

SANDF discipline in spotlight after death

Disciplinary procedures in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) have come under the spotlight following the suicide of a woman soldier after she was allegedly humiliated by her commanding officer.



The tragedy comes as the SANDF is yet to act against 3000 soldiers who went on the rampage in 2009.

According to the South African National Defence Union (Sandu), the officer stationed at the SA Infantry School in Oudtshoorn, identified only as soldier Mboxo, was publicly humiliated by her commanding officer, a Col Siseko Nombewu, on Monday, after she and a male soldier, a Corporal Ngobeni, were caught being intimate in his barracks.

SANDF director of corporate communication Gen Xolani Mabanga said a board of inquiry, which was standard in such matters, had been established and there had been no reason to suspend Col Nombewu.

However, Sandu's national secretary, Pikkie Greeff, claimed that Col Nombewu went too far and had made "belittling remarks which in essence amounted to questioning publicly the sexual morals and character".

Greeff said Cpl Ngobeni was called on the parade ground before the entire battalion and stripped of his rank insignia by Col Nombewu. "This action was taken without any due process, any charges or court proceedings as required by military law," said Mr Greeff. He also made other allegations, including claims of racism, against Col Nombewu.

Defence analyst Helmoed Heitman said it was not uncommon for members of the SANDF to be publicly disciplined, but this usually took place after a hearing or court martial.

Source: *Business Day* via I-Net Bridge