

MEDIA RELEASE

RESPONSE TO QUERIES ON THE ADVERTISED RECRUITMENT INTO THE NAMIBIAN DEFENCE FORCE

1. The Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs was established in terms of Chapter 5, Article 32 (3) (g) of the Namibian Constitution, to maintain and employ the Namibian Defence Force as provided for by the Supreme Law of the Land and the Defence Act. The maintenance function comprises recruiting, training, research and development, procurement, administration, logistical support, maintenance, and medical care. The employment part includes strategic, operational, and logistics planning, as well as exercising command and control over operational forces.

2. The Namibian Defence Force was established on 2 June 1990 in accordance with Article 115 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia as amended; to defend the territory of Namibia and national interests. Since then, the NDF has gone through different stages of transformation that brought about a balanced structure resourced with suitable human capital, equipment and support facilities. Having initially been a Single Service Force (Ground Force), it is now a fully-fledged Force composed of three Services, namely: the Army, the Air Force and the Navy.

3. Since its establishment in 1990, the NDF has successfully defended the integrity of the national territory and interests by suppressing and defeating incursions into Namibia especially in the Northern and North-Eastern part of our country, and continuously monitoring activities along the common border and in the territorial air land and maritime spaces. The NDF regularly participates in law enforcement activities assisting the Namibian Police Force. It as well as assists Civil Powers; Authorities and Communities in times of disasters and other needs. It has further participated in both operations of war and operations other than war under the auspices of SADC and the UN. Valuable lessons were drawn from those undertakings and, as such, the perpetual transformation agenda of the NDF is informed by those lessons.

4. The founders of the NDF were the erstwhile adversaries during the fight against colonial occupation and apartheid, who are gradually exiting the Defence Force due to, mainly, retirement. Since 1996, the Ministry has gradually recruited young Namibian volunteers of ages between 18 and 25 with prescribed education and other requirements. Throughout the past recruitment processes, valuable

lessons were learnt that resulted in the gradual review of the process for its perfection.

5. Recruitment for the Defence Force is a continuous process as it aims at filling the vacancies created annually through retirements, resignations, discharges and deaths. The purpose of recruitment is to ensure that the majority of the members in the Force are young and energetic people between the ages of 18 and 40. This age bracket (18-40) is for those who are physically able to withstand the chaotic nature and physical demands of the battlefield. It is therefore important that the Defence Force is constantly manned by a good number of young cadres while also retaining a considerable number of middle aged officers and men (41 -59) to groom and mentor the young ones.

6. A career in the NDF is a permanent but voluntary undertaking, as our constitution outlaws conscription. Soldiers follow a career path that involves both physical military and academic training. The soldiers' growth path depends on their achievements in training courses attended, operations participated in and the command and staff appointments held. In the performance of their duties, the soldiers operate sophisticated equipment and weapon systems on which they must be trained. Their operational training takes place in Namibia while some individuals are trained abroad to come and train others back home. All instructions are conducted in the official language (English), while comprehension of operational tactics and employment of the equipment and systems require certain levels of understanding of mathematics and science.

7. Please take note that it is not everybody that makes it to the top in the military. As a result, some individuals fall by the wayside and may become redundant in certain positions which is not desirable. It is thus important that academic learning remains a continuous process alongside one's military progression. This is the reason that, at a certain stage after the members have mastered their regimental duties, they are afforded opportunities to further their studies in areas of their interest, to prepare them to exit the force at any stage of their career, if they want to pursue careers in different fields. It has thus been determined that if individuals join the NDF with entry levels to vocational training and other tertiary institutions, they stand a great chance to progress in their military career as they will be able to master the trades they will be assigned in, and also to further their studies in preparation for careers outside the military if they so wish.

8. While motivating the budget allocation for **Vote 8: Ministry of Defence** in the National Assembly on the 19th April 2022, Hon Frans Kapofi, Minister of

Defence and Veterans Affairs, echoing H.E. the President and C-In-C's call for "Re-imaging", before appreciating the Minister of Finance and the DG National Planning Commission for coming up with a balanced budget, stated that Re-imaging as declared by the C-In-C is one major project that MODVA will undertake to improve Namibia's defence capability. Such undertaking, as he explained, include developing a structure that will be responsive to future challenges; recruiting fresh pairs of legs with a particular level of education; improving infrastructures and acquiring new technologies; and also the passing over of the torch from the generation of freedom fighters to the younger generation.

