



The Mauritius Police Force

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## Special Mobile Force

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### Brief History of the Military Garrison in Mauritius 1810-1960

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1810, British Troops from India consisting of HM's Madras Volunteers Battalion, Madras Native Infantry and the Bengal Volunteers landed in the north of the island under the command of Lt. General Sir John Abercromby. They marched towards the capital and after a brief skirmishing, they took possession of the island. The island of **Isle de France** became British and resumed its former Dutch name Mauritius.

Since that time a British Garrison remained on the island for both internal and external security. The British troops were camped in various parts of the island and it was in 1916 that the Headquarters was established at Vacoas.

In 1835, the military strength was around 2,000. In 1931, the strength of Mauritius Regiment along with the Royal Navy and Air Force was 2,694. In later years a troop of the King's own African Rifles joined the British Garrison. During the war and after, the local command became part of the East Africa Command when the British Garrison consisted mainly of Battalions of the King's African Rifles.

### Creation of the Special Mobile Force and Its Role

#### Regimental Motto - *We'll do it, What is it?*

In 1960, the British Government decided to withdraw its garrison from Mauritius after 150 years of service in the island. On the departure of the British Garrison, the Mauritius Special Mobile Force was formed. It was evident that the task of the newly created SMF was to ensure the internal security of the country.

The Special Mobile Force was set up with the recruitment of a number of volunteers who had a certain experience of the Second World War and selected members of the Mauritius Police Force. The SMF took over the barracks formerly occupied by the King's African Rifles at Vacoas and was named Abercromby Barracks, in the honour of General Sir John Abercromby, who led the forces which captured our island in 1810. The Special Mobile Force was commanded by British Commanders and it was not until 1978 that the first Mauritian, Col D. Bhima BEM MPM, assumed command of the SMF.

The SMF is a paramilitary force; it is an integral part of the Mauritius Police Force with its main function to ensure the internal and external security of the island. It is organised as a motorised Infantry Battalion with five Companies, an Engineer Squadron, and a Mobile Wing containing two Squadrons equipped with armoured vehicles.

Training at the SMF is based on conventional military tactics with emphasis on Internal Security Operations. All ranks are given a basic military training on their first joining the Special Mobile Force. Depending on their capabilities and aptitudes, some are trained on commando lines and a selected few are given specialised training for specific tasks.

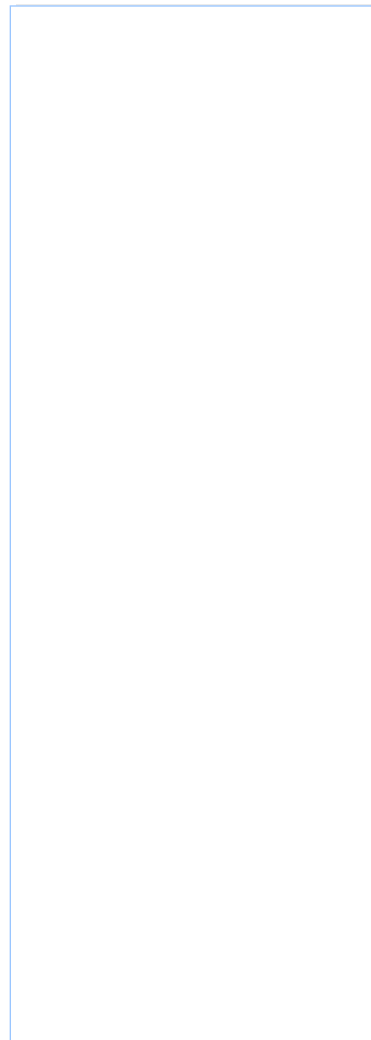
The SMF is also employed for ceremonial guards of honour, search and rescue operations, bomb disposal, route clearance detecting and destroying gandia and illicit distillation, and helps opening of roads after cyclones.

Besides its paramilitary functions, the SMF is actively involved in a number of social activities.

#### The Badge and the Motto

Within the wreath of braided band (rows) of oak leaves significant of Royal refuge (re the Royal Oak Incident in May 1660) holding the Royal Crown, symbol of trinity within the three-pronged oak leaf stresses. Encrested within the wreath, letters "S" (Special), (Mobile) symbolising the lightning flash, and

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"F" (Force) making SMF. The central base of the wreath consisting of the oak leaves knot rests upon a scroll inscribed with the Regiment's name "Special Mobile Force – Mauritius".

**The Overriding interpretation can be summed up as follows:-**

S	Special	In status, demeanour, achievements and mission accomplishment.
M	Mobile	Swiftness in action, movement and striking power.
F	Force	To be reckoned with as a valid deterrent, smart turnout, standing punch and fortitude.

**The Motto**

The first Motto of the Special Mobile Force was

**"The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer."**

Which recently changed into

**"WE'LL DO IT, WHAT IS IT "**

Which was more apt after the various challenging tasks carried out successfully and professionally by the SMF.

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