

LESOTHO : LESOTHO DEFENCE FORCE AIR SQUADRON

Lesotho was previously known as the British Protectorate of Basutoland before gaining independence in October 1966. The country is one of the most mountainous countries in Africa and is situated on the Maluti Mountains. It has no access to the sea and is totally surrounded by South Africa.

The air squadron has had various guises since its inception in 1978. It was first known as the Police Mobile Unit (PMU) and was formed to assist the police in the deployment of men and equipment to the various bases situated throughout the mountainous kingdom. To rotate the police contingent at Quachas Nek or Mokotlong with Maseru would have taken days if not weeks by road and is now completed in a matter of hours. Roads in some parts are non-existent and horses are relied upon for travel.

With the formation of a small military force, the air wing was changed to the Royal Lesotho Defence Force Air Wing (RLDF), but with the political upheaval the title was changed to the Lesotho Defence Force Air Squadron (LDF), although delivery of CASA C212 Aviocar c/n 408 had the letter "R" preceding the "LDF" of RLDF 46. A number of the air wing aircraft originated from West Germany and a number of the pilots were trained in that country with German government assistance.

At some stage the Police Mobile Unit received two Mil Mi-2 helicopters as a donation from Libya. For many years they were parked near the security fence at the old Maseru Airport, and if a photographer was brave enough in those days to use his camera, a sneak photograph could be taken. They were last seen as gate guards outside two separate military establishments. On the author's visit in 1993, the guard at one establishment allowed photographs, but at the other, photography was frowned upon.

As in the majority of air forces, accidents do occur and Lesotho is no exception. On the 10 November 1989, CASA C212 Aviocar LDF 46 crashed in the mountains in the south east of the territory, shortly after take off from the remote airfield at Quachas Nek. Unfortunately the crew and all the passengers on board were killed.

On 2 November 1993 Agusta Bell 412 LDF 24 was written off in a crash. It crashed near the Mohale Dam after the main rotor struck the ground. It was replaced by Bell 412 LDF 26, seen at Rand Airport on 2 August 1994. This same helicopter crashed on 9 January 1998 near Thaba Putsoa, injuring all five passengers and crew. The aircraft was a write off. The insurance settled their claim and another Bell 412 was delivered in May 1998.

On 20 May 2003 a MBB Bo105 LDF 51 ditched in the Katse Dam killing the pilot and one passenger, another three passengers survived and were rescued by a motor boat.

At some stage a re-numbering process took place with MBB Bo105S PMU-5 becoming LDF 5 and the Soloy-Bell 47G-3B1 PMU-6 becoming LDF 6. A further re-numbering of the CASA 212s took place after 2001, as images viewed on the internet show LDF 46 re-numbered as LDF-24 (a serial previously used by a AB 412) and LDF 52 re-numbered as LDF-26 (previously used by a Bell 412).

This insignia is carried by all aircraft and helicopters.

The purpose of this forum is to share aviation related images of African Air Forces and is not for gain. These are sourced from various sites on the internet and from Winston Brent's own collection and from various owners who over the years have been prepared to share their images with him on the proviso of anonymity, and who prefer not to have their names acknowledged. Remember that on the African continent and also on some of the other continents, the recording of details of aircraft and images thereof has sometimes resulted in immediate detention. Where the source is known, it will be listed in the credits and where it is already on the image, it will be left on the image for the benefit of the viewers and it also gives the copyright owner greater exposure.



