MPA) of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) in the first visit between military police of the two countries.

The concept of a military police exchange program was conceived at the US Army War College while the author studied South Africa and its reemerging role as a regional power. Contact with military, educational, and government representatives in South Africa, including the MPA in Pretoria, led to an exchange program that will encompass active and reserve military police and focus on garrison and tactical operations.

## **South Africa's Importance**

South Africa is rapidly emerging as a regional leader on the continent and is developing political, economic, and cultural ties around the world. The country's first democratically elected government, which assumed power in 1994, has achieved recognition as being capable of influencing the region. However, the country continues to struggle with the legacy of apartheid and the challenge of fully developing its social, economic, and military power. But South Africa can project regional power and could take the lead for security in southern Africa. Economically, it embraces globalization; politically, it is nonaligned and promotes African nationalism. This promotes Africans helping Africans, a major theme of the current presidential administration, which influences the security strategies for the region.

## **US-RSA Defense Commission**

In 1997, the United States and the RSA established a defense commission to promote security cooperation to develop a mature, mutually beneficial defense and

security relationship. Both nations' presidents reaffirmed the commission's objectives in 2001, which—

- Promote stability in South Africa through the ongoing political-military transition in the country.
- Enhance the capabilities of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.
- Promote stability in southern Africa by encouraging South African leadership in the region.
- Encourage democratic principles and civilian control of the military.

Military police are uniquely designed to participate in this endeavor, which led to the concept of an exchange program between US and South African military police.

## **The Pursuit**

Instructors at the US Army War College helped coordinate with the Director of Southern African Policy at the US Office of the Secretary of Defense, which approved the initial concept in August 2003. The MPA chief approved the initial concept in October 2003. The next two months were spent coordinating the effort with the Office of Defence Cooperation in Pretoria and the US European Command (EUCOM) for approval, which was obtained in December 2003. Administrative requirements were completed in early January 2004, and the first visit by US military police took place 18 to 22 January 2004.

## **South African Corps of Military Police and the MPA**

The current military police in the SANDF trace their origins to 30 December 1938, when South

Africa established the South African Corps of Military Police (SACMP), or *Suid-Afrikaanse Militere Polisie Korps*, as a unit of the Permanent Force of the South African army, part of what was then called the South African Defence Force. This proclamation went into effect on 1 November 1938 and is the official birthday of the SACMP. The SACMP remained an integral part of the South African army, providing military police support during domestic operations and war for more than 60 years.

In 1994, the SACMP underwent its largest transformation with the election of the African National Congress as the majority government in the new South Africa. Reflecting the diversity of the people and their culture, a number of armed forces of the apartheid era South Africa were integrated into the new SANDF, replacing the South African Defence Force, on 27 April 1994. These armed forces were the so-called statutory forces—the South African Defence Force, the Transkei Defence Force, the Ciskei Defence Force, the Bophutatswana Defence Force, and the Venda Defence Force—and the three nonstatutory forces, which were armed wings of previously outlawed political parties. These were Umkhonto we Sizwe of the African National Congress, the Azanian People’s Liberation Army of the Pan-African Congress, and the KwaZulu Self-Protection Force of the Inkatha Freedom Party. With integration into the SANDF, military police of these forces were also integrated into the SACMP. The corps of military police did not change its name, but the diversity of the corps reflected the new beginning of South Africa.

The first real test of the new SACMP and the new SANDF came on 22 September 1998 when a task force of troops from Botswana and South Africa crossed the border into the Kingdom of Lesotho to help the Lesotho government regain stability. Together with the combat elements of the force was a platoon of military police using Mamba mine-protected, four-wheel drive vehicles. As part of Combined Task Force Boleas, the military police provided police services to the stabilizing force. Despite the fact that the stabilizing force met fierce resistance from members of the Royal Lesotho Defence Force, the military police performed well under fire and suffered no casualties. The value of military police was acknowledged when the SANDF chief of joint operations said in a press conference that more military police should have been in the task force.

On 21 October 1998, the South African cabinet approved a parliamentary white paper on participation in international peace missions that stated, “Military

police have appropriate training, experience, and equipment to contribute significantly to peace support operations, especially where there may have been a breakdown in law and order. Military police units would work in close cooperation with the civil police component of the force, as well as the local police authorities. Because of the sensitive nature of such missions, military police would also focus on curtailing illegal activities or breaches of local law by members of the force.”

On 1 April 1999, the South African army’s director of provost services was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and appointed as director of the SANDF military police services. That officer also was designated chief of the MPA, which was established the same day to oversee all military police in the SANDF. The MPA is equivalent to the US Office of the Provost Marshal General. This made the MPA chief the de facto provost marshal of the SANDF. Military police from each service formed into one unit and reestablished centralized policy making and control of the military police within the SANDF. Air force and naval police also became a part of the SANDF MPA on 1 April 1999. This meant that they ceased to function as separate service police organizations, and their jurisdiction was now extended to all members of the SANDF.

