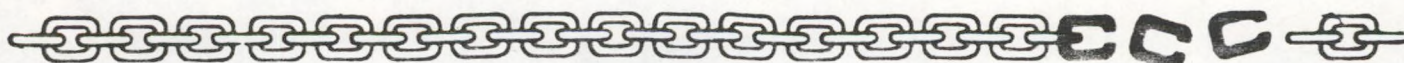


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## ORGANISATION, STRUCTURES AND RANKS OF THE SADF

This paper describes the make-up of the different sections of the SADF, the structures of command, as well as a description of the ranks of SADF officers and non-commissioned officers.

February 1988.



## A. Organisation of the South African Defence Force

The South African Defence Force numbers about half a million men and women who could (if government claims are true) be put in the front line within two weeks, a process of organisation called mobilisation.

The SADF is divided into three basic forces: the Permanent Force (PF), Citizen Force (CF) and National Servicemen (NSM).

For convenience, the workings of these three forces will mainly be considered with reference to the Army, the service where the forces are most clearly defined. However, these three forces make up four different services, the Army, Air Force, Navy and Medical Services, the organisation of which will be discussed later. These all together make up the Defence Force which has its own organisation of command and control separate from forces and services.

### A.1. Permanent Force

The Permanent Force is made up of people serving full-time in the SADF. The time of service varies, but (apart from the women at the Women's College at George) is never less than two years.

It's task is to carry out all functions which require so much training that it would not be practical to use national servicemen (whose term is two years). For instance, the Reconnaissance Commandos reputedly train for eighteen months, which would leave only six months of action; thus the "Recces" sign on for at least five years.

Air Force pilots are generally Permanent Force, as are most of the personnel of naval vessels.

All officers above the rank of Commandant are Permanent Force.

Another task of the Permanent Force is to train the national servicemen. All NSM training units have a core of PF instructors who have done special courses to teach soldiers their skills and also to condition them into obeying orders even when their lives are in danger.

### A.2. Citizen Force

All conscripts who complete their two years as national servicemen are sent to the Citizen Force to do their camps. This amounts to 720 days of camps spread over nearly twenty years. They may serve in either of two kinds of units: battalions or commandos. (Sometimes the former kind of unit is called CF and the latter Commando.)

Battalions are used for "conventional warfare" of the sort such as that waged in Angola, as opposed to "counter-insurgency warfare" which is used against guerrillas. They are grouped in brigades (generally three to a brigade); there are about 1 000 men in a battalion (sometimes battalions are clustered in twos and called regiments), so that a brigade will have at least 3 000 troops, and probably more than 5 000. Three or more brigades make up a division. The CF has two divisions, the 7th and 8th. It will be seen that this "conventional warfare" force is only a fraction of the CF.

The rest of the CF are grouped into Commandos. Commando units are not as well equipped as CF units. They are short of transport and are not equipped with armour except for special purposes.

The reason for this is that they are intended to defend their local areas against guerrilla attacks and subversion. They also guard national key points such as bridges and power stations.

They are very easily mobilized. Commandos take their rifles home with them, whereas CF soldiers only receive theirs when they are called up for camps. The political significance of commandos is obvious. They are heavily represented in rural areas, but towns also have commands and there has been some effort to produce commandos out of factories (Vanderbijlpark Commando and Atlas Commando represent the members of, respectively, a steelworks and an aircraft factory).

The National Reserve (men who have not received military training and are called up for a week of rudimentary instruction - the "Dad's Army") form part of the commandos. These men are intended to replace more effective troops in tiresome and undemanding jobs such as crewing roadblocks.

Some Commando units are being retrained and re-equipped as CF units with armour and artillery, as part of the general strengthening of the SADF.

#### A.3. National Servicemen (NSM)

Approximately 50 000 troops per year are created by conscription. While doing their two years, they are called NSM. They spend from three to nine months training and the rest of the time fulfilling duties which range from medicine to the Parachute Battalion. Because they are young, strong and easy to influence, NSM are considered the best soldiers, and the SADF uses them for preference. The bulk of white SADF casualties are NSM. They also provide a pool of recruitment for the Permanent Force.

