

FACTSHEET

28



PARLIAMENT OF KENYA
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Serjeant-At-Arms Directorate



Factsheet No. 28

THE SERJEANT-AT-ARMS DIRECTORATE

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Purpose and Acknowledgement

This Factsheet is part of the Kenya National Assembly Factsheets Series that has been developed to enhance public understanding and awareness, and to build knowledge on the work of the Assembly, and its operations. It is intended to serve as a guide for ready reference by Members of Parliament, staff and the public. The information contained here is not exhaustive and readers are advised to refer to the original sources for further information.

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The Serjeant-At-Arms Directorate



The Serjeant-at-Arms of the National Assembly is a Parliamentary officer responsible for enforcing the Standing Orders, Speaker's Rules and Orders to ensure order and decorum. The Serjeant-at-Arms also performs ceremonial duties including carrying the mace to and from the House during ordinary and

special sittings of the House. The Serjeant-at-arms also keeps order during meetings, and, if necessary, forcibly removes any members or guests who are overly rowdy or disruptive.

A Serjeant-at-arms officer may be any officer from the disciplined Services, Provincial Administration, or other official with experience in security, protocol and management.

The Roles of Serjeant-at-arms include:

a. Chamber and Ceremonial Duties

1. Enforce Speaker's Rules and Standing Orders to maintain order and decorum in the Chamber and the galleries;
2. Escort Members under sanction out of the Chamber if ordered to do so by the Speaker;
3. Maintain a manual attendance register in the event that the biometric system fails;
4. Ascertain that quorum is attained before start of business in the Plenary;
5. Standing guard during a division vote when all Chamber doors are locked;
6. Maintain the custody of the Mace and MPs' firearms;
7. Facilitate access and comfort of guests during official visits by dignitaries to the precincts and the Plenary.



(Above): A Serjeant-At-Arms Officer placing the Mace in its brackets at the commencement of a sitting.

b. Housekeeping and Estate Management

1. Allocate offices, furniture and accessories to MPs and
2. Supervise contracted service providers responsible for cleaning;
3. Ensure committee rooms are secure, clean and ventilated;
4. Supervise gardening, fumigation and garbage collection;
5. Ensure safety and security of Parliamentary Estate and assets.

c. Operations and Liaison

1. Facilitate admittance of Members' guests, accredited public officials, media representatives and visitors to the National Assembly;
2. Facilitate visits by dignitaries to the Jomo Kenyatta Mausoleum;
3. Assist with protocol during national holidays and state functions;
4. Ensuring emergency preparedness and evacuation in case of fire outbreaks and other incidents;
5. Enforce the warrants of the Speaker summoning a witness to testify before a select committee of the House;
6. Control the media/press and witnesses during plenary and committee's sessions.
7. The Serjeant at arms investigates all incidents within the precincts of Parliament and liaises with National Security agencies.
8. Preserving parliamentary etiquette, heritage and custody of artefacts.
9. Ensuring compliance with occupational Safety and Health standards.
10. Facilitate public education to visitors, schools, colleges and universities.

d. History of Serjeant at arms



UK Parliament House of Commons Serjeant at Arms carrying the ceremonial mace.

The name Serjeant-at-Arms derives from the Latin word *serviens* or servant. In Kiswahili the Serjeant at arms is referred to as "Mpambe". Traditionally Serjeants-at-Arms were known as "Serjeant"; "Mace Bearer"; "Gentleman-Usher" , Usher of the Black rod", etc,.

In the United Kingdom in medieval times, monarchs used people who provided services like the provision of arrows, fodder and waiting upon the King at table who were called serjeanties. Later people who were permanently retained by the Sovereign became known more particularly as serjeants. These officers were required to be in immediate attendance on the Monarch's person to arrest traitors and other offenders. In medieval times: The activities of the King's Serjeant-at-Arms included collecting loans and, impressing men and ships, serving on local administration and in all sorts of ways interfering with local administration and justice.

By 1415, a specific officer was appointed 'AS SERJEANT-AT-ARMS FOR THE COMMONS' (Nicholas Maundit was appointed the first Serjeant at arms of British Parliament) to be attendant upon the House of Commons and the Speaker. When Henry VIII left the Palace of Westminster, two Serjeants, though still officers of the court, continued to attend upon the Parliament - one serving the House of Lords and the other the House of Commons. Today the Common's Serjeant is warranted to attend upon Her Majesty's person when there is no Parliament; and at the time of every Parliament to attend upon the Speaker of the House of Commons.

