

## Major Nandi Zama



Major Nandi Zama is an esteemed military pilot in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) who is recognised as the first black woman in the history of South Africa to fly and command a Hercules C130 cargo plane. She is an invited speaker at the AeSSA's 2019 Annual Conference, themed 'African Aerospace: Innovation and Passion'.

Originally from Kwa-Zulu Natal (Kwa-Mashu), Major Zama joined the SANDF in 2004, completing her BSc at the SA Military Academy soon after. She received her pilot's wings in 2006 and has since continued to loyally serve in the South African Air Force (SAAF), accumulating a total of 2 100 hours of active flight.

She is passionate about engaging with young professionals and school goers, particularly young girls, and encourages them to explore careers in aviation and STEM fields.

With an interest in aviation that began during her teenage years, Major Zama has since flown various aircraft, the most recent being the Hercules C130BZ which is the most tactical airlift in global military standards. She acknowledges the role that Mathematics and Science played in her early years of the military, and remains an advocate of these subjects whenever she engages with young people.

Her military aviation career has seen Major Zama fly across many nations, including conflict countries such as the DRC and South Sudan; and has seen her lead the C130 formation during the 2019 Presidential Inauguration. Zama says, "Any occasion to fly the C130 is an extremely enjoyable experience. As a military aviator it is an honour to salute the commander in chief in this way. In this case, it was a C130BZ leading a formation of 6 Astra Pilatus PC VII."

Zama adds, "Formation compositions differ from one parade or flypast to another so although this is the second inauguration flypast in which I have flown C130s in (the first was in 2014 for former President Zuma), it is the first with Astras and the first while I was in lead."

She is a certified Aviation Safety Officer, Flight Testing and Evaluation Pilot and Senior Staff Officer.

Major Zama is a respected voice in the SAAF and is an advocate for women's rights within the military context. Her experience over the last 13 years has seen her raising her voice for new innovations in and the transformation of, equitable working conditions for serving female members.

Through her continued commitment to education, women's equality and serving her nation, Major Zama is set to continue on the path that she has forged, not only for herself but also for current and future female members of the SAAF.

As one of the Inspiring Fifty Women in STEM of 2018 and a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society, Major Zama hopes to reach and connect with more women in STEM/STEAM, primarily to add her voice towards stimulating the growth of these industries by sharing her passion for aviation with fellow women and youngsters to pursue careers in the sector.