The SACMP thus ceased to exist, becoming the SANDF MPA. It is a law enforcement organization similar to the South African Police Service, the civilian national police force. The SANDF MPA is a joint agency at the South African Department of Defence level and there is no longer an army or service-equivalent military police agency like the SACMP. Today, the organization consists of approximately 1,300 soldiers, airmen, and sailors; and the 2002 Defence Act empowers military police as “peace



**The Mamba is the primary vehicle of the South African army military police.**

officers,” giving them the same powers and duties as members of the South African Police Service.

Over the last 65 years, the military police in South Africa have a history that mirrors the development and transformation of the country. SACMP and SANDF MPA units have participated in the following operations:

- Major combat operations during World War II in North Africa and Italy.
- Contingency and counterinsurgency operations in South-West Africa (now Namibia) and Angola.
- Domestic support operations during emergencies; stability operations and support operations (SOSO) in Lesotho.
- Peacekeeping and humanitarian operations supporting the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the African Union in Burundi.

Although smaller than its US counterparts, the SANDF MPA’s scope and missions are very similar.

### **Contemporary Missions of the South African Military Police**

The military police of the South African army, air force, and navy provide uninterrupted community-based law enforcement, community assistance, and force protection support to protect life and property and to serve the needs of all members of SANDF military communities. To accomplish this, the SANDF MPA maintains 24-hour military police support that includes crime prevention patrols, client service center operations, and criminal investigation services. The military police maintain discipline, enforce laws and regulations, and support community crime prevention.

The following core capabilities of the SANDF MPA are closely related to those of US military police and are part of training programs for both tactical and garrison units:

- Maneuver and mobility support.
- Internment and resettlement operations.
- Area security operations.
- Asset protection.
- Close protection of visiting dignitaries.
- Maintenance of law, order, and discipline and the investigation of crime within the SANDF MPA.

### **SANDF MPA Vision**

The South African constitution mandates that the SANDF MPA provide military police for the Department of Defence to protect South Africa and its territorial integrity and to comply with the republic’s

obligations to international bodies and states. The vision of the SANDF MPA is to provide a professional and cost-effective provost service, allow individuals to realize their full potential and to treat them in a dignified manner, use mutual support, maintain high standards through quality service, make optimal use of resources, and display apolitical conduct to create a climate of law abidance.

### **Initial Trip Discussion**

The initial exchange was conducted from 18 to 22 January 2004 with representatives from the 924th Military Police Battalion (Provisional) at Fort Riley, Kansas, visiting the RSA to develop the exchange program. The focus of the program was on critical asset protection, military police doctrine exchange, and coordination of training opportunities, all of which support the Joint Military Relations Working Group of the US-RSA Defense Commission. This was the first visit between the countries regarding military police. Attendees visited tactical and garrison law enforcement units, and the US representatives from Fort Riley provided a series of five presentations to RSA personnel, depending on their operational level. The presentations were as follows:

- History of the US Military Police Corps.
- Operation Iraqi Freedom lessons learned.
- Introduction to the 924th Military Police Battalion (Provisional).
- Fort Riley law enforcement operations.
- Training and education of US Army military police.

### **Schedule of Events**

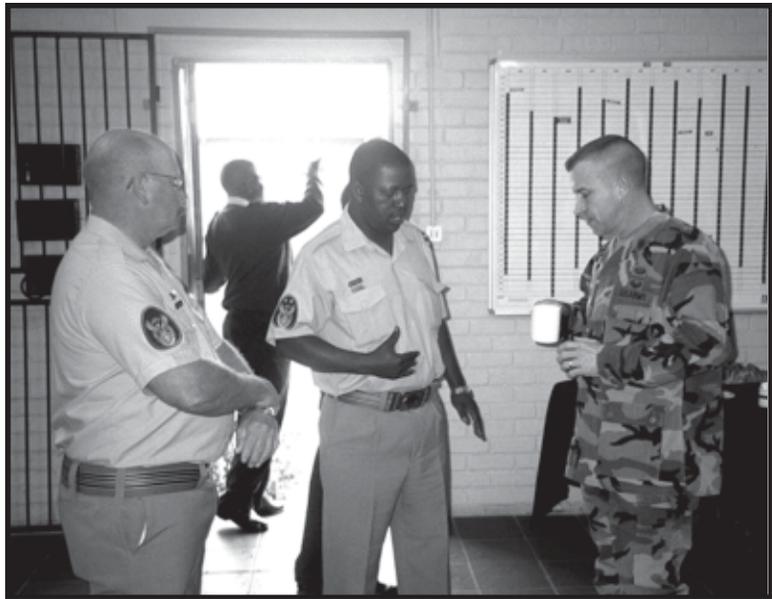
Two South African army military policemen escorted the US representatives around the Northern Military Police Region (NMPR). At the RSA Military Police School in Thaba Tswane, US representatives were briefed on the MPA organization and mission and on the school’s organization and structure. Next, US representatives visited the NMPR headquarters in Thaba Tswane for an operational law enforcement briefing from the officer who is commander of the NMPR headquarters and provost marshal for the Northern Region. The NMPR provost marshal supervises the nine assistant provost marshals (APMs) assigned to the region. As with the SANDF MPA, the NMPR is a joint command where all three services provide military police personnel for law enforcement duties on military installations.