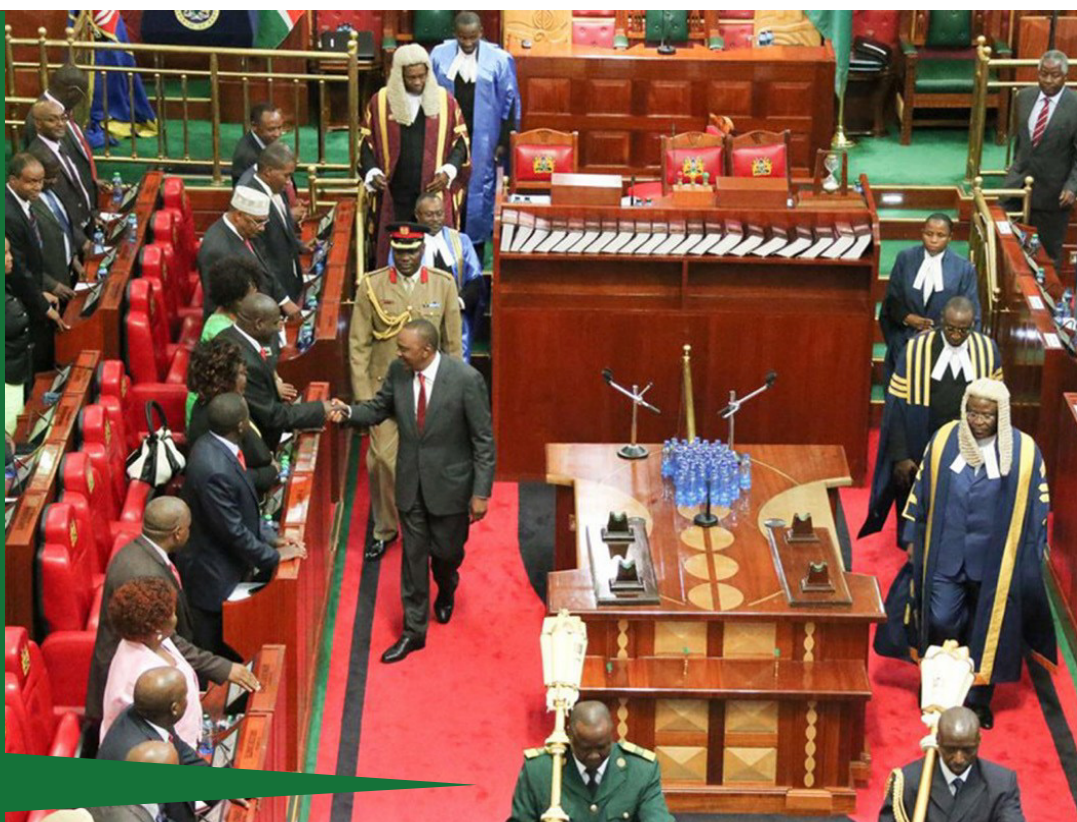
In the Australian Parliament the Serjeant is a career officer of the Department of the House of Representatives. The Serjeant's *raison d'être* is the same in Australia as in the United Kingdom and the classic explanation is that given by Chief Justice Lord Coleridge in 1884 when he pointed out that, "The Houses of Parliament cannot act by themselves in a body; they must act by officers; and the Serjeant-at Arms is the legal and recognised officer of the House of Commons (Representatives) to execute its orders."

As a mark of respect to the Speaker and to symbolize the authority of the King, the Serjeant-at-Arms, who was till then the personal bodyguard of the King, was entrusted with the duty of being the Custodian of the "Mace".

The Serjeant-at-Arms as bearer of the Mace became identified with protecting the privileges of the House. The Speaker was considered the "Guardian" and the Serjeant-at-Arms, "the Enforcer".

The traditional responsibilities of the Serjeant as attendant upon the Speaker expanded more broadly to being attendant on the House. In the House of Commons, the role of the Serjeant extended to include being the Housekeeper for the Commons. The Serjeant in the House of Representatives has important responsibilities for Members' accommodation and furnishing.

Chief Serjeant-At-Arms Officers of respective Houses leading a procession of H.E. The President at the end of a joint sitting of Parliament of Kenya.



However, the responsibilities have evolved over time and at present include a wide and varied range of responsibilities in keeping with the needs of the National Assembly as a modern working organisation. While there has been an evolution of the role, the focus very much remains on the Ceremonial and chamber services while providing advice and services to the Speaker, Members, staff and visitor's.

With new and contemporary threats to Parliament that include terrorism, global warming and the Covid-19 pandemic, the Serjeant at arms have to be dynamic and quick to learn and adopt the new threats and trends.

(Source: This information on the history of Serjeant at arms was taken and quoted from the UK Parliament Website, Sri Lankan website and the Cayman Island website.

e. Office bearers of the Chief Serjeant at arms in Kenya

The first Chief Serjeant-at-Arms was appointed in 1958 and the Mace was presented by Queen Elizabeth to the Legislative Council in 1958.

Major M. G Elliot was the first Chief Serjeant-at-Arms and held the post from 1958-1964. He was in charge of both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Thereafter, the following officers succeeded:-

1. Mr. Samuel Kibuthu 1964 to 1967-senate
2. Mr. Khaoya Barasa - 1964 to 1983
3. Mr. Frederick Omondi Oduong 1983-1987
4. Mr. Obadiah Vundi Ndivo 1987-1994
5. Mr. Michael ole Kirusua- 1994 to 2002
6. Major (Rtd) Edward Wambugu Waithaka- 2002 to 2006
7. Mr. Aloisio Nterepu Lekulo - 2006 to date.

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