

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO AMAPÁ

PATRÍCIA DINIZ FASSI

THE ARMED FORCES EDUCATION IN SURINAM

MACAPÁ

2021

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Final Paper presented to the course of International Relations, Department of Human Sciences and Philosophy, from the Federal University of Amapá (UNIFAP), as a partial requirement for obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations.

Adviser: Paulo Gustavo Pellegrino Correa

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present work analyses the trajectory of the armed forces in Suriname. The young country has suffered a series of political coups involving the military, causing changes in their academic formation. The time frame is from November of 1975 to January of 2021, since the country's Independence until the creation of the first military educational institutions in the country. The methodology used was exploratory and qualitative; it counted with biographical support, interviews, paper articles, informative websites, and the academies' social media. The creations of the mentioned institutions marked a new era in Suriname's military education, that used to depend almost exclusively of cooperation with other countries, mostly Brazil and The Netherlands.

**Keywords:** Military Education; Suriname; Cooperation.

## **RESUMO**

O presente trabalho analisa a trajetória da educação das forças armadas no Suriname. O jovem país sofreu com uma série de golpes políticos envolvendo militares, infligindo mudanças na formação acadêmica deles. O recorte temporal é de novembro de 1975 até janeiro de 2021, desde a independência do país até pouco mais de um ano da criação das primeiras instituições educacionais para militares no país. A metodologia utilizada foi exploratória e qualitativa; contou com apoio bibliográfico, entrevistas, artigos de jornal, sites informativos e redes sociais das academias. A criação das mencionadas instituições marcou uma nova era na educação militar no Suriname, que dependia quase que exclusivamente da cooperação com outros países, majoritariamente Brasil e Holanda.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Militar; Suriname; Cooperação.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Surinam, the youngest country in South America, after becoming independent, was marked by a series of political upheaval driven and originated by military matters; the main one – the cause of the first military coup – was directly related to the privileged training of a group of soldiers, that received higher positions and salaries, while the others suffered from inequalities and lack of attention to their demands. After the 1980 coup, the government made military cooperation agreements with other countries in order to meet the internal demands, taking this into consideration, military education in Surinam depended almost exclusively on other countries.

The present text aims to analyze the course of military education in Surinam. The time frame is from 1975, year the country became independent from The Netherlands, until January of 2021, one year and two months after the inauguration of the *Surinaamse Militaire School* (Military School of Surinam) and the *Surinaamse Militaire Academie* (Military Academy of Surinam), the first regularly established schools in the training of military personnel in Surinam. To support the overall objective, the following questions guided the work: what is the role of the armed forces in Surinam? How does the military training occur? How does cooperating with other countries help the military training of the Surinamese?