LESOTHO :					
POLICE MOBILE UNIT					
Serial	Type	c/n	dd	ex-	fate
PMU-1	Short Skyvan 3M	SH1958	11.01.79	ex G-14-126, G-BFIA, 7P-AAB,	sold as N981GA, ZS-MJP, 07.02.89, to OE-FDF, 09.07.96 w/o 17.10.98
PMU-2	Short Skyvan 3M	SH1960	07.02.79	ex G-14-128, G-BFUJ, 7P-AAC,	sold as N982GA, ZS-MJS, 07.02.89,
PMU-3	Cessna A152	A152-0874	01.10.79	ex N4706A, XA-AWH, ZS-KJD,	ZS-KJD 11.80 to V5-?? returned to ZS-KJD 09.06
PMU-4	MBB Bo105S	S-179	04.10.79	ex D-HDFQ,	sold as D-HAAA 05.84 w/o 28.09.84
PMU-5	MBB Bo105S	S-322	10.04.80	ex D-HDIA (ntu), D-HIFR	to LDF 5
PMU-6	Soloy-Bell 47G-3B1	WA606	.04.81	ex XT844,G-BERO, HB-XHM,	to LDF 6
PMU-7	Mil Mi-2	567033031		ex Libya AF 7033	derelect
PMU-8	Mil Mi-2			ex Libya AF	derelect
PMU-27	Dornier Do 27A-4	2106	24.09.80	ex D-9, OL-D09/OT-AMH D-EGVN, 7P-AAX	sold as G-BNVX 09.87 to HC-BNK, D-EGVN
PMU-28	Dornier Do 28A-1	3023	16.10.80	ex D-IBEG, EC-CPO (ntu), D-IBEG, 7P-AAZ,	sold as G-BNVW 08.09.87 to N12828 10.91
LESOTHO DEFENCE FORCE AIR SQUADRON					
LDF 5	MBB Bo105S	S-322	10.04.80	ex D-HIFR, PMU-5	sold as ZS-RNE 17.01.02
LDF 6	Soloy-Bell 47G-3B1	WA606	.04.81	ex XT844, G-BERO, HB-XHM, PMU-6	sold as ZS-RTO, to VH-OBY 13.12.06
LDF 22	Cessna 182Q	182-66862	.12.88	ex N96819, ZS-MDA, 7P-AAP,	sold to N96819 02.06.04 to ZS-PHE, ZS-JAI, D2-EAP
LDF 23	does not exist				
LDF 24	Agusta Bell 412	25508	.04.86		w/o 02.11.93
LDF 24(2)	CASA C212-300 Aviocar	A71-3-408	14.04.91	ex LDF 46	
LDF 25	Agusta Bell 412	25517	.06.86		
LDF 26	Bell 412	36088	.08.94		w/o 09.01.98 to rebuild, N4324X, A7-HBD 07.02
LDF 26(2)	CASA C212-400 Aviocar	A71-4-461	18.09.01	ex LDF 52	
LDF 27	MBB BK117A-1	7054	27.04.85	ex D-HBNB,	sold as ZS-HRP .05.86 to N8765J 04.01.94
LDF 44	Bell 412	33128	22.10.86	ex ZS-HMA, 7P-LES,7P-HAB	w/o .01.2006
LDF 45	MBB Bo105S	S-735	91/92	ex (N760MB), D-HDRW, ZS-YBX, 7P-AAO, 7P-HAA	to ZS-RNO 08.01 in exchange for LDF 50
LDF 46	CASA C212-300 Aviocar	A71-1-389	07.09.89		w/o 10.11.89
LDF 46(2)	CASA C212-300 Aviocar	A71-3-408	14.04.91		serial changed to L.D.F -24
LDF 47	Bell 412EP	36429	22.05.07		
LDF 48	CASA C212-300 Aviocar	A71-2-390	07.09.89		w/o 16.12.2000
LDF 49	Bell 412SP	36200	18.05.98		replacement for LDF 26
LDF 50	MBB Bo105LSA-3	2056	07.08.01		
LDF 51	MBB Bo105LSA-3	2055	10.09.01		w/o 20.05.03
LDF 52	CASA C212-400 Aviocar	A71-4-461	18.09.01		serial changed to L.D.F -26
LDF 53	MBB Bo105LSA-3	??		c/n possibly 2048	
LDF 54	Gippsland Airvan	GA8-03-038	.04.04	ex VH-AUN	
LDF 55	Bell 206B	4577	01.06.04	ex	



Dornier Do 27A-4 7P-AAAX which later became PMU-27



Dornier Do 28A-1 7P-AAZ which later became PMU-28



MBB Bo105S LDF 5, with Bell 412 LDF 26 in the background



Left & below: Two views of Short Skyvan 3M PMU-1 / ZS-MJP



Above & right: Two images of Short Skyvan 3M PMU-2 / ZS-MJS





Another view of MBB Bo105S
LDF 5

Soloy-Bell 47G-3B1 LDF 6,
was previously PMU-6 and
served for many years in
the training role



MBB Bo105S D-HAAA was
previously PMU-4



Two views of Mil Mi-2 PMU-7 which the author was allowed to photograph during his visit in 1993



Cessna 182Q LDF 22 was to serve faithfully from 1988 until 2004 in the training role.

Agusta Bell 412 LDF 24 seen by the author in 1993, just before its demise on 02.11.93



Agusta Bell 412 LDF 25 is one of two Agusta built versions in service

MBB Bo105LSA-3 LDF 51 is one three added in recent years





Bell 412 LDF 44 appeared to be the VIP transport during the author's visit in 1993

MBB Bo105S LDF 45 was to serve from 1982 until 2001 when it was traded in for newer versions



Bell 412SP LDF 49 was the replacement for LDF 26



These images taken in 1993 during the author's visit show one CASA 212 with the "R" added and another without the "R"





Air-Britain Photographic Images Collection

© Graham C Evans

These CASA 212s were at some stage re-painted in camouflage and in about 2001 had their serials changed to LDF 24 & LDF 26



Air-Britain Photographic Images Collection

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Gippsland AirVan LDF 54 was taken on strength in April 2004





Left: LDF 24 at Dodson's yard USA in 1997 for rebuild

LDF 24 at Lanseria in 1994 after its accident on 02.11.93



LDF 26 immediately after its crash on 09.01.98