

Zuma will be at slain soldiers' memorial

President Jacob Zuma is expected to attend a memorial service on Tuesday (2 April) for the 13 SANDF soldiers killed in the Central African Republic.



Image: GCS

The defence force was expected to hold a second memorial service at 11am at the Thaba Tshwane City Hall. The service Zuma was scheduled to attend would take place at the Swartkop Air Force Base, also at 11am.

The soldiers were killed on Saturday, 23 March, during a clash with Seleka rebel forces at the South Africa National Defence Force base outside Bangui. Twenty-seven others were wounded in the attack.

Two days after the attack Zuma said about 200 South African soldiers fought off about 1,000 rebels. The SANDF was in the CAR as part of a military co-operation agreement signed in 2007. The SANDF was tasked with building the capacity of the CAR's army and helping the country plan and implement a process to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate rebel forces into the CAR's defence force.

Rebels however accused President Francois Bozize of failing to fulfil promises he made, the *Associated Press* reported. They demanded he send all South African troops home.

Bozize fled the CAR on 24 March, before rebels over-ran the city and seized the presidential palace.

The 13 SANDF soldiers were named as Corporals Mokgadi Darius Seakamela and Ntebaleng Andrew Mogorosi, and Lance Corporals Daniel Sello Molara and Lukas Mohapi Tsheke.

The Riflemen killed were: Lesego Maxwell Hertzog, Zamani Jim Mxhosana, Xolani Dlamini, Vusumzi Joseph Ngaleka, Karabo Edwin Matsheka, Khomotso Paul Msenga, Maleisane Samuel Thulo, Motsamai William Bojane, and Thabiso Anthon Phirimana.

All were members of One Parachute Battalion, from Bloemfontein.

The *Sunday Times* quoted unnamed South African soldiers saying that children were among the attackers.

"It was only after the firing stopped that we saw we had killed kids. We did not come here for this. To kill kids. It makes you sick. They were crying, calling for help, calling for [their] moms," the soldier claimed.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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