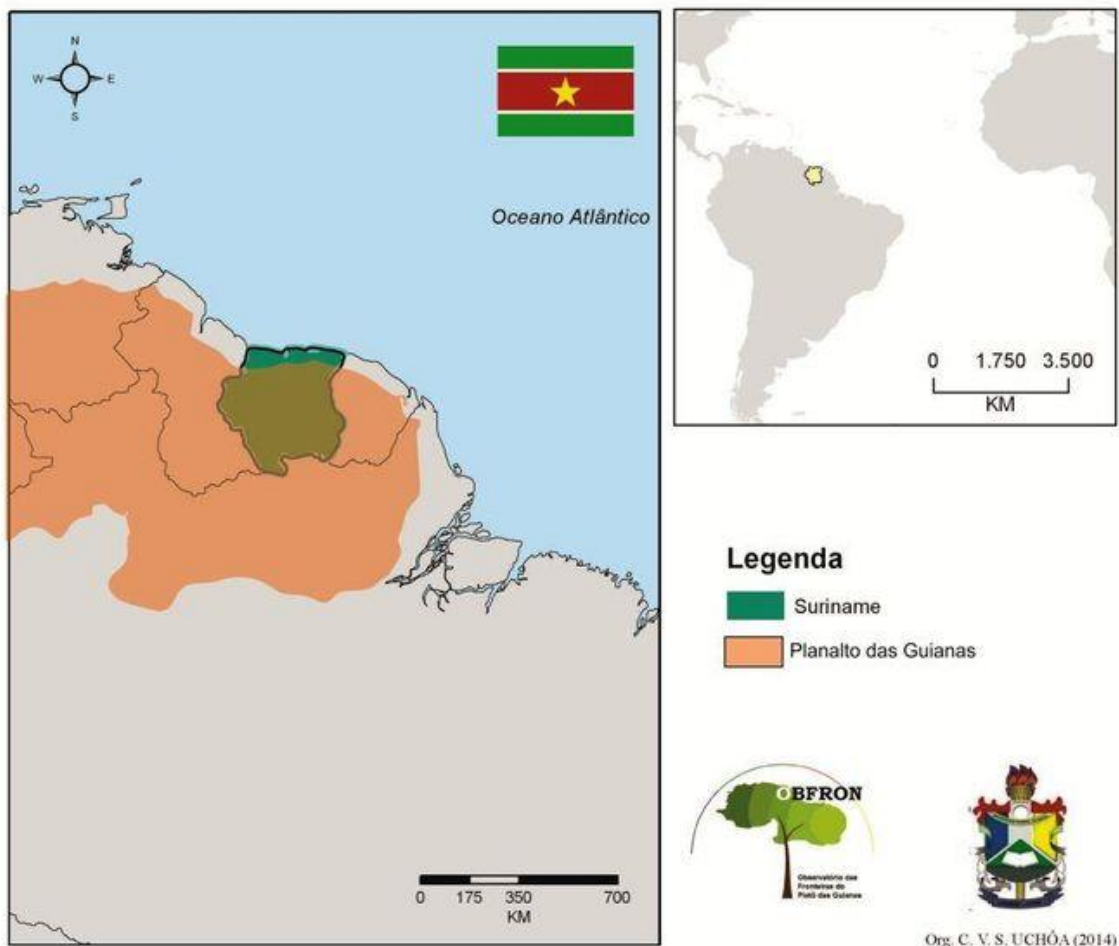
For this, the methodology used was qualitative and exploratory, counting on bibliographic research, interviews with Surinamese Military, newspaper articles, informative websites, and social networks. The low adhesion to the interviews and the little available bibliography were research limitations faced, it is assumed that part of the decline in the invitation to talk about military issues is due to the political background of then-president, Desiré Delano Bouterse, main military leader and protagonist of the coups. The school's and the academy's Facebook pages were great sources to withdraw information about the processes and the functioning of the learning institutions. Bearing this in mind, this article is a kick-start in the academic comprehension of the understanding of military education in Surinam.

The text is divided in six sections: introduction, history background – which discussed how military training occurred in Surinam before the creation of the Surinam military academy and school -, antecedents, military training currently, military training in times of pandemic and final considerations.

## 2 HISTORY

Surinam is a small country located in the north of the South American continent, where it borders Brazil, Guyana, and French Guyana (France) – as we can see in Map 1. Officially called the Republic of Surinam, the State is composed of a population of approximately 587,000 inhabitants, according to the United Nations, and a great ethno-cultural diversity arising from the colonization period, formed mainly by Hindustani, Indigenous, Creole, Maroons, and Javanese people. Surinam has its history marked by a strong military presence and to understand this influence it is necessary to go back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Map 1 — Republic of Surinam



Font: CORREA (2014, p.138)

During Dutch colonization – established in 1667, with the Treaty of Breda – the Netherlands was responsible for national security, while the Surinamese government

took care of internal security. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, against the backdrop of the Cold War, with the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the Dutch government feared that a possible spread of communism in the Caribbean region would affect Surinam, causing Europeans to entrust the colony's ideological protection to the armed forces – until then formed only by the Dutch -, who despite defending the interest of the metropolis, still needed the legitimacy of the colonists so that their mission would be properly fulfilled. For this, it was necessary to recruit Surinamese, who provided the necessary validation to maintain control of the population; the act became increasingly necessary, thus giving rise to the essentially Surinamese armed forces.

