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Caught between a rock and a hard place

Contributions: Although all possible care is taken with articles, the editorial staff cannot accept any responsibility for lost articles and photographs.

2005 - Winner of the Government Communicator of the Year Award (GCIS).

2005 - Winner of the National Ubungcweti Award (GCIS).

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Filtr: Sgt Litelu Masia, Rfn Themba Mosiea, Rfn Thabiso Jiyane, Rfn Michael Freitas and Rfn TINYKO Baloyi deployed at the Crocodile River in the Kruger National Park to conduct border safeguarding. (Photo by S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole)

SA National Defence Force shows a sound social investment

SA National Defence Force relieves the plight of the less fortunate

Joint Tactical Headquarters Limpopo presents a house to a needy family

Members of the SA National Defence Force giving back to the community

In Command or Under Command – Under which command affiliation is God in your life

Goodwill parcels for the ambassadors of peace on the borders

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For the latest news on defence matters in South Africa, visit our website at: www.dod.mil.za
May you, our readers, enjoy this Special Edition of SA Soldier which is packed with operational success stories on peacekeeping and borderline control as well as inspiring social-responsibility projects. In addition, this Special Edition boasts with a new “look and feel”. Hope these changes meet your expectations.

This edition features an exclusive interview with the Force Commander of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO), Lt Gen Derick Mgwebi.

In enhancing the lives of women and children in Goma in the DRC your assistance and support are dearly needed. Chief Director Transformation Management, Maj Gen Olga Nodola, in conjunction with the SA Army Engineers Squadron in Goma, the SANDF Gender Advisor deployed in Goma and the United Nations Women’s Office have initiated an outreach programme. Through this programme they have established vegetable farming to provide basic food and a day care centre that will assist in eliminating child labour and child soldiers.

To be able to achieve these, Chief Director Transformation Management kindly request members of the Department of Defence to assist by donations of seeds for vegetable farming, toys and clothes that are of no longer in use for the women and children in the conflict affected area.

We call upon all Services and Divisions to establish nodal points where donations can be deposited.

*For more information and enquiries contact Col S.C. Tau-Blay on (012) 355 5337 or Mr T. Mudavheni on (012) 355 5975.

Nelda Pienaar
Editor SA Soldier

Translation into Xitsonga by Ms Nhlanhla Baloyi, an Intern at Defence Reserves.
Goodwill parcels were distributed at the DOD Mobilisation Centre

By S Sgt Itumeleng Makhubela
Photo by L Cpl Jonathan Mogano

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) deployed forces in support of peace missions throughout the African continent. In a joint venture between the SANDF and the private sector, the Goodwill Parcel Project (GWPP) distributes parcels to all members over the festive season.

The Goodwill Parcel Project group handed the parcels to deploying members during the mobilisation parade to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at the DOD Mobilisation Centre in Bloemfontein.

MCWO Mothusi Kgaladi, Chairperson of the GWPP of the Military Leg, advised that as the members board the plane going into foreign lands, they must understand that they are representing the country. He said they should keep the national flag aloft and carry it with pride.

He said: “Once you touch down at the DRC you must understand that you are ambassadors of your country. In connection to the disturbing event from our members in the last deployment, keep in mind number 5 from the Code of Conduct which says: ‘I take responsibility for my own actions’.”

Director Peace Support Operations, Brig Gen Thabiso Mokhosi, said the SANDF is required by the Constitution to deploy forces to foreign countries, which is our international obligation. He said the country’s interest as a member of the international community is to ensure that peace is attained and maintained in the region and the continent.

He added: “We need to see deployment as an opportunity to build Africa as a continent to a progressive system and not merely for monetary reasons. I would like to wish you a successful deployment and also urge you to keep communicating with your families for morale support.”

Sgt Gaoketse Mabalane from the SA Air Force HQ said he is deploying to the DRC and will be based in Goma for the duration of 12 months. He explained that this is his first deployment.

He added: “We should not be found doing things that are unbecoming. We must discharge our duties to the best of our abilities to ensure that we meet our operational and international obligations.

On that note, I would like to extend my gratitude to the business community for their inputs by insuring that you and your families are thought of during the festive season. The business community in South Africa understands the difficult task that lies before you.”