#### A.4. The South African Army

The Army is the largest force in the SADF, numbering at least 300 000. It is divided regionally into various areas called Commands. Among these are Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Natal, OFS, Wits, Northern Transvaal, Eastern Transvaal, Western Transvaal and South-West Africa. Within these areas, the units are subdivided according to function.

In the CF conventional force units are, from largest to smallest: Division (perhaps 20 000 troops, under a Brigadier or Major-General), Brigade (5 000, under a Brigadier or Colonel), Regiment (2 000, Colonel), Battalion (1 000, Commandant), Company (200, Major or Captain), Platoon (30, Lieutenant), Section (10, Corporal). Commandos work the same way except that the biggest group is a Group (3 or 4 Commandos - there are no regiments) equivalent to a brigade.

Something which may confuse some is the fact that there are various "arms of service" within the army. Generally a battalion or a training school will be devoted to a particular arm. These are: Infantry (which may be motorised, riding in trucks or light armoured vehicles like Buffels, or mechanised, riding in heavy armoured vehicles like Ratels), Artillery (either G-5 or G-6 155mm guns or Valkiri 127mm rockets) which supports the infantry, Armour (Olifant tanks and Eland armoured cars) which fight against other armour and scout for the infantry, and Engineering, which build bridges, maintain roads and help to undermine enemy fortifications. In addition to these there are Signals units, which supply radio communications and jam or listen in on the enemy; Supply units which carry food, fuel, water and ammunition to the troops; Maintenance units which maintain vehicles and other equipment. There are many other types of units which support the four "teeth" arms. There are about three supporting soldiers for every one that fights.

At the head of the Army is the Staff, who look after training, supply, intelligence (every company has its intelligence officer, and at higher levels intelligence officers make up important parts of the headquarters units) and personnel. Strict codes of conduct are drawn up by this Staff, which is subject only to the Chief of the Army and the various staff units of the SADF. The current Chief of the Army is Lieutenant-General Liebenberg.

#### A.5. The South African Air Force

The Air Force is the most effective and expensive force in the SADF. It is divided into two units: Support Command and Strike Command.

Support Command incorporates all aircraft which cannot fight other aircraft of drop bombs, and also supporting units on the ground.

There are also geographical commands: Main Threat Area Command, also called Northern Aerospace Defence Command, which defends the Transvaal with Mirage interceptors, Western Air Command, which controls combat aircraft in Namibia, and Southern Air Command, which controls patrol aircraft and helicopters operating over the coast, and has a joint headquarters with the Navy at Silvermine.

Commands are divided into Squadrons. Squadrons are usually made up of similar aircraft to do similar jobs. There is a Squadron of Mirage F1 interceptors, a squadron of Cheetah fighter-bombers and so on.

The Air Force controls a network of radar stations, a small number of very old Cactus surface-air missiles, a wide network of supply and support and has defence units on the ground for protecting airfields. Anti-aircraft guns, however, are controlled by the Army, and there have been recent exercises attempting to coordinate the two, suggesting that there is some friction.

A special unit deals with setting up temporary airfields on roads. On occasion, apparently SAAF aircraft have operated from Angolan soil.

#### A.6. The South African Navy

Of the combat services, the Navy is the poor relation. It is divided into two geographical units: Eastern and Western Fleet Command, and is headquartered in Pretoria.

All of the frigates and destroyers bought in the 1950s and 1960s for the defence of the Cape Sea Route have been disposed of, and the Navy now concentrates on smaller craft. These are divided into Flotillas. There are two Strike Craft Flotillas, using Israeli missile boats, a Submarine Flotilla (more submarines may be under construction using German designs), several flotillas of small harbour protection motorboats and several minesweepers. In addition there are two ships designed to refuel and resupply ships at sea.

The Navy is responsible for watching the coast. In addition there are Marine units which guard harbours. They do duty in Namibia, but usually in the Caprivi Strip, where SWAPO is inactive. They are conscripts, whereas most seagoing units are PF.

Although the other services have won the most "glory", the SAN has destabilized with some distinction, having sent frogmen to attack Angolan and Mozambican ports, shipped arms to the MNR in Moxambique by submarine, and carried Major du Toit to his rendezvous with FAPLA in Cabinda, Angola.