In 1975, under Dutch pressure, due to political and economic wear and tear caused by the colony (CAVLAK, 2016, p. 72-73), Surinam peacefully acquired its independence – via a treaty – and obtained its first elected governor, Henck Arron, deposed in 1980 by a Military Coup that started a succession of military coups experienced by the Surinamese, thus marking a journey of instability resulting from the great political uncertainty and economic problems.

The 1980 coup – led by Desiré Delano Bouterse – was driven by the lack of leadership and class organization, the limitation of military service to border patrols and participation in public events, and the huge salary differences between officers and non-officials – especially the trained in the metropolis, who were much better rewarded than their subordinates - (CORREA, 2015, p.115). As it did not have an established ideology, the 1980 coup caused concern in the international scenario given the context of the Cold War, making the United States consider the act an instability in South America (URT, 2010, p. 71-72).

The lack of “friends” in the international scenario created an opening for relations between Surinam and Cuba, as mentioned before, the coup had no established ideology, after this approximation, Bouterse called it a communist revolution – even though he did nothing related to communism (SINGH, 2018). In Brazil, it was feared that this shift to the left of the neighboring country would lead to US intervention very close to its borders; faced with this, the Brazilian government sent three years later, a diplomatic mission to Surinam headed by General Danilo Venturini, whose objective was to associate with the Bouterse government, offering economic, financial and military cooperation – including military training programs and scholarships of study in Brazilian universities – in exchange for the Surinamese distance from Cuba and its ideals and for the State's approximation with other

countries of the western bloc (ÁVILA, 2009, p.48). The Venturini mission was considered a success.

The following years were full of repression and violence, causing a civil war in 1986 to re-implement the constitutional order, a cause supported by the metropolis that even offered a large amount of money for Bouterse to leave the country and live in exile. Accordingly, in 1987 the constitution was approved and in 1988 Ramsewak Shankar was elected president; in 1990 he was deposed by another Military coup devised by Bouterse.

With the redemocratization of the 1990s, the policy that has always been reduced to the Apanjaht model – the practice of voting in the name of one’s own race, one’s own group – was no different; interim president Johan Kraag, by making alliances with the opposition, wins for his party a majority of seats in the parliament. Until 2009, the post of President of Surinam was interspersed between allies of Bouterse and the opposition. In 2010, Bouterse’s coalition wins 23 of the 51 parliamentary seats and thus manages to be elected and, five years later, to be re-elected with an absolute majority of votes. The military prided over the country until July 2020, despite being accused of many crimes committed during the dictatorship.

### **3 ANTECEDENTS**

#### **3.1 MILITARY TRAINING DURING THE DICTATORSHIP**

Right after Desiré Bouterse’s first military coup in 1980, there were no changes in the country’s armed forces training system; individuals continued to be sent to the metropolis for capacity-building and military training, as “the Dutch government was premised that it should do everything to support non-military rules in Paramaribo and ensure that the army’s leadership under Desi Bouterse “remains in the barracks” (TROUW, 1996). With this in mind, the Netherlands remained “contractually bound’ to the education and training of the Suriname army, as well as the supply of weapons” (TROUW, 1996). However, shortly after the second coup, in 1982, the Netherland cut the economic aid provided to the former colony since independence – keeping only its commitment to the country’s redemocratization – as the dictator ordered the shooting of fifteen opposition leaders, in addition to the



murder of thirty-six other opponents allegedly trying to escape from prison (DEW, 1983, p.4-7), these events became known as the “December massacre”.

These episodes, together with a strict regime imposed by the government – marked by censorship, curfew and the country’s isolation – provoked intense reaction in the international system, the country that initially caused concerns for not showing an established ideology, became uncomfortable because of the assumption that it was going through a turn towards the left (URT, 2010, p.72-73). The rapprochement with Cuba over the course of the year, together with the bipolar scenario of the Cold War, were the key points that led other countries to believe in the need for intervention.

Brazil, with its traditional position of non-intervention, maintained good relations with Surinam after the 1980 Military Coup and to avoid possible ideological conflicts, the country sent diplomat Saraiva Guerreiro to Surinam to propose forms of cooperation; Bouterse returned the visit and took the opportunity to discuss with Brazilian leaders the possibility of transferring Brazilian weapons to Surinam, as well as the granting of technical assistance and training of officers via bilateral cooperation (AVILA, 2011, p.13-14). Soon after, the 1982 massacre took place.