Brig Gen Mokhosi said commanders on the ground must realise that they are commanding soldiers and must use authority vested upon them by their appointment. He said SANDF members must abide by the rules and regulations of the deployment. He said: “Most importantly; you must bear in mind that there is zero-tolerance on sexual exploitation and other abuse cases. People in the areas you are deploying to are vulnerable and I do not wish that you take advantage of that.”

The General Officer Commanding Joint Operational Headquarters, Maj Gen Jabulani Nkabinde, indicated that the SANDF’s mandate is to supply forces for peacekeeping missions in the DRC. Therefore a high level of military professionalism is important and needs to be portrayed at all times.

He said: “Let us serve our country and the continent with diligence and integrity and in accordance to the Code of Conduct for uniformed members. Let us avoid issues of sexual exploitation, drunkenness, loose talk and insubordination because they lead to failure in achieving goals.”

Maj Gen Nkabinde said it is important for them to always be alert and remember that one of their duties during the deployment is to create favourable conditions for economic growth within the continent, as well as to give the people of the DRC an opportunity to live their lives as normal citizens in a free country.

He added: “We need to see deployment as an opportunity to build Africa as a continent to a progressive system and not merely for monetary reasons. I would like to wish you a successful deployment and also urge you to keep communicating with your families for morale support.”

Capt Cathy Sibiya from Area Military Health Unit Mpumalanga is a medical doctor serving at 4 SA Infantry Battalion. She is deploying under the Aviation Squadron in Goma at the Muningi Base.

Capt Cathy Sibiya from Area Military Health Unit Mpumalanga is a medical doctor serving at 4 SA Infantry Battalion. She is deploying under the Aviation Squadron in Goma at the Muningi Base.
Goodwill parcel project

Recognising the important role of the SA National Defence Force in peacekeeping

Representatives of the various sponsors of the Goodwill Parcel Project (GWPP) accompanied by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Joint Operations Headquarters (J Ops HQ), Maj Gen Jabulani Nkabinde, Deputy Chief of the SA Air Force, Maj Gen Gerald Malinga, and other senior generals and officials of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) visited the externally deployed members of the SANDF in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as part of the GWPP to hand over a token of appreciation.

The GWPP visit happened as a gesture of goodwill and afforded the team an opportunity to honour, acknowledge and reaffirm its appreciation to the deployed members for their continued efforts to promote security, peace and stability on the continent. All activities of the GWPP carry the good wishes and appreciation of the entire SANDF and the South African community as a whole, and have an important impact on the morale of deployed members and their families over the festive season.

During the visit to the DRC, the GWPP had an opportunity to pay a courtesy call on the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in Congo (MONUSCO) Force Commander, Lt Gen Derick Mgwebi to congratulate him on his appointment and wish him well in his endeavour to bring lasting peace and stability to the DRC. Apart from goodwill gifts to the soldiers, various sponsors handed over soccer and netball kits to 4 SA Infantry Battalion, which was deployed as part of the Force.
Intervention Brigade, The RSA Aviation Squadron, RSA Engineer Squadron and the SANDF Special Contingent.

The GWPP recognises the important role of the SANDF in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building, and the importance of their participation and full involvement in all efforts regarding the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. This year the GWPP celebrated fifteen years of its existence. Over the years the project has become one of the significant events on the DOD calendar, and credit must be given to all the Warrant Officers in the SANDF.

Speaking on behalf of the sponsors, Mr Lungisa Mbuli, Executive Head, Group Business Development of Sanlam, said that the companies’ involvement was one way of saying thank you to the country’s men and women in uniform. He congratulated the SANDF on its peacekeeping efforts because business can only thrive where there is peace and stability, so peacekeeping has a direct impact on the country’s economic growth.

Mr Mbuli said: “We have been part of the SANDF Goodwill Parcel Project for a number of years. GWPP supports our men and women in uniform who serve our nation selflessly. Through the SANDF, the business community has the environment necessary to conduct business. Stability, soundness and order are some of the critical aspects in building a sustainable economy. The entire nation is in safe hands and at peace due to the men and women in uniform who have worked and sometimes sacrificed their lives to protect the sovereignty of this country on the continent and beyond.

