

From Defence to Development

REDIRECTING MILITARY RESOURCES
IN SOUTH AFRICA



Edited by Jeddyn Dock and Penny Mokhele

FROM DEFENCE TO DEVELOPMENT

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Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa

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for The Group for Environmental Monitoring

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Rocky Williams

Virtually all countries in the southern African region are undergoing or have undergone phased demobilisation programmes. Declining economies, negotiated political settlements and developmental imperatives have impelled governments to re-examine military establishments and the finances required for their maintenance.

A range of creative strategies has been suggested on how southern African countries can demilitarise their respective states, societies and military establishments. These include the downsizing, or even elimination, of some armed forces; the reduction of military expenditure; the conversion of military facilities and inventories to civilian use; and the reintegration of demobilised soldiers into civilian life. Historically, it has been the human resource component of demilitarisation that has received considerable attention from political and defence planners. The reasons behind this strategy are self-evident: without a peaceful and sustainable reintegration of soldiers into society, the prospects of political, economic and social stability will be bedevilled.

Inherent contradictions lie at the heart of southern African demobilisation programmes, making their implementation a potentially Janus-faced process. Along with a host of political and social problems most southern African demobilisation programmes take place within economies that are incapable of absorbing all personnel. Often the financial and employment packages provided to demobilised soldiers do not match the salaries and perks received in the employ of the military. Post-demobilisation training is often incomplete or does not accurately reflect the skills requirements of the economic sector into which soldiers are directed.

Fundamental to the success of any demobilisation programme, therefore, is the effective preparation of former military personnel. The key factors are sound planning and management of the process; career counselling; thorough skills and personnel audits; research into employment prospects; and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Critical to the reintegration process is the extent to which an effec-



(Photo courtesy of Salute)

tive human resources development and conversion programme can be instituted and prove capable of gainfully deploying demobilised personnel in the economy. More so than any other aspect of demobilisation, unemployment contributes to disaffection and frustration among former soldiers.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the potential role which human resources development and conversion can play within the context of an envisaged demobilisation programme. While acknowledging that a range of programmes can be instituted, it focuses on the role that alternative certification programmes can play. Although the emphasis is on the institution of alternative certification programmes for officers and senior non-commissioned officers, the principles can be applied to similar programmes for all ranks within the South African armed forces.

Towards a human resources conversion strategy

The terms *human resources conversion* and *human resources development* are used extensively in this chapter. Human resources conversion refers to the practical and normative conversion of specific skills possessed by military personnel into capabilities that can be

used in a non-military environment. This can be achieved by accreditation of these skills by governmental and business sectors, or through their recognition and integration into broader educational and training courses. Human resources development refers to the provision of education and training for people lacking particular competencies, or supplementing existing capabilities with market-related skills.

The importance of human resources conversion and development cannot be underestimated. A successful demobilisation programme can contribute to socio-economic development and has the indirect potential to release funds previously earmarked for defence spending for developmental needs. This reality lies at the heart of any proposed demilitarisation agenda. The benefits of such a programme are measurable way beyond the fiscal outlay.

Money spent on a demobilisation programme facilitates human development . . .

Effective human resources development provides employment . . .

Effective and durable employment reduces the sources of social and political conflict, both internally and regionally . . .

Reduced conflict diminishes the prospect of war . . .

Decreasing prospects of war contribute to reductions in defence spending (Kingma, 1995).

