



BONN INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CONVERSION

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bulletin

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Conversion in South Africa

By Penny McKenzie

The end of the Cold War and the advent of democratic rule in South Africa mean that the prospects for peace, security and development are greater now than ever before. It is a unique moment therefore to shift power and resources from the military to development purposes. Although South Africa has undergone a rapid process of demilitarization in the last six years there are still many conversion challenges, in particular the conversion of military land, human skills, finances and the arms industry.

There have been profound changes in defense since the election of a democratic government in April 1994. These include cuts in defense budgets of nearly fifty percent since 1989, the merger of eight armed forces into a new South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the establishment of civil control of the military and the democratic formulation of defense policy. Underpinning these changes is a reconceptualization of security to include its political, economic, social and environmental aspects. At the heart of the new approach is a concern with the security of people and a recognition that the greatest threats to people's security are socio-economic threats such as homelessness, poverty, illiteracy and lack of social services.

The imperative to meet people's development needs, combined with the fact that there is no foreseeable conventional military threat facing South Africa, means that there is considerable space to rationalize the South African Defence Force. There is a convergence of interests between the rationalization process of the military and the conversion agenda of the demilitarization movement.

There are four key conversion challenges, namely conversion of military land and bases, human resources, finances, and the arms industry.

The SANDF currently controls 500,000 hectares of land. Some of this land was acquired through the dispossession and forced removal of communities under the apartheid regime. A number of communities are now re-claiming their land. The rationalization process is an opportunity for communities to regain their land as well as for land to be freed for redistribution purposes.

The conversion of human resources is a critical challenge for the military. The integration process has resulted in a force of 101,000 people which is bloated in terms of budgetary constraints and defense needs. Soldiers from the guerilla armies who were not eligible for integration into the new defense force because of education levels, health or age or who chose not to integrate have been demobilized. A further 30,000 military personnel could be rationalized. This will impact hardest on soldiers from the guerilla forces, many of whom have not had access to education and training and have limited material resources. The key challenge of demobilization and rationalization is to successfully reintegrate ex-soldiers into civilian life. The military currently has a Service Corps which aims to do this but there are calls for reintegration to be managed instead by a civilian body.

There is lively debate about appropriate levels of defense expenditure in South Africa. Defense spending is less than two percent of the GDP, the level recommended by the United Nations for developing countries. Nevertheless it has been suggested that the defense budget should be cut further in light of the pressing socio-economic needs. In particular there is public opposition to the purchase of expensive capital equipment, such as corvettes and submarines.

Finally the conversion of the arms industry is an important challenge. South Africa's arms industry has

***... imperative to meet
people's development
needs ...***

adjusted to a declining defense budget and shrinking international defense markets by significantly increasing arms exports. This is a limited strategy and the industry will have to continue to diversify and convert. Government needs to develop a defense industrial adjustment policy which provides a conducive macro-economic environment to enable the conversion of the industry.

Significant rationalization and conversion is happening in South Africa. The short term costs such as job losses and decline in industrial output will be offset by the positive long term effects of resources being allocated to meet socio-economic needs and providing a better life for all South Africans. Building the capacity of civil society to advocate for continued conversion, to participate in conversion efforts and monitor the process is a critical challenge for NGOs working for demilitarization.

Pennie McKenzie co-ordinates the "Re-defining security" program at the Group for Environmental Monitoring (GEM) in Johannesburg, South Africa. BICC provides support to GEM in the design and planning of a research and education project entitled "Capacity Building for Conversion in South Africa".

Errata

We apologize for a typing error made in bulletin No.1 in the feature on *China's Conversion* written by Yitzhak Shichor. The correct sentence (first page, second column) should read:

From 1958 to 1960 [instead of 1969] the share of civilian output value in the total defense industrial output value was 60.8 percent, reaching 74.5 percent in 1960 [instead of 1969], ten times as much as in 1957 and as much as in the mid-1990s.

Bonn International Center for Conversion bulletin No. 2

As an independent, non-profit organization, the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) supports and promotes the processes by which people, skills, technology, equipment, financial and economic resources are shifted from the military or defense sector towards alternative, civilian purposes.