### A.7. The South African Medical Service

The South African Medical Service trains all medical personnel in the SADF. After training they are normally distributed to various military bases and units throughout the country. Some, however, serve in Military Hospitals in Bloemfontein, Cape Town and Pretoria or in various sickbays.

### A.8. Other Units

In addition to these forces there are certain units which do not fit into these categories but deserve mention for their practical or political value.

1) The South-West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) was set up in 1980 to fight against SWAPO. This was apparently because SADF casualties were becoming intolerable.

This force of (possibly) 20 000 troops is heavily committed to the fighting units; there are far less supporting units than in the SADF. The non-combatant support role is fulfilled by SADF troops in Namibia.

It is organised much like the SADF, although many units (battalions) are Permanent Force such as 101 Battalion (Owambo), 202 Battalion (Kavango) and the Bushmen Battalion.

Most of these units enlist for money, because of chronic unemployment in Namibia. Conscripted units of the SWATF are drawn from the south and centre of the country. There is no conscription in the north, probably because it is feared that conscripts would have SWAPO sympathies. This is becoming a problem even in Windhoek.

In practice all SWAFT units fall under the control of the SADF in action.

2) Other unusual Namibian units are 32 Battalion, made up of Angolans and defectors from SWAPO, and COIN (also known as Koevoet), a police unit which specialises in fighting insurgents and has a reputation for atrocities, as well as the SWA Specialist Unit, a force of troops mounted on horses or motorcycles.

3) In addition to these forces, there are various PF black units. The first of these was 21 Battalion, which is inter-tribal. Since its establishment, various tribal units have been established in various homelands. These are intended to become the armies of these homelands after "independence", and are presumably picked for political reliability to the homeland government. The most likely use for these units is that of quelling unrest. This has already happened in Ciskei, Transkei and Venda. The forces are of doubtful combat capability. It may be worth noticing that there is also a Cape Corps of two battalions of coloureds, who are also PF. Some Eastern Cape battalions and commandos have experimented with allowing coloureds to join their units, and in the Orange Free State, black farmworkers belong to commandos.

4) In all rural areas isolated farms are linked by a radio service known as MARNET. The SADF issues automatic rifles to farmers and their families and trains them to use them. It helps fortify farms, urges labourers to inform on suspicious circumstances, and provides armoured vehicles for transport. Thus it has at least a small degree of support for military operations in such areas.

5) Finally, although it is not in any way part of the SADF, the Unita movement in Angola is regarded by the SADF as an important ally because of the way in which it hinders the movement of SWAPO guerrillas, and there is liaison between SADF and Unita commanders.

## B. Command Structures

At the very top of the SADF is the Chief of the SADF (General Geldenhuys) and the Defence Staff, who handle administrative and planning tasks in the same way that the Army, Navy and Air Force staff handle theirs. There are also Inspector-Generals of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Medical Service who rove round to ensure that orders are effectively carried out. There are also various other bodies which assist the Defence Staff and communicate between them and various civilian or paramilitary bodies. These include the Defence Command Council, Defence Staff Council, the Defence Planning Committee and the Defence Advisory Council.

### B.1. Defence Command Council

This is the highest body in the SADF. It is chaired by the Chief of the SADF. It includes the Chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Medical Service, as well as the heads of the various staff divisions of Logistics (which deals with supply and maintenance of equipment) and Operations (which deals with what the SADF is actually doing, such as township duty and border wars). This is a small body capable of making quick decisions. Other groups are larger and more ponderous but offer the DCC advice.

### B.2. Defence Staff Council

This is also chaired by the Chief of the SADF. It includes the heads of all Staff Divisions, which are Personnel, Intelligence, Operations, Finance and Logistics, the Chaplain-General (who handles all spiritual welfare), and the Director-General of Resources. This body has less prestige than the DCC but because of the greater number of specialists, might be better informed.

### B.3. Defence Planning Council

This involves the Chief of the SADF, Chiefs of the Army, Air Force and Navy, Chiefs of Staff for Operations, Logistics and Finance, and the Chairman and Senior General Manager of Armscor. This body oversees the procurement of weapons, monitors the defence budget and helps plan the future running of the SADF. The presence of civilians in the body gives it good information about the mood in Armscor which is vital to ensure smooth buying of arms.