For the institution of an effective human resources conversion programme, it is important that the following factors are considered prior to initiating the planning process:

- Extensive stakeholder identification and consultation. This will range from major stakeholders, such as the state, the private sector, and international agencies, to smaller, more locally based organisations. This partnership should involve practical and transparent interfaces: joint involvement in programmes, joint representation on key demobilisation committees, secondment of expertise to the demobilisation programme, etc. While major stakeholders are important players in the demobilisation programme, it should be remembered that it is local communities, the smaller stakeholders, who will either benefit from or bear the brunt of demobilisation programmes.
- Institution of a public awareness campaign. This is important in broadening the base of popular support for the programme and addressing misconceptions about demobilised personnel (allegations of preferential treatment, fears regarding their likely behaviour, etc.).
- Mobilisation of resources required for the proposed programme (financial, material, organisational and intellectual).
-

Institution of a comprehensive needs analysis. A needs analysis is necessary to determine the following:

- job prospects and employment patterns in the different sectors: (rural, urban, industry, agriculture, etc.);
 - regional possibilities and variations in employment;
 - skills deficits;
 - identification of appropriate training and educational institutions.
-
- Securing donor pledges prior to the demobilisation programme.

The following should be taken into consideration during the planning phases:

- Feasibility studies on a region-by-region basis. These should take into account:
 - ◆ tertiary, technical and vocational training capacity;
 - ◆ existing and potential funding for such institutions;
 - ◆ equipment availability at educational and training institutions;
 - ◆ availability and condition of buildings;
 - ◆ availability and competency of instructors;
 - ◆ the capacity of NGOs to provide training.
- Market demand and training prioritisation.
- Key indicators of success.

By considering these factors during the planning phase, it is possible to discern a number of generic strategies required for a human resources conversion programme. These are outlined below.

The first-line response strategy

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), which has amassed considerable expertise in the sphere of human resources conversion, identifies a number of strategies that can be adopted in the context of a demobilisation programme. The first is referred to as a first-line response strategy, in which an immediate operational response is provided over an eight- to twelve-month period. This approach is skill-specific in terms of scope, relies extensively on NGO and community expertise and assistance in its implementation, and is usually targeted at specific categories of military personnel (those in the lower ranks, those possessing limited skills, and those without extensive managerial or academic training).

Features of a typical first-line response strategy include:

- The design of self-contained modules aimed at imparting a specific skill that can be taught by a range of institutions and instructors. Examples include auto-engineering, building and construction, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, plumbing, pipe-fitting.
- The creation of module training banks at national and regional

levels that can be accessed by locally based demobilisation projects.

- Surveying and utilising locally based NGOs, churches and private-sector bodies in implementing training programmes to ensure community participation and determine an appropriate skills profile for a region.

A first-line strategy works most effectively in the informal rural sector and the informal urban sector where specific skills are developed, minimum business skills are imparted, and polyvalent training is extended to the skill group as a whole. These strategies presuppose the existence of an economy that has a relatively developed informal-sector network.

The Tigrayan experience from the Ethiopian demobilisation process is an example of the first-line response strategy in action. Some 3000 demobilised personnel were identified for the programme, all of whom possessed no more than basic literacy and military training. The programme identified income-generating activities in the Tigrayan region and designed appropriate training modules for each skill required. Trainers were trained and employment resource packages were designed to facilitate the programme's implementation. Regular follow-ups were conducted after the institution of the programmes.

The short-term approach

The adoption of the classic institutional and the formal apprenticeship strategies for human resource conversion is more typical of developed countries in which there is a high degree of literacy, numeracy and formal education. This approach seeks to utilise the services of existing tertiary institutions (universities, technical colleges, specialised training institutes, academies, etc.) to educate, train and convert the skills of former soldiers into particular employment directions. Typical examples include the post-Second World War GI Bill in the United States, the Montgomery GI Bill currently in existence in the United States, and the military career transition programmes used by the British, German, United States, Canadian and Australian armed forces to prepare officers completing medium-term contracts for a second career.

While these approaches have recorded high levels of success in many countries (particularly the United States) there are factors which should be considered before adopting this approach:

- The capacity of institutions to accommodate demobilised personnel.
- The importance of securing an early agreement between the Ministry of Defence, government and educational institutions on the proposed implementation of programmes. This applies particularly to the accreditation of military training and experience in a non-military environment.
-

A realistic appraisal of the constraints of formal institutions and their involvement in such a programme, for example:

- the limited experience of teachers and instructors in understanding the needs of demobilised personnel;
- rigid entry requirements that may prove resistant to the accreditation of military experience and qualifications;
- rigid, inflexible and outdated curricula that prove incapable of adapting to the challenges of a human resources conversion programme;
- the use of outdated methodologies (e.g. non-participative, teacher-centred methodologies);
- the inability of many institutions to understand the changing demands of the labour market.