“This first contact for understanding and cooperation in the military area – including the eventual transfer of Brazilian-made material for military use – opened up an important, lasting and controversial spectrum of activities and opportunities of crucial importance at the time of the Venturini mission and the Figueiredo-Bouterse convergence. (AVILA, 2011, p.13-14, author’s translation)”

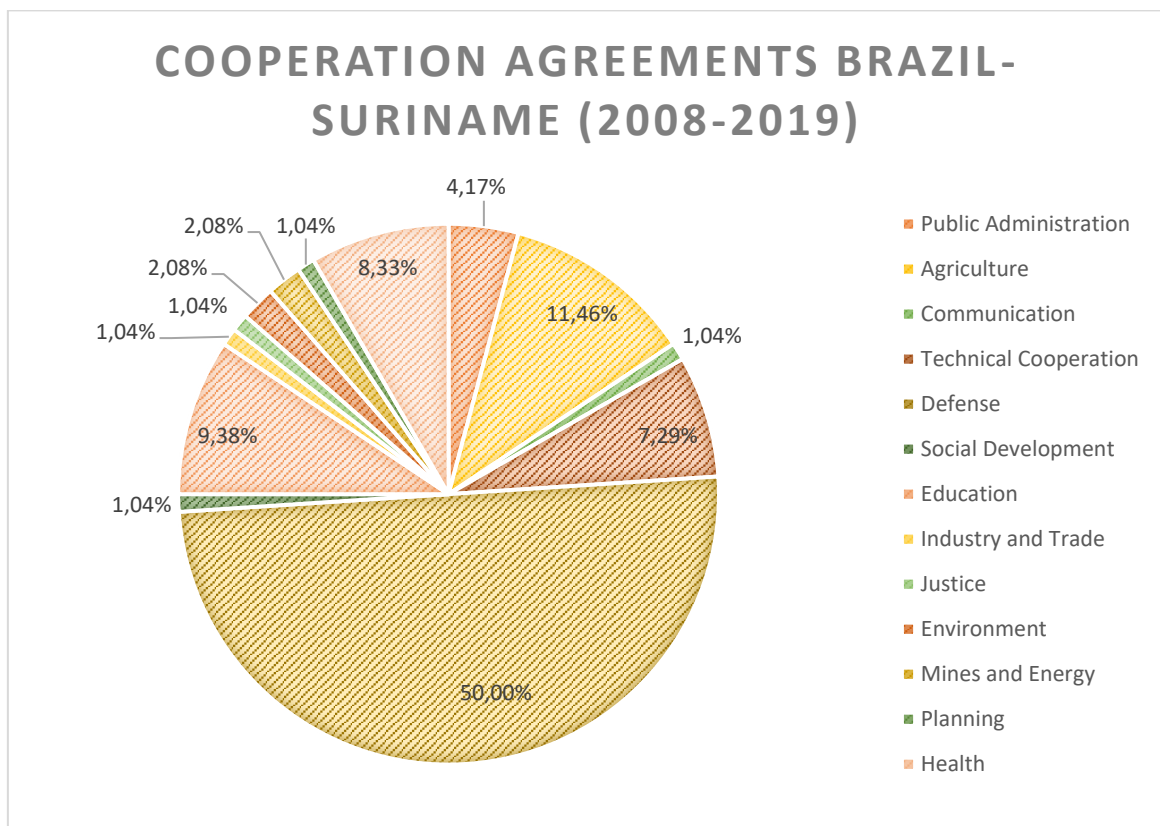
This “opening” created between Brazil and Surinam was extremely relevant to the success of the Venturini Mission, as described in the quote above. The Venturini Mission, as mentioned in the previous section, was a diplomatic mission coordinated by Minister and General Danilo Venturini – head of the military cabinet – which aimed to distance Surinam from communist ideology and from countries that spread it, such as Cuba. For this, civil and military assistance programs were offered, including technical cooperation the agro-industrial area, studies for the construction of hydroelectric plants and the increase in air and maritime transport between countries (CONDE, 1983); “military training programs, scholarships at universities in the Amazon, substantial increase in bilateral trade and even satellite transmission of Brazilian soccer matches” (Jornal do Brasil - Nacional, 22/04/1983) were also offered

and, finally, a credit line worth US\$70 million was offered, used mainly to import Brazilian-made military equipment (MACDONALD, 1988, p.117) in exchange for getting away from Cuba and its ideals and getting closer to other countries from the western bloc (AVILA, 2009, p.48). The mission was successful and marked the beginning of military cooperation between Brazil and Surinam.