### B.4. Defence Advisory Council

This concerns the Chief of the Defence Force, the Minister of Defence, the President of the Armaments Board and various civilians co-opted by the Minister. This body seems mainly concerned with SADF-National Party and SADF-business relations.

## C. Rank Structures and Insignia

Insignia in the Army and Air Force are identical. In some cases, names may be different. In the Army the colour of the insignia is yellow; in the Air Force, it is blue.

General - three castles and crossed sword and staff, worn on epaulettes (shoulders). There is only one general in the SADF at any time - the Chief of the SADF, assuming that he is drawn from the Army or Air Force.

Lieutenant-General - two castles and crossed sword and staff on epaulettes. SADF chiefs of staff and Chiefs of the Army, SAAF and Medical Service are Lieutenant-Generals. Addressed as General.

Major-General - one castle and crossed sword and staff on epaulettes. Divisional commanders and chiefs of Army and Air Force and Medical Service Staff are major-generals. Officers commanding important Commands like SWA Command are also major-generals. Address: general.

Brigadier - one castle and three stars on epaulettes. Brigade or divisional commanders, heads of unimportant commands like WP Command and senior staff officers are brigadiers.

Colonel - one castle and two stars on epaulettes. Some very large units like battalion groups, bigger than battalions but smaller than brigades, may have colonels (eg. 6 SA Infantry battalion).

Commandant - one castle and one star on epaulettes. Most battalions and commandos fall under commandants. In western armies and in the SAP, this rank is called Lieutenant-Colonel.

Major - one castle on epaulettes. Some companies fall under majors. Most second-in-commands of battalions are majors.

Captain - three stars on epaulettes. Most companies are commanded by captains.

Lieutenant - two stars on epaulettes. Many second-in-commands of companies are lieutenants, and all medical doctors are lieutenants. Apart from this, the rank is not common.

Second Lieutenant - one star on epaulettes. The majority are platoon commanders. Most NSM officers are second lieutenants. Addressed as Lieutenant.

The above are known as "commissioned officers". Their task is to give orders and to plan both the administration and the operation of their units or their specialist duties. Generally speaking they are well-educated; a second lieutenant must have matric. Those who pass through schools but are not well-educated or less successful tend to become non-commissioned officers. Their job is to carry out the commands of the commissioned officers, to maintain discipline, and to keep up morale in the troops under their command. In any body of troops, there will be an NCO alongside every commissioned officer.

Warrant Officer First Class - SA Republic shield supported by springbok surrounded by wreath. Common job is chief NCO for a battalion, known as regimental sergeant-major. Address: sergeant-major.

Warrant Officer Second Class - SA Republic shield supported by springbok. Common job is chief NCO for a company, known as company sergeant-major. Address: sergeant-major.

Staff Sergeant - Sergeant's stripes surmounted by a castle. Common job is company sergeant-major or chief NCO for a body bigger than a platoon but smaller than company. Address as Staff.

Sergeant - three chevron stripes. Common job is chief NCO for a platoon.

Corporal - two chevron stripes. Among PF members or those who have passed through schools, common job is chief NCO for a platoon. Among normal conscripts, a corporal commands a section. Despite the fact that his rank is identical he will be totally subordinate to his platoon corporal.

Lance-corporal - One chevron stripe. As above, either chief NCO for a platoon or second-in-command of a section.

It will be noted that all NCO insignia are worn on the sleeve, not on the shoulders.

The large number of second-in-commands among officers and NCOs is due to the likelihood of death or injury of the commander, in which case the second-in-command (or most senior officer or NCO) takes over automatically.