Short-term response strategies (1-5 years duration) tend to focus on more conventional training approaches, including formal apprenticeships, self-employment programmes and the use of classic institutional approaches. These strategies are most effective in the urban formal sector and the rural formal sector, although self-employment programmes have relevance in the formal and the informal sectors.

Short-term alternative certification programmes have been successful in the United States. These programmes have been applied exclusively to officers and, to a lesser extent, to senior non-commissioned officers, and build on the instruction skills of the military, management background, planning skills and the predisposition to work in teams. Successful examples have included soldier-to-teacher programmes and provide possible parallels with the institution of similar human resource conversion programmes in South Africa.

Alternative certification: The US experience

Simply put, alternative certification refers to programs designed to facilitate the entry of college graduates with appropriate subject matter expertise into classroom teaching or administrative positions in the schools . . . Alternative certification programs allow arts and sciences graduates to participate in intensified programs which do not require the typical accumulation of credit hours, to demonstrate competency requirements, and or to gain the necessary expertise through field-based experiences while holding a teaching position (MacDonald et al. , 1994:20).

While alternative certification in the United States has focused exclusively on converting the skills and capabilities of former officers and senior non-commissioned officers into classroom-based competencies, the concept is used in a wider sense in this chapter. Here, it refers to the conversion of the skills and capabilities of all former soldiers into a range of competencies, including managerial and

administrative capabilities in the private and the public sector, possible conversion into teaching- and instructor-based competencies, and the conversion of technically related skills in similar areas.

Alternative certification programmes in the United States take place within the broader context of defence downsizing. To prepare military personnel for a second career upon severance, a variety of Military Career Transition Programmes (MCTPs) has been instituted. Although many former military officers and non-commissioned officers find direct employment in the private sector, many want to go to university or college, or desire training in a new skill (Military Career Transition Program, 1994).

A survey of 5 000 military members attending an MCTP at Fort Benning, Georgia, found that approximately 50 per cent wanted to go directly into a private sector job, about 20 per cent wanted to go to university, and 30 per cent wanted training in a new skill (*Army Times*, 3 May 1993). Traditionally, MCTPs concentrated on providing military personnel with the skills they would require for a job search (interview techniques, curriculum vitae compilation, etc.). Within the context of large-scale downsizing, emphasis was increasingly placed by the Clinton administration on job placement for former military members and resulted in some \$519 million being allocated to MCTPs in 1994 (*Army Times*, 3 May 1993).

The reasons behind the institution of alternative certification programmes – for example, in education – have included the following: to increase the pool of mathematics, science, special education and minority teachers; increase the numbers of teachers in rural and urban areas; attract a more diverse group of candidates . . . and provide opportunities for bright college graduates to begin careers in teaching without completing extended teacher certification programmes (MacDonald et al., 1994:20). Successful programmes have been introduced for other areas of employment, including local government, business and technical trades.

Why focus on former military personnel for alternative certification?

Alternative certification programmes (ACPs) involving military personnel have invariably drawn criticism. Is it desirable to convert the skills of former military personnel and bring them into the civilian sector? And what qualities do the military possess that better equip them for alternative certification? Old Dominion University (ODU), which runs the largest ACP in the United States, concentrating mainly on military personnel from Virginia, has identified a number of beneficial traits, including maturity, a sense of responsibility, an understanding of team work, a sense of community, relative youth, communication skills, training skills and experience, and a level of technical competence (Military Career Transition Program, 1994).