“The role of the SANDF in bringing stability to Africa cannot be overemphasised. The success of the SANDF peacekeeping operations can be attested to in countries such as Burundi, the Central African Republic and the DRC.”

Mr Mbuli added that as part of the business community the GWPP will continue to support the SANDF. He said: “We pay a special tribute to all soldiers who have served and continue to serve this country diligently without any expectation of recognition, and to our fallen heroes, we salute and honour you.”

It all started back in 2001 when the Warrant Officer of the SANDF and the Warrant Officer of the Joint Operations Division initiated the project. At that stage there was no funding for it, and the Warrant Officer of the SANDF then requested that all Warrant Officers in the SANDF donate R1 towards the project. The project has since grown and evolved and includes hamper packs for the members’ families back home.

This has been made possible owing to the generosity of sponsors and the SANDF Spouses Forum. Currently the SANDF Spouses Forum is the custodian of the hamper packs and undertakes to find sponsors and sees to the content of the hamper pack. The GWPP, through the Warrant Officer of the SANDF Council and the Spouses Forum, was extended in 2010 to include the deceased member’s families. This was done in order to remember the sacrifices of members who passed away during deployments.

Through this project, the SANDF was able to spread its wings to cultivate, maintain and enhance partnerships with community-based structures. These included businesses, churches, schools, orphanages and old-age facilities that have benefited from the partnerships. The project not only touches the hearts of the deployed soldiers over the festive season, but also their family members back home. Those unfortunate to be in hospitals or hospices also share in the project, as well as those who are on duty on Christmas Day.

The success of the project is clearly demonstrated by the gratitude shown by the different recipients of parcels or hampers. The aim is therefore not to reimburse soldiers for their efforts but to show appreciation and support to deployed members and their families over the festive season by means of goodwill parcels and hamper packs.
The Goodwill Parcel Project visited members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) deployed internally within the borders of RSA as part of Operation (OP) CORONA as a gesture of goodwill to reaffirm appreciation for their continued efforts to improve security in the RSA, especially over the festive season.

The SANDF has forces deployed along the RSA borders with Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The Goodwill Parcel Project visit also afforded sponsors the opportunity to convey their good wishes and appreciation to the internally deployed members for their sterling job that they do in safeguarding our borders. Those unfortunate enough to be in hospitals or hospices also shared in the Project, including those who were on duty over the festive season.

The Officer Commanding of Joint Tactical Headquarters Northern Cape, Col Bantu Ndandani, who spoke on behalf of the Patron of the Goodwill Parcel Project, Lt Gen Norman Yengeni, at the Louisvale Operational Base thanked the sponsors on behalf of all soldiers for the commitment they continue to show. He said that this gesture was a clear indication to the
families of the thousands of deployed soldiers that the private sector is willing to partner with Government in improving the lives of our people.

Col Ndandani said: “Thank you for spreading goodwill. Without your contribution the SANDF would not have been able to hand over this token of appreciation to our members. Please continue to do the good work you do by supporting the SANDF in all its endeavours to safeguard our borders.” He also thanked the sponsors for seeing fit to come and experience what our deployed soldiers were going through in conducting their duties. He said now they would have a better understanding of the challenges facing our deployed soldiers on the borders.

Speaking to the deployed members, Col Ndandani said: “If someone sees you wearing this uniform and waves at you, it comes from the bottom of their hearts. That is all they can do. That means you have done something good. You are respected not only because you wear this uniform, but also for what our SANDF stands for. Therefore you must be respectful and professional at all times. Please do what you do best. Provide security so that our borders can be secured.” The sponsors shared the same sentiments in recognising and honouring the deployed members. On presenting the gifts, they said they were proud of the work the soldiers were doing and appreciated their sacrifices. In return soldiers were pleased with the goodwill parcels and felt that their efforts were not in vain. Pte Mlungisi Mtshali from Natal Carbineers said that the gifts gave them courage and energy as they knew their efforts were recognised. He added that he was happy to receive the gift. All soldiers were in good spirits while on duty at the bases the delegations visited to hand over the goodwill parcels.
The nation learnt with great shock and sadness of the sudden passing of Rfn Moalosi Albert Mokhothu who died during a gun fight with rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on 19 December 2016. Rfn Mokhothu lost his life while serving as a member of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO) with the responsibility of ensuring peace and stability in the eastern part of the DRC.