9. It is thus on the basis of that transformational agenda that the MODVA consequently announced this week, on Monday, its intention to recruit, and therefore invited young Namibians that are willing to volunteer to serve the Namibian people in the NDF, to apply for recruitment subject to the set requirements.

10. Since that announcement/invitation, the MODVA is overwhelmed with queries on the requirements set, while the social media is also inundated with the same, with some insinuating sentiments that are offensive, not only to the institution, but also to its members. We are therefore hereby setting the record straight on the key issues raised by those concerned as follows:

10.1 HIV test (status) being a personal issue and therefore the requirement is discriminatory and not supported by science. Basic military training is an arduous undertaking that involves physically straining activities and which sometimes cause injuries to individuals. A career in the military requires one to be a team player, hence, the trainees, during their initiation stage are required to work together as a team. They are thus required to assist one another in order to bond and meet the set requirements for such activities. Secondly, the NDF as an instrument of foreign policy is expected to participate in bilateral and multilateral activities where a negative HIV test is in most cases a requirement. Henceforth the HIV test is just a precautionary measure to prevent further transmission in training and elsewhere where NDF soldiers will be expected to participate or operate under strenuous conditions.

10.2 Why is COVID-19 vaccination a requirement? COVID-19 vaccination is one of the mitigating if not preventive measures against the spread of the pandemic. During military and fitness training activities it is not advisable for one to wear a mask as that may lead to oxygen deprivation resulting in suffocation.

Military training is physically demanding and involves contact amongst the trainee. Secondly, military training courses are time intensive and require all the trainees to participate in all lessons and practices, such that if one was to be hospitalised during the duration of training, they are regarded to have failed the course and can therefore not progress to the next level. In the case of recruitment, failure means one has not met the requirement for enlistment in the NDF. Thirdly, in our bilateral and multilateral engagements nowadays a negative COVID-19 test and proof of vaccination are a prerequisite. It is thus on the basis of these limitation that proof of COVID-19 vaccination is a requirement. Kindly take note that the MODVA is not forcing anybody to be vaccinated, but expects all the applicants to be those who meet the set requirements.

10.3 Why has the ministry not widened the age requirement from a cap of 25 to 30? As explained earlier that is the age limit requirement for recruitment into the NDF because of the reason advanced earlier. In many countries the age limit is between 17 and 22 years old, but 18 to 25 years old is the standard set in Namibia.

10.4 Why is the 2.4 km run as a requirement? Subjecting applicants to basic fitness test, that includes a 2,4 km run and others, is a universal practice. Physical fitness is one critical requirement for one to graduate from Basic Military Training. In the past we have had nationals who at the beginning of training could not even run a 100 metres at whatever speed. Such people suffered in training and some even ended up opting out. To prevent a repeat of such scenarios, it was then decided that basic fitness test must be included in the initial selection process.

10.5 The requirements of 25 points with an E in English or 27 points with a D in English are the same requirements asked for someone applying to the university. The reason for these requirements was also well explained in the preceding paragraphs (5, 6 and 7). It is really very unfortunate that there are people out there who do not understand the nature and complexity of the mission of the NDF. From global perspective, Defence Forces do recruit highly qualified members for a number of reasons. The members primarily operate sophisticated war fighting machines that cannot be operated by school dropouts, such as: flying fighter aircraft, navigating war ships, operating artillery and missile systems, and other sophisticated military equipment for the successful defence of the motherland and national interests. Secondly and more importantly, they do not only operate equipment, but they also estimate situations, plan accordingly and command formed up group of soldiers to carry out different functions in military operations under strenuous conditions.

11. It must therefore be understood that the MODVA is not an employment creation institution, but it is the most effective insurance at the disposal of our country. It must therefore be managed by and employ selfless and brave sons and daughters who are ready to pay the ultimate sacrifice for their motherland.

I thank you!

Maj Gen PSPA Nathingé
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