The observations of ODU have been reinforced by surveys conduct-

ed among principals in Virginia who cite the following qualities exhibited by former military personnel certificated as teachers: maturity and life experience, strong content knowledge, an ability to work with younger people, responsibility, clear goals, strong work ethic, good planning abilities, motivation, conceptual ability, strong leadership skills, and a high level of professionalism (MacDonald et al., 1994:21).

The people involved in the programme tend to confirm these observations:

The organisational and training skills I had to use in the army transferred over. The objectives and planning are the same, though they are called by a different name. You have to prepare lesson plans and long-range semester plans instead of weekly training schedules and quarterly training plans (*Soldiers Newspaper*, March 1993).

He brings order, sensitivity, and the kind of stick-to-it-ness you want teachers to have, but usually don't have until they have been in the system for a while. I would like to see 30 people like him in this building. He brings new dimensions with an old idea strong management, firmness and sensitivity (*Soldiers Newspaper* March 1993).

The programme just made good sense. Throughout the military profession, personnel are exposed to a considerable amount of experience involving planning, instruction, human relations and technology. Their backgrounds in the military coincide with the skills needed to become good teachers (*The Flagship*, 10 June 1993).

However, using military personnel for ACP particularly in education has its drawbacks:

Underlying the bureaucratic hassles are differences between the military and public school classroom environments. Some former military people have difficulty bringing their vocabularies down to student level. Others have trouble figuring out how to administer discipline without the advantages of military rank . . . Indeed another problem is the changes in the schools over the past three decades. Dr Robert MacDonald, a professor of curriculum and instruction at Old Dominion, said of the new teacher, 'They say the school they would have liked to have taught in existed in 1959.' (*New York Times*, 8 April 1992) One of the features of the ACP for teachers is the institution of a normative component to the programme that stresses the class-

room management and behaviour management techniques required for operation within the more liberal and interactive educational environment of the 1990s (*Educational Week*, 20 May 1992).

The experience of Old Dominion University

The MCTP began as a collaborative effort between the armed forces and their education offices, university departments, school districts, the Virginia State Department of Education and the community. Stakeholder consultation and participation centred around administrative planning, curriculum development, key faculty participation, programme implementation and quality evaluation. Such interaction ensures that major stakeholders are involved in curriculum design and implementation.

Prospective teachers have to complete more than 60 hours of tutorial and group work, and individualised instruction, before entering their compulsory six-week practical teaching experience module (22-45 credit hours and 27-30 hours for certification). Military personnel have the choice of certification only, certification and a Masters degree, or certification and a certificate of advanced study. The course takes an average of 18 months to 2 years, is part-time, and is completed in uniform. Considerable follow-up is provided once military personnel are placed in jobs.

Military personnel on the MCTP can work towards certification in the following teaching areas: early childhood, middle school, secondary school, special education, vocational technical training, or specialised training for disadvantaged children. The acquisition of a certificate in one of these areas allows MCTP graduates to pursue postgraduate studies.

The ODU programme provides candidates with experience in teaching methodology, classroom management, lesson preparation and related pedagogic skills. It also focuses on normative skills, interactive and participative teaching, multi-cultural training, and sensitising candidates to the more democratic and non-hierarchical nature of the modern school.

Attempts to replicate the experience of such an MCTP in South Africa should take cognisance of the following:

- The importance of regular interaction among the identified stakeholders: the armed forces, the community, the institution providing the training, and the sector where military personnel will be employed.
- The university or college offering the MCTP should be actively involved in its presentation, implementation and ongoing evaluation.
- Extensive counselling assists candidates to choose an appropriate
- vocation.
-

Extensive support needs to be provided to aspirant alternative certification members in the spheres of learning and interviewing skills, preparing curricula vitae, applying for positions and presentation.

The concept of alternative certification as applied at ODU could prove a useful tool for a South African demobilisation programme.

Employment and training in South Africa

The institution of an alternative certification programme for military personnel about to be demobilised in South Africa requires acceptance by major stakeholders, the capacity and willingness of training institutions to participate in such a programme, the identification of areas of the economy where alternative certification programmes would be of benefit, and funding.

