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The 2014 Cape Town Military Tattoo: Celebrating 20 Years of Democracy in South Africa

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From the first peal of the Castle bell signalling the closing of the Van der Stel Gate to the last plaintive notes of the pipes leaving the arena a little under two hours later, the 2014 Cape Town Military Tattoo entranced the audience. Playing to packed stands, the 2014 tattoo brought the military and civic lives of the Mother City together in a celebration of pageantry and national defence capability. Congratulations from military and civilian dignitaries alike confirmed the enormous success of this year's Cape Town Military Tattoo. Its increasing popularity is a clear testament to the growing profile enjoyed by this annual event.

The Cape Town Military Tattoo, the largest military tattoo in Africa, is held under the authority of the Chief of SA Army, and produced entirely by Full-time and Reserve Force members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), under the aegis of the Defence Reserves Provincial Office, Western Cape. Its venue at the Castle of Good

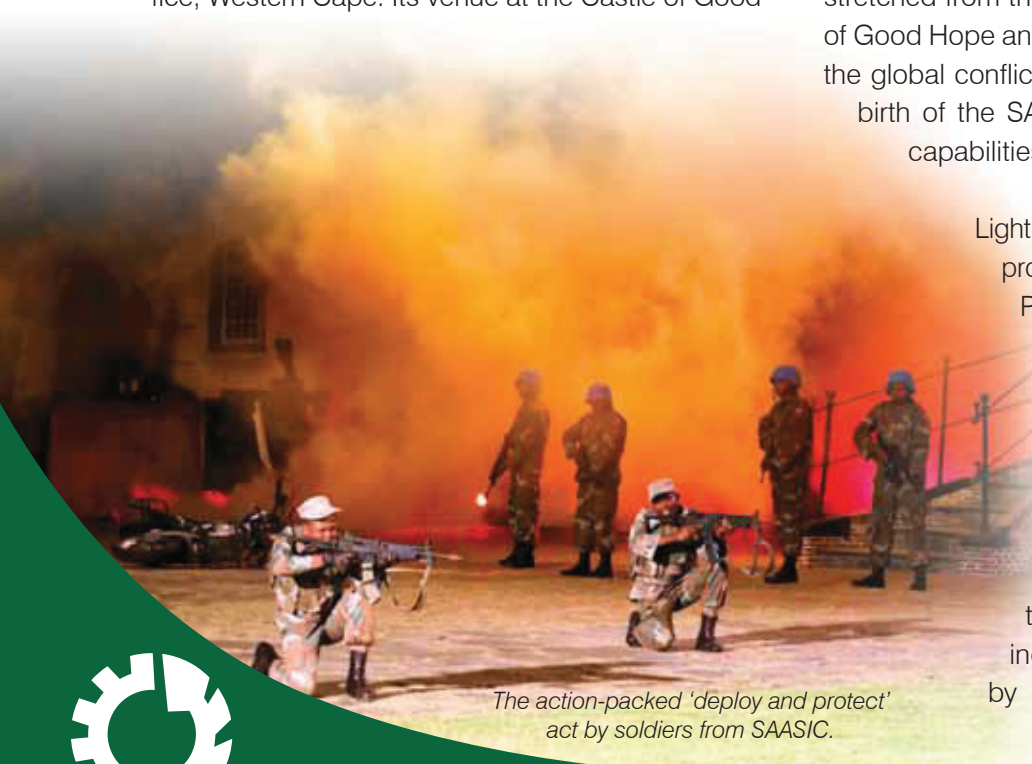
Hope, completed in April 1679 and with a continuous military presence since then, makes the Cape Town Military Tattoo unique among tattoos around the world.

Over four evening performances and a Saturday matinee, from 5 to 8 November 2014, the tenth Cape Town Military Tattoo celebrated twenty years of democracy in South Africa. Attending and saluting dignitaries this year were Lt Gen F. Msimang PSCJ ENSP (Chief SAAF), Rear Admiral W. Teuteberg SM MMM (Deputy Chief SAN), Maj Gen S. Veldtman CLS MMM PB (Chief Dir SA Army Corporate Service), Brig Gen H. Kamffer SM MMM DWD (Chief Dir SA Army Reserves) and Capt (SAN) M. Rammutloa (SSO Def Res Western Cape).

The magnitude of our national achievements over the past two decades was dramatized in a carefully constructed and choreographed programme that stretched from the early military days of the Castle of Good Hope and the loss of South African lives in the global conflicts of the World Wars through the birth of the SANDF in 1994 to the exhilarating capabilities of our soldiers today.

Lighting and sound were once again provided by 3 Electronic Workshop, Pretoria, under WO1 Shawn Boehme. Their enthusiasm for the project was evident in the impeccable sound and in the atmospheric and perfectly designed lighting.

In traditional fashion, the 2014 Cape Town Military Tattoo opened with a bang – the firing of a 17th century signal cannon by members of the South African



The action-packed 'deploy and protect' act by soldiers from SAASIC.



Cannon Association. This heart-stopping detonation introduced another ancient military custom: each evening, as night fell over the Castle of Good Hope, soldiers of the Castle Ceremonial Guard re-enacted part of the historic Castle key ceremony, dating back to the days when Cape Town was run by the Dutch East India Company, locking the Castle gates and returning the key to the Castle Adjutant. The Military Fanfare Group then flooded the arena with colour and sound. South Africa plays a critical role in fostering regional stability and democratic governance on the African continent, and flagbearers carried on the national flag of the Republic of South Africa and the flags of the countries that we are currently assisting in peacekeeping operations.