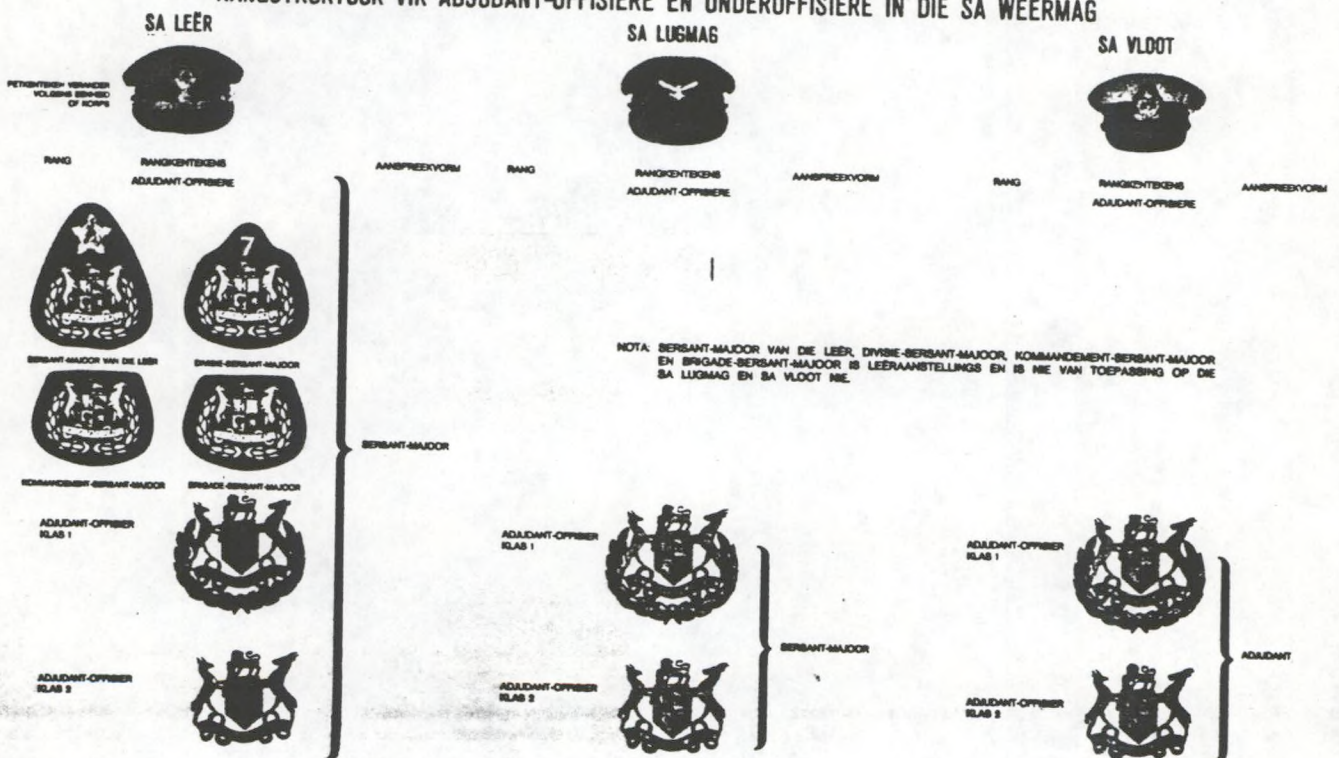
Pay scale and prestige of officers and NCOs are identical although there are additional perks for some officers - better bars in base camps, for instance, than those available to NCOs. Roughly speaking, the following levels of officers and NCOs are equals:

Warrant-officer 1st class	equals	Commandant
Warrant-officer 2nd class	"	Major
Staff-Sergeant	"	Captain. (To offer some insight on this, Willem Steenkamp, Times Defence Correspondent, was a Staff-Sergeant, but after doing an officer's course, became a Captain.)
Sergeant	"	Lieutenant
Corporal	"	Second-Lieutenant