Predictions about the future of the South African economy vary from cautious to optimistic. The country is recording a 3 per cent growth rate but finds itself unable to absorb the large numbers of school-leavers completing matric every year. It is estimated that a 6 per cent growth rate will be necessary to ensure all school-leavers are gainfully absorbed into the economy. Unemployment is estimated at approximately 43 per cent (*Mail & Guardian*, 5 January 1996).

While the informal sector has been trumpeted as an arena where people can find employment, it is plagued by problems. Inhibiting factors include near saturation in certain areas (for example, Gauteng), the high level of insecurity experienced by people employed there, and a host of cultural, national, gender and ethnic factors which make entrance into this sector problematic.

Although the formal sector is limited in its capacity to absorb new job applicants, certain niches appear to exist. Some organisations specialising in skills provision record high employment statistics for people entering the formal sector. Several Johannesburg-based groups confirm this tendency. The St Anthony's Skills Training Programme in Johannesburg has trained an average of 2 600 people in a range of vocational skills courses since the beginning of 1994. Courses generally last for eight weeks and focus on skills required in the formal and the informal sector (welding, plumbing, construction, dress-making, etc.). At present, the programme records a 70 per cent employment rate for people completing the course. The Bertrams Brigade provides training in construction-related skills and records an 82 per cent employment rate for people completing the course. A similar organisation, Keyboards, provides computer training for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and records a 100 per cent employment rate for people completing the course (*Homeless Talk*, February 1996).

While the percentages are impressive, they do not indicate the duration of employment, or the follow-up involved in the programmes.

Temporary employment can be of initial value in a demobilisation programme, but may not guarantee lasting prospects of employment.

At junior, middle-management and senior-management levels, many private-sector companies are scouring the market to find affirmative action and equal opportunity candidates for long-term employment. Those possessing either a degree or appropriate management background and experience are sought after. The increasing attrition rate of officers from the SANDF also indicates that scores are carving out niches (in some cases, lucrative) in the burgeoning consultancy sector.

The public sector remains a fertile area of employment. Although central government is being rationalised according to the proposals outlined by the Department of Public Administration, employment potential exists within provincial, regional and particularly local government where there are experience, skill and qualification deficits at middle- and senior-management levels. For instance, the majority of middle and senior managers in the public service are not trained to the level of the posts which they occupy. This has been acknowledged by a joint initiative based at South Africa's business and development schools, known as the University-Based Management Development Programme for Implementing the RDP. The programme aims at producing personnel for the middle- and senior-management echelons required to manage the RDP. Six universities participate in the programme: School of Government (Western Cape); School of Public and Development Management (Stellenbosch); School of Public Policy and Development Management (Durban-Westville); School of Public Management (Pretoria); Institute of Government (Fort Hare); and the Graduate School of Public and Development Management (Witwatersrand). The following observation highlights the urgent need for skilled managers in the civil service: Between 18 000 and 30 000 newly trained professionals are required annually for the public service. This exceeds the output capacity of existing training institutions by over 10 000.

The group envisages:

- An increase in total output of trained managers at postgraduate level from 340 per annum in 1994, to 1 015 per annum in 1999.
- An increase in the total output of graduates from certified programmes from 732 per annum in 1994, to 2 270 in 1999.
- Within the overall increase in output of 199 per cent for degree programmes over 5 years, and 210 per cent for certificate programmes for the same period, an increase of graduates drawn from disadvantaged racial and gender backgrounds by 221 per cent and 152 per cent respectively for the degree programmes, and 297 per cent and 339 per cent for certificate programmes (University-Based Management Development Programme, 1995:3).

With appropriate consultation and mutually agreed certification, it may be possible to place alternatively certified SANDF personnel in these sectors.