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Staff Spotlight:



**Ulrike Lindemann
and
Ulrich Schirowski**



Ulrike Lindemann, from Germany, works in BICC's project management department as the project leader for base conversion in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). She studied geography specializing in regional economics and urban planning. Ms. Lindemann has recently been joined by Ulrich Schirowski, a geographer specializing in regional and political economics.

Their project focuses on giving assistance to North Rhine-Westphalian communities affected by base closures. Initiating and undertaking the complex conversion process requires interdisciplinary knowledge and high management qualities on the part of the local leaders. Being aware of this, the North Rhine-Westphalian government requested BICC in 1995 to assist communities in the redevelopment process. Consultation is offered in a variety of issue areas which communities are engaged in; e.g. developing viable alternative uses for former military sites, building local consensus on development priorities, working out financial and marketing concepts, dealing with contamination as well as protected buildings. The project staff also acts as a moderator in disagreements arising between the German federal government and communities over purchase prices of former military land.

To support those involved in conversion in North Rhine-Westphalia, Ms. Lindemann and Mr. Schirowski also inform them on how ideas, experiences, and strategies are managed in other communities, both national and international. To do this, Ms. Lindemann and Mr. Schirowski cooperate closely with the North Rhine-Westphalian state and district governments. Besides personal consultations, Ms. Lindemann and Mr. Schirowski have published a handbook for the North-Rhine-Westphalian communities including detailed information on governmental funding programs and 'best-practice' strategies.

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Prospects for Disposing of Chemical Weapons in Russia

On November 8-10 the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) in conjunction with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) held a conference addressing problems and prospects for a chemical weapon (CW) program in Russia to destroy the declared stockpile of 40,000 agent tons. The mix of participants included scientists, academic researchers, industry representatives, members of non-governmental organizations, and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The Convention will enter into force on 29 April 1997. In addition, officials from countries currently lending technical assistance to Russia to help them initiate a CW destruction program were present.

During the conference areas of potential concern which could obstruct aims for moving forward with destruction were discussed. These include the ability to finance the program, the current lack of a national law supporting future destruction plans, and matters of human and environmental

"... a destruction program which is estimated at US \$3-5 billion ..."

safety linked to the different disposal technologies under consideration. The conference also addressed the domestic decision-making processes and problems in Russia and how the issue of chemical weapon disposal is treated within this framework.

The ability to fund the implementation of a destruction program, which is estimated at US \$3-5 billion, has been a major factor for Russian officials in deciding whether to ratify the CWC. Possibilities for future Russian ratification of the CWC will depend on a combination of factors including prospects of further international assistance.

In 1997 BICC and SIPRI will be issuing publications both in English and Russian containing the papers prepared for the conference.

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New: The "BICC China Book"!

Defense Conversion in China: Jörn Brömmelhörster, John Frankenstein (eds.), *Mixed Motives, Uncertain Outcomes—Defense Conversion in China* Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, January 1997, 270 pages

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In early 1995 BICC commenced its Internet service, relating to conversion, disarmament and demilitarization. ConverNet is a core-element of BICC's function as a worldwide clearinghouse on practical conversion experiences and projects, and the amount of data available has increased steadily and, with it, the amount of visitors to the site.

ConverNet presently consists of three components:

- BICC documentation including selected full-text versions of publications, abstracts, project briefs, press releases and reference material, and information on the institute
- Information and data from cooperation partners, including among others, the Specialized Information Network "International Relations and Area Studies", and the German Society for Foreign Affairs (DGAP)
- Consulting services: (1) Base closure marketing page (from Feb 97) providing information for potential investors on former military sites (2) Bulletin Board of conferences, workshops and cooperation proposals in the field of conversion and international security.

Within the context of promoting the Internet as an excellent tool for facilitating research as well as governmental communication and data retrieval, Michael Dedek participated in the conference "Partnership for Peace (PfP) Governments on the Net", organized by the Euro Atlantic Foundation in Bratislava on 28-30 October 1996. His presentation focussed on the two functions the Internet serves for BICC: (1) Information retrieval (2) Information/Data supply. It was well received as a good illustration of the type of information that should be provided by governments and international organizations and how research institutes could document their work on the Internet.