The birth of the SANDF itself, which this year also celebrates its 20th birthday, was dramatically depicted in an act by the SA Army Special Infantry Capability Unit (SAASIC). On Wednesday 27 April 1994, the South African Defence Force and the defence forces of Bophuthatswana, Venda, Transkei and Ciskei merged with the forces of Uhmkonto we Sizwe, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) and Inkatha to form a new and unified force – one that would gain the trust of the whole nation and protect the freedom of our country. This force was the South African National Defence Force. Since then, we have seen our soldiers saving the lives of our people in disaster areas; we have seen them undertaking peacekeeping duties across the continent with dedication and commitment; and we have seen them protecting our borders. The SANDF is a force for peace, and a force we can be proud of.

The men of the SAASIC and their motorcycles made another spectacular appearance later in the show. The SANDF is in daily service of the people of South Africa in ways that we may not appreciate, including border control operations, support of other state departments and peace-keeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. They are also deployed in major game reserves to assist in curbing the ongoing scourge of



Massed Pipes & Drums.

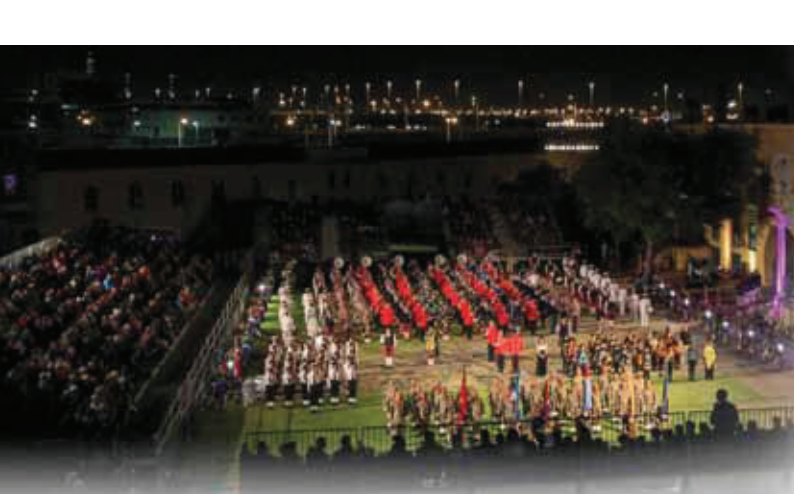
rhino poaching. The mock contact with poachers by SAASIC was a great hit with the audience.

Another popular act was the display of silent drill by the cadets of TS Woltemade, learners involved in the SA Navy cadet programme. Their meticulous display, which took over 100 hours to perfect, was over in 6½ minutes but the audience was riveted to their seats for every second. We saw the cadets again in a tribute to the men of the SS Mendi.

This year marks the centenary of the start of World War I, a global conflict that changed the face of the world, at a cost of over 37 million civilian and military casualties. On 21 February 1917, the troopship SS Mendi went down in the English Channel, taking with her 616 South Africans, nearly all of them members of the SA Native Labour Corps on their way to the European front. In October 2014, the SANDF rededicated the SS Mendi Memorial on the grounds of the University of Cape Town, and in this act members of the SA Navy Marimba Group, the cadets of TS Woltemade, and the young dancers of Project 021 paid tribute to the men who perished beneath the waves that day, with the words of Rev. Isaac Dyobha ringing in their ears: “We are the sons of Africa!”

We had earlier watched spellbound as the learners of Project 021, a community-based collaboration





Final Muster.



Lt (SAN) Lindela Madikizela telling the story of the SS Mendi with the Sea Cadets from TS Woltemade behind him.

breaking down social barriers towards a united South Africa, dramatized the challenges and hopes of the transition to a democratic South Africa.

Juxtaposed against these more introspective acts were the bands. A massive total of 4 military bands and 7 pipe bands participated in the 2014 Cape Town Military Tattoo, in a sensational display of pageantry and sound. The military bands were represented by the South African Army Band Western Cape, the SA Army Band Kroonstad, the SA Navy Band from Simonstown, and the SA Military Health Service Band from Pretoria. The pipe bands included the Drums and Pipes of Cape Town Highlanders, the Pipes and

Drums of Cape Field Artillery, the Pipes and Drums of Cape Garrison Artillery, the Pipes and Drums SA Military Health Service, The Pipe Band of 1 Medical Battalion, and participating for the first time, Knysna & Districts and the Algoa Caledonian Pipe Bands. Each solo act was constructed to complement the tattoo theme, including numerous traditional South African references honouring the spirit of ubuntu and the reconciliation that defines South Africa in a joyous celebration of twenty years of democracy.

The climax of the Cape Town Military Tattoo is the 1812 Overture, performed by the massed military bands, with live gunfire provided by the 25-pounder field guns of the Cape Field Artillery Saluting Troop, unlimbered directly outside the Castle's main entrance. Firing in precise synchronisation with the music, the blasts reverberate through the Castle bastions and the cordite rolls over the parapet walls, thrilling the audience night after night.

In a final symbolic demonstration of unity, the Prelude and Sunset during the Final Muster gave us all a moment to reflect on the inspirational shift that we as South Africans have made, as we enter our third decade of democracy. For inspirational and educational content, colourful pageantry and brilliant music, the 2014 Cape Town Military Tattoo will be hard to beat. As the final notes drifted into the night sky and the last spotlight faded away, it was clear that the 2014 Cape Town Military Tattoo had been a tremendous success. ⚙️



The formation of the new SANDF.