Human resources conversion programmes in SA

It is clear that a large number of military personnel will be rationalised from the SANDF. Estimates range from 30 000 to 50 000. Increasing pressure on the budget, the need to reduce high operating costs, the massive reductions in force levels taking place in the southern African region, and the structural reorganisation of the SANDF are all indicators in this regard. However, unlike many other African armed forces, SANDF personnel have a wide skills base and a diverse and heterogeneous economy into which they can be incorporated.

These skills include leadership and management, effective written and oral communication, team building, strategic capabilities, and an ability to work with large groups of people. Most senior- and middle-ranking officers possess graduate qualifications from civilian tertiary institutions and staff colleges (the latter providing extensive background in managerial, strategic, financial and administrative techniques). Junior officers and senior non-commissioned officers have completed a range of military courses in areas of functional specialisation in addition to basic management skills.

The advantages of alternative career certification programmes (ACPs) can be summarised as follows:

- They allow military personnel who are about to be demobilised the opportunity to convert their skills to gainful use in the civilian sector. This contributes to a reduction in the levels of uncertainty and insecurity among personnel about to be demobilised.
- Since ACPs are not full-time courses, military personnel can complete their certification while in uniform. Given their part-time nature, demobilised personnel are not faced with the problem of sustaining themselves and their families during 3-4 years of fulltime study. The SANDF can, at minimal cost, contribute towards their education and allow them time-off to study and prepare for their impending demobilisation.
- ACPs utilise the extensive skills of military personnel for the benefit of the public and the private sector. Former soldiers are guaranteed relatively stable employment (unlike the insecurities rife in the informal sector).
- ACPs ensure that the ongoing resources invested in defence will, ultimately, have a developmental spin-off. Conversion and accreditation of military experience and qualifications represent a practical use of skills that would not normally have a social utility.
- South Africa already possesses growing expertise in this arena

most notably the various accreditation initiatives that have been forwarded to the National Qualifications Board, and the different courses offered at business schools.

- The institution of the Service Corps – a structure designed specifically to accommodate and prepare former military personnel for reintegration into civilian society – provides a practical basis for initiating aspects of a human resources conversion programme. Although the Services Corps is limited by finance, by a perceived lack of legitimacy in certain quarters (particularly among some former non-statutory force members), and by the focus of its activities (confined largely to the demobilisation of lower-level personnel), it can play a facilitating role in ensuring the institution of a broader human resources conversion programme.

The institution of a South African ACP for demobilised officers and non-commissioned officers will require the following planning stages to prove successful:

- Popularising the concept of alternative certification among major stakeholders.
- Securing agreement among major stakeholders on the viability of such a programme and ascertaining whether it would meet their employment needs.
- Identifying areas of the economy which could meaningfully benefit from the introduction of an ACP (for example, certain managerial levels of the civil service in provincial and local government).
- Investigating institutions which could be used for a pilot programme.
- Identifying individuals who are either eligible for or interested in alternative certification.
- Initiating a national programme with appropriate endorsement over a five- to ten-year period (the anticipated time in which demobilisation might be realistically achieved). Thereafter it could become a standard component of the SANDF's military career transition programme, preparing medium-term contract personnel for second careers.

The scope for the introduction of an ACP programme appears to be considerable given the managerial shortages identified in the private and public sector. Interested parties consulted on the initiation of an ACP in South Africa (including the Service Corps, the private sector, and the public sector) have expressed support and enthusiasm for the concept. A certain latitude exists to investigate and introduce such a programme and it would be foolish to squander this valuable human resource opportunity.¹

¹. Discussions have included people from the private sector, the public sector, the University of the Witwatersrand Business School, the Service Corps, and the SANDF's Chief of Staff Personnel.

Conclusion

The success of a demobilisation programme will be judged by its relative ability to reintegrate former military personnel into civilian society. Empowerment is critical. Human resource conversion and development should receive more attention in the challenging years that lie ahead. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made by certain defence personnel planners to date, a much wider range of creative options needs to be examined and instituted.