BICC's yearbook :

Conversion Survey 1996- Global Disarmament, Demilitarization and Demobilization,

Oxford University Press, UK, 1996 (price £17.99, \$27.95, DM 45.00), 281 pages

The 1997 issue of *BICC's yearbook,*

Conversion Survey 1997- Global Disarmament and Disposal of Surplus Weapons will be published in May 1997

BICC Publications

In addition to its annual yearbook *Conversion Survey* and other books, BICC publishes series such as *report*, *brief* and *paper* that analyze the background of the international conversion process, report on conversion projects and experiences, and offer scientific as well as practical know-how in the various fields of conversion. Recent publications include the following:

brief 8: Pawel Wieczorek and Katarzyna Zukrowska, *Conversion in Poland: The Defense Industry and Base Redevelopment*, November 1996

paper 6: Joseph DiChiaro III, *Conference on Dismantlement and Destruction of Nuclear, Chemical and Conventional Weapons, 19-21 May 1996, Conference Summary*, December 1996

Forthcoming:

paper 7: Irmgard Nübler, *Human Resources Development and Utilization in Demobilization and Reintegration Programs*, January 1997

paper 8: Denise Spencer, *Demobilization and Reintegration in Central America*, January 1997

report 9: Jörn Brömmelhörster, *Konversionsförderung in der EU: Das KONVER II Programm [Conversion Support in the EU: The KONVER II Program]*, February 1997

Upcoming Events

A conference on the **regional aspects of conversion** is planned by BICC; to be held in Bonn from 5-7 March 1997. Both in academic and policy making circles, the economic region has been perceived as an important, possibly the most important, level of activity to counter the negative employment effects of defense downsizing. The conference aims to compare experiences with regional conversion policies in Europe and the United States.

4th International NGO Conference on Landmines: **Toward a Mine-Free Southern Africa** to be held 25-28 February 1997, Maputo, Mozambique, aims to build on the increasing worldwide momentum to ban landmines. The 4-day conference will consist of speakers, panel discussions, workshops, open papers as well as visits to demining sites and training centers, prosthetics and rehabilitation programmes. For more information contact:
4th International Landmines Conference, c/o Fundacao Para O Desenvolvimento da Comunidade (FDC)
Avenida Eduardo Mondlane, 1160-1170 R/C
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BICC Notes

In October 1996 Minister Anke Brunn, Chairperson of BICC's International Board, and Dr. Herbert Wulf, Director of BICC, launched BICC's study on micro-disarmament (BICC brief 7) at the United Nations. They met with Under-Secretaries Annan, Desai and Jin as well as the Director of the UN Centre for Disarmament Affairs to discuss the possibilities for follow-up action on the control of small arms. The study on micro-disarmament (prepared in cooperation with the Monterey Institute for International Studies at the request of the German Foreign Office) includes an overview on problems relating to the circulation of small arms and presents a set of recommended operating principles for the United Nations and other multilateral organizations involved in micro-disarmament.

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On October 16, 1996 Michael Brzoska and Kees Kingma participated in a hearing at the German Bundestag on "Armaments and Development Cooperation". The hearing was organized by the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development. In both its written submission and oral presentation BICC stressed that the demobilization and disarmament of combatants after the end of conflicts have become important issues in development cooperation in a number of countries and should receive more attention by policy-makers. This message, also stressed by other participants at the hearing, was well received by a number of members of parliament and follow-on work in the committee is planned.

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From October 27-30, 1996, an international conference on "Conversion of Military Sites and Defense Industries" was held in the city of Kaiserslautern, Germany. It was organized jointly by the United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services and the State of Rheinland-Pfalz (Germany), in cooperation with the Directorate General for Regional Policies of the Commission of the European Communities. Experts from all over the world discussed the opportunities and benefits of worldwide conversion. Examples of industry conversion, base closures and redevelopment from East and West as well as developing countries were presented. Although similar problems are often encountered when redevelopment or restructuring is required, the approaches applied to cope with these challenges vary widely. Both public and private action has been initiated in the different areas of conversion. The participants stressed the need for a world-wide monitoring and evaluation of conversion projects as well as an international exchange of experiences. They also explored the possibility of a follow-up conference, preferably in the US, to address the role of local government when experiencing conversion problems.

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