### 3.2 POST DICTATORSHIP MILITARY TRAINING

In recent years, we can see that defense cooperation was an instrument of military training in Surinam. In this context, Brazil stood out. As we can see in Graph 1, fifty percent of the cooperation agreements signed from 2008 to 2019 are in the area of defense and, according to the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), all of them are directly related to the training of the Surinamese armed forces. The primary aim of Brazil-Surinam cooperation was to foster the professionalization of Surinamese officers, thus spreading Brazilian military doctrines in the country (ÁVILA, 2009, p. 51).

Graph 1 — Brazil-Surinam Cooperation Agreements (2008-2019)



Font: Author's elaboration data ABC (2020)

After the redemocratization in 1991, the Surinamese armed forces started to receive a series of aid from other countries to develop their team, among them Brazil, the United States and China stand out. Brazilian cooperation, as explained above, is led by assistance in military training. The United States offers training to the military, police, prosecutors, government officials, and policy makers with the aim of strengthening democratic institutions in Surinam (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 2019), as the young country has a history marked by successive coups of state; China's assistance consists mainly of donating logical materials, in 2009, material worth ten million Yuan were donated (EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME, 2009).

In addition to the three, Surinam also has the help of the former metropolis, however, in the form of limited assistance, which, according to the interviewee, Colonel Justus Hew A Kee – member of the Court of Appeal for the Surinamese Armed Forces – works discreetly due to the difference in political perspectives between the countries.

## **4 MILITARY TRAINING CURRENTLY**

### **4.1 SYSTEMATIZATION**

The Surinamese Armed Forces are divided into three parts: army, air force and navy, and military police; and they are staffed by about 2500 employees. The air force and navy practically do not operate due to the lack of investments. The army, which holds the largest workforce, is divided into three fronts: a light infantry battalion, a special forces corps and a support army (GLOBAL SECURITY, 2017).

The President of the Republic is the head of the Armed Forces, thus being the supreme authority for all national military affairs, but with the assistance of the Minister of Defense and the Commander of the Armed Forces. The Commander – who is hierarchically below the Minister – manages the Military Branches and Regional Command Centers and it is considered the “Military Chief”. Surinamese military ranks are divided into three categories: Enlisted, Non-Commissioned Officers and Officers; the first two have four subcategories such as Soldier and Sergeant, respectively, and the last has seven, including Lieutenant, Captain and Major.

## 4.2 FUNCTIONS

According to the Constitution of Surinam, the main functions of its army are: to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Surinam, assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order when requested, provide help and assistance in the prevention of disasters and accidents, and fight its consequences; and contribute to economic development in Surinam.

## 4.3 EDUCATION

Surinamese military education, which since colonization took place in other countries, began to take place on national grounds with the inauguration of the first military educational institutes in Surinam – the Surinamese Military Academy and the Surinamese Military School – inaugurated in September 2019. According to Hew A Kee, military training, performed by both military and civilians, is based on three levels: for soldiers, for non-commissioned officers, and for officers; the academy's study programs last for three years, after graduation, the individual earns a Bachelor of Military Science degree and gets promoted to second lieutenant. The military school's study programs last two years and graduation results in promotion to sergeant.

According to the newspaper Suriname Herald (2019), the academy offers courses that provide academic training from bachelor's to master's degrees. Specializations are also offered in the following areas: Administration and Logistics, Infantry, Air Force Administration and Logistics, Nautical Navy, Technical Navy, Intelligence and Security, Infrastructure Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Military Police (Suriname Herald, 21/09/2019).