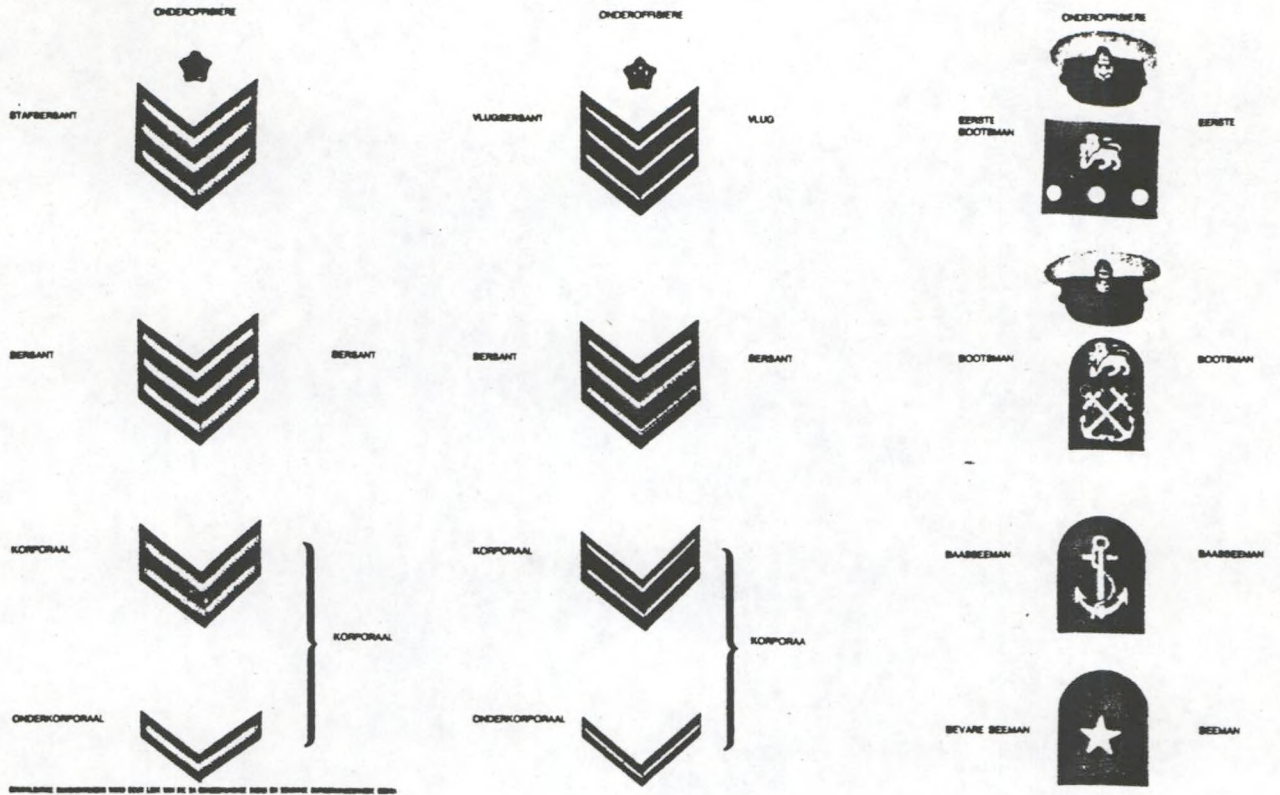
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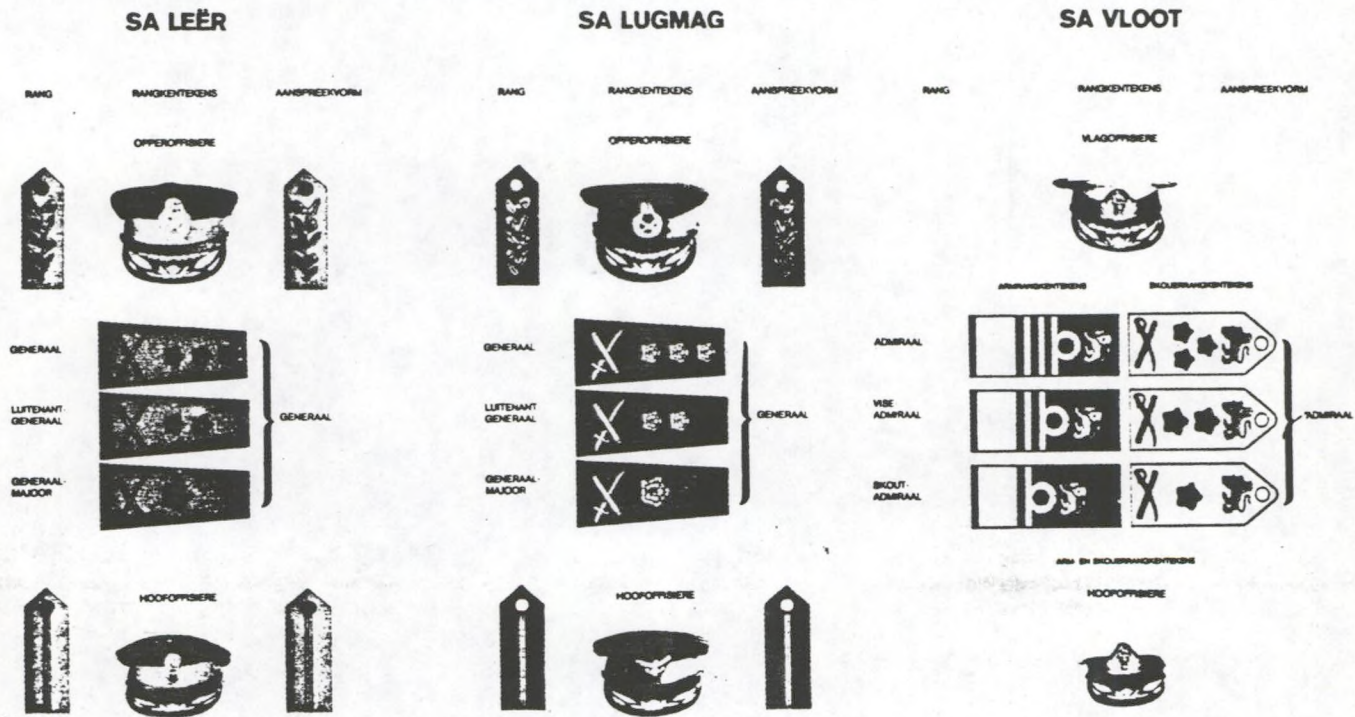
RANGSTRUKTUUR VIR ADJUDANT-OFFISIERS EN ONDEROFFISIERS IN DIE SA WEERMAG