US representatives met the chief of the SANDF MPA, whose intent is to develop a program that encompasses force protection training (to include law enforcement), peacekeeping operations and

tactical training, and military police education and training. Interestingly, the SANDF MPA staff has a number of officers with experience in South-West Africa (now Namibia) and Angola in counterinsurgency and SOSO.

US representatives visited Waterkloof Air Force Base, which is the major South African air force base servicing Pretoria and Johannesburg. A presentation from the region's APM was combined with a tour of the grounds and facilities. US representatives inspected the APM's "parade," which showed them the professionalism of his army, air force, and navy military police. Then US representatives made an unscheduled visit to the military police correctional facility in Thaba Tswane. While there was only one prisoner in confinement, the military police at the facility were professional and knowledgeable about their operations. Military corrections are run in much the same manner as in the United States. The facility was small by US standards but professionally administered.

At the 13th Provost Company at Thaba Tswane, currently the only tactical and deployable military police unit in the inventory, US representatives were briefed by the company commander on the operational capabilities of the company and viewed the company's equipment. The company, which has a headquarters commanded by a major, contains a small element of operational support and three platoons



**US and RSA sergeants major discuss law enforcement operations.**

commanded by captains. The main fighting vehicle is the Mamba. The unit is supporting United Nations operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Operation Mistral) and an African Union mission in Burundi (Operation Fibre), and it recently participated in training exercises at the South African Combat Training Center and joint exercises at the Port of Durban and Saint Helena Bay.

The visit concluded with a traditional South African gathering, called a *braai*, to celebrate the week's events. The *braai* culminated with an exchange of mementos between the two agencies.



**The author and the Waterkloof Area Provost Marshal (South African air force) review the "parade" of military police at Waterkloof Air Force Base, Pretoria.**



**US representatives talk with South African military police during a review of the Waterkloof Air Force Base area provost marshal parade.**

### **Program Discussion**

The Office of Defence Cooperation in Pretoria, with the SANDF MPA and EUCOM, is coordinating the exchange program. US representatives agreed on the following recommendations:

- That the RSA and United States continue the exchange program. The focus should be on SOSO, including peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations. The histories of both countries show that each can learn from the other's participation in the wide range of full-spectrum operations of their respective militaries.
- That SANDF MPA leaders visit the United States and observe military police operations at an installation. The visit should include exposure to tactical and law enforcement operations and possibly a staff "shadow" by the participants. Fort Riley is prepared to sponsor and support the event.
- That the program continue to focus on critical asset protection, including the role and authority of protection and garrison law enforcement operations. Fort Riley is prepared to sponsor and support the event.
- That the SANDF MPA chief and appropriate staff attend the US Army Military Police School Warfighter Conference in September 2004 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The conference brings together the senior leadership of the US Military Police Corps and provides an information exchange to these leaders of the United

States and other countries. Fort Riley is coordinating the visit with the US Army Military Police School, and the Chief, MPA, is scheduled to attend.

- That the program include military police school relationships for training, education, and development of military police.
- That the program include the exchange of military police in tactical units focusing on officers (lieutenants through lieutenant colonels) and noncommissioned officers (sergeants through sergeants first class). Participants should speak and understand English, be deployable outside their respective countries, and be representative of the high professional standards of the SANDF MPA and the Corps of Military Police.

### **Conclusion**

This visit was an opportunity to launch a program of mutual support between the two countries and was a forum to start a military police exchange program between the Republic of South Africa and the United States. Both countries can learn from each other, not only in terms of military police tactics and doctrine but also in SOSO and full-spectrum operations. The histories of the United States and the Republic of South Africa provide a background for mutual learning and greater understanding of social diversity and culture. The greater result from the visit was a better understanding of South Africa and the important role it plays in the region and on the continent.