The academy's vision is "to educate officers and develop offices to provide competencies with the ultimate goal of growth and development within and outside the defense organization" (SURINAAMSE MILITAIRE ACADEMIE, 2019) and its mission consists of five points (1) to regularly promote training and specializations for people inside and outside the defense organization so that they can deal with society's intrinsic challenges; (2) support relevant services within government and the private sector; (3) identify and enter into international cooperation with other military academies around the world with the aim of exchanging knowledge and updating the

Academy's faculty team; (4) contribute to the development of the soldier's career within the organization; and (5) train honest and innovative soldiers who do not shy away from any challenge and who are capable of thinking and working towards results (SURINAAMSE MILITAIRE ACADEMIE, 2019). Military service is not mandatory and the minimum age for enlistment is 18 (CIA, 2019).

To enroll in the academy, the individual must have a certain civil education. According to documents posted on the School's Facebook (ANNEX A) – page called *Surinaamse Militaire School* -, to apply for officer training, applicants must have a VWO diploma (*Voortgezet Onderwijs voor Senioren*) – pre-university education – or a NATIN diploma (*Voortgezet Onderwijs voor Senioren*) – vocational secondary education. As for the applicants for the training of non-commissioned officers, it is requested a MULO diploma - (*Voortgezet Onderwijs voor Junioren*) – more advanced primary education – or a HAVO diploma (*Voortgezet Onderwijs voor Senioren*) – general higher education, the course lasts a year less than the VWO (OONDERWIJSSYSTEEM SURINAME, 2015); (SCHOOLLOOPBAAN Suriname).

In the documents (ANNEX A) it is also stated that to enter the academy candidates must be between 18 and 28 years old and at least 1.60 m tall. In addition, they must present their diploma and academic record, three recent passport photos, a declaration of good conduct, a copy of their identity card and two copies of the CBB statement, from the Central Bureau for Civil Affairs, corresponding to a certificate of full content – a document that contains details about the person's life (birth certificate, if the person is married, divorced, widower e etc.). Upon submission of the necessary documentation, candidate undergo an interview, physical test, medical and psychological examination, and background check.

## **5 MILITARY TRAINING IN TIME OF PANDEMIC**

As mentioned above, the Surinamese academy and military school were only inaugurated in November 2019, taking this into consideration, the formation of its first classes only happened in 2020, with the process mentioned in the previous section. In March 2020, the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus, SARS-CoV2, was announced, causing all non-essential activities to be suspended in order to reduce the spread of the virus. Therefore, on March 17, 2020, according to information posted on the Suriname Military Academy's Facebook, both school and academy

were closed until further notice, suspending the submission of applications that started on March 5, 2020 and were scheduled to end on March 27, 2020.

On April 14, 2020, the applications could be submitted again, and the learning centers were back up and running training a few students. As of January 11, 2021, the Surinamese military school started teaching online classes via the Zoom platform.

## 6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of the text is to understand how military education occurred in Surinam after independence and to understand its current functioning. Despite the various research obstacles found, such as the low adherence to interviews and the scarcity of bibliography on the subject, it was possible to find plenty of content on Surinamese military education in books, articles, and primary sources used by the military themselves and fulfill the general and specific objectives proposed.

As announced at the beginning of this work, Surinam has, in its young history as an independent country, an irregularity in the education of its military. The relationship with the former metropolis, political turmoil, and cooperation agreements were the variable found in the construction of Surinamese military education. Thus, the creation of the Surinaamse Militaire School and the Surinaamse Militaire Academie in 2019 was a milestone for the regular training of the military in the country. Therefore, this article shows the variable history of military education in the newest country in South America.

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## ANNEX A — Documente calling for enrollment in the courses of the Surinamese Military Academy posted on March 5, 2020.



### VACATURE MINISTERIE VAN DEFENSIE



Het ministerie van Defensie stelt zich ten doel de veiligheid op het gehele grondgebied van Suriname te waarborgen, dit als fundamentele voorwaarde voor de ontwikkeling van ons land. Voor het succesvol bereiken van de doelstelling zijn er twee (2) militaire onderwijsinstututen opgericht die jonge Surinamers zal opleiden tot officier en onderofficier.