NOTA: SERJANT-MAJOR VAN DIE LEER, DIWISIE-SERJANT-MAJOR, KOMMANDEMENT-SERJANT-MAJOR EN BRENGE-SERJANT-MAJOR IS LEERAANSTELLINGS EN IS NIE VAN TOEPASSING OP DIE SA LUGMAG EN SA VLOOT NIE.



### OFFISIERSRANGSTRUKTUUR IN DIE SA WEERMAG



BRIGADIER		BRIGADIER	BRIGADIER		BRIGADIER	KOMMOOR		KOMMOOR
KOLONEL		KOLONEL	KOLONEL		KOLONEL	KAPTEIN		KAPTEIN
KOMMANDANT		KOMMANDANT	KOMMANDANT		KOMMANDANT	KOMMANDEUR		KOMMANDEUR
PETKENTEKEN VERANDER VOLGERS EENHEID OF KORPS		PETKENTEKEN VERANDER VOLGERS EENHEID OF KORPS	PETKENTEKEN VERANDER VOLGERS EENHEID OF KORPS		PETKENTEKEN VERANDER VOLGERS EENHEID OF KORPS	LITENANT- KOMMANDEUR		
MAJOR		MAJOR	MAJOR		MAJOR	LITENANT- KOMMANDEUR		
								JUNIOR OFFISIERE

KAPTEIN		KAPTEIN	KAPTEIN		KAPTEIN	LITENANT		LITENANT
LITENANT		LITENANT	LITENANT		LITENANT	ONDERLITENANT		ONDERLITENANT
TWEEDE LITENANT		TWEEDE LITENANT	TWEEDE LITENANT		TWEEDE LITENANT	VAANDRIG		VAANDRIG

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**KAPELAANSDIENS SAW**

<b>SA LEER</b>		<b>SA LUGMAG</b>	
PETKENTEKEN		PETKENTEKEN	
CHRISTUSMONOGRAM OP SKOULER		CHRISTUSMONOGRAM OP SKOULER	

AANSPREKFORM - DOMINEE



PETKENTEKEN

**SA VLOOT**

	MOU WINTERUNIFORM
	SKOULER SOMERUNIFORM

BYVORBEEL TOT PARATUIS

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