#### DE SURINAAMSE MILITAIRE SCHOOL

De Surinaamse Militaire School (SMS) heeft als missie het opleiden van onderofficieren door het aanbieden van competenties met als uiteindelijke doel groei en ontplooiing binnen en buiten de defensie- organisatie. Kunt u zich terugvinden in deze missie dan kunt u zich nu opgeven voor de 'onderofficiersopleiding' aan de SMS.

#### De vereisten zijn als volgt:

Minimale vooropleiding	Leeftijd	Lengte	Nationaliteit
MULO-A/B of LTS-B/C of HAVO-P/R of IMEAO diploma of daaraan gelijkgesteld diploma	minimaal 18 jaar en maximaal 28 jaar	Minimaal 1,60m	Surinaamse

#### Wij bieden:

- ⇒ een veelzijdig beroep met carrièremogelijkheden.
- ⇒ een aantrekkelijk salaris conform Militaire Loonreeks en goede secundaire arbeidsvoorwaarden.

Schriftelijke sollicitaties kunnen vanaf maandag 3 februari 2020 tot en met vrijdag 27 maart 2020 gericht worden aan de directeur van de Surinaamse Militaire School, Maj B. Landveld, BEd aan de Verlengde Keizerstraat # 30 te Paramaribo. De sollicitatie moet in gesloten enveloppe, ondervermelding van sollicitatie 'onderofficiersopleiding' op het secretariaat van de directeur worden ingeleverd. Voor extra informatie mag u bellen op: 421885.

#### Bij uw brief sluit u in:

- ⇒ kopie van uw diploma en cijferlijst;
- ⇒ 3x recente pasfoto's;
- ⇒ 1x nationaliteitsverklaring;
- ⇒ 2x uittreksel van het C.B.B. en
- ⇒ een verklaring van goedgegedrag.
- ⇒ kopie ID kaart

#### Verder moet u bereid zijn zich te onderwerpen aan:

1. het sollicitatiegesprek
2. de fysieke test
3. het geneeskundig onderzoek, waaronder een drugs- en een psychologische test
4. het antecedentenonderzoek



## VACATURE MINISTERIE VAN DEFENSIE

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### **DE SURINAAMSE MILITAIRE ACADEMIE**

**De Surinaamse Militaire Academie (SMA)** heeft als missie het opleiden van officieren door het aanbieden van competenties met als uiteindelijke doel groei en ontplooiing binnen en buiten de defensie-organisatie. Kunt u zich terugvinden in deze missie dan kunt u zich nu opgeven voor de **'officiersopleiding'** aan de SMA.

**De vereisten zijn als volgt:**

Minimale vooropleiding	Leeftijd	Lengte	Nationaliteit
VWO-P/Q/R/S of NATIN diploma of daaraan gelijkgesteld diploma	minimaal 18 jaar en maximaal 28 jaar	Minimaal 1.60m	Surinaamse

#### **Wij bieden:**

- ⇒ een veelzijdig beroep met carrièremogelijkheden.
- ⇒ een aantrekkelijk salaris conform Militaire Loonreeks en goede secundaire arbeidsvoorwaarden.

Schriftelijke sollicitaties kunnen vanaf maandag 3 februari 2020 tot en met vrijdag 27 maart 2020 gericht worden aan de directeur van de Surinaamse Militaire Academie, L-Kol B. Mangal, MPA aan de Verlengde Keizerstraat # 30 te Paramaribo. De sollicitatie moet in gesloten enveloppe, ondervermelding van sollicitatie **'officiersopleiding'** op het secretariaat van de directeur worden ingeleverd. Voor extra informatie mag u bellen op: 421885.

#### **Bij uw brief sluit u in:**

- ⇒ kopie van uw diploma en cijferlijst;
- ⇒ 3x recente pasfoto's;
- ⇒ 1x nationaliteitsverklaring;
- ⇒ 2x uittreksel van het C.B.B. en
- ⇒ een verklaring van goedgegedrag.
- ⇒ kopie ID kaart

#### **Verder moet u bereid zijn zich te onderwerpen aan:**

1. het sollicitatiegesprek
2. de fysieke test
3. het geneeskundig onderzoek, waaronder een drugs- en een psychologische test het antecedentenonderzoek