At the time, expressing his condolences, President Jacob Zuma said that he was deeply saddened by the fall of our dedicated, brave and patriotic young soldier. President Zuma said: “He died fighting for peace and stability in our continent. He paid the ultimate price for peace. We are deeply saddened. We salute him for his courage and his contribution will never be forgotten. On behalf of government and all South Africans, we wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, relatives and colleagues. Our prayers and thoughts are with them in this difficult period. May his soul rest in peace.”

Lt Gen Zimpande Msimang, Chief of the SA Air Force, accompanied by Lt Gen Lindile Yam, Chief of the SA Army, and other senior officials of the SANDF received Rfn Moalosi Albert Mokhothu’s mortal remains during a ceremony symbolising the military practice of receiving a hero who fell in the battlefield.

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) received the mortal remains of the late Rfn Moalosi Albert Mokhothu during a ceremonial parade that was held at Air Force Base Waterkloof.
honours on 7 January 2017. The service was conducted at Botshabelo Stadium and he was laid to rest at the Botshabelo Cemetery. He was given a hero’s send off in a colourful military funeral that turned the township of Botshabelo into a hive of activity. Family, relatives, childhood friends and colleagues attested to the fact that South Africa had lost one of its greatest assets, an airborne soldier. They described him as one who loved life and they celebrated the gentle and humorous person he was.

Maj Gen Rudzani Maphwanya, General Officer Commanding Infantry Formation, in paying tribute to this gallant fighter recognised the commitment of Rfn Mkhothu to serve through his selfless dedication to the safety of the Republic and the continent, and his dedication, loyalty and determination to protect the vulnerable and insecure people of the DRC. Speaking to the mourners, Maj Gen Maphwanya said the death of the Rfn was definitely not in vain. He said that Rfn Mkhothu literally took the bullet on behalf of the people of DRC so as that they can have a better life.

He further said that Rfn Mkhothu lived to make a difference in this world, and died as he lived, safeguarding our nation, defending our freedom and preserving our liberty.

Maj Gen Maphwanya said: “You were a true professional bound by a common vocation, which was more than a job, or career, or a profession. You chose to serve as agent of peace and guardian of freedom. Through us your exceptional legacy will always be remembered. We will always remember you and be inspired by the example you have given us. Your spirit will remain like a handprint on our hearts. We salute and honour you for the sacrifice you have made for the achievement of peace and stability on the continent.”

The SANDF will inscribe the name of Rfn Mokhothu on the wall of remembrance and acknowledge him as a hero who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Rfn Mokhothu was a proud and fully-fledged member of the 1 Parachute Battalion. He served his country and nation with pride and distinction and conducted himself at all times in the way required of a paratrooper.

Affectionately known as Bushi by his friends and colleagues, his ambition was always to become a successful Paratrooper and to fulfil his childhood aspiration of becoming a Presidential close-protector in future. As a community member, he was involved in various projects with the youth of Botshabelo. These projects included mentoring and training young people in stage drama and street soccer. He also single-handedly established a youth traditional dance group known as Bokamoso Traditional Dance Group that immensely contributed to youth skill empowerment in Botshabelo.

The late Rfn Moalosi Albert Mokhothu.
In conversation with the Force Commander of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Congo

By S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole
Photos by S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole
and courtesy of MONUSCO

In December 2015 the former Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), Mr Ban Ki Moon, appointed Lt Gen Derick Mgwebi as Force Commander of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), the single largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world. More than 20 000 military personnel from Armed forces around the world work under his leadership in different locations across Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

This includes the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB). For the first time the tri-national force made up of Malawian, South African and Tanzanian elements has the mandate of using force, if and when necessary, to protect civilians from armed and rebel groups.

Lt Gen Mgwebi’s continental peace support and peacekeeping deployments include Force Commander of the African Mission in Burundi and Force Commander of the UN Mission in Burundi. Lt Gen Mgwebi served in various positions in the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) before assuming his duties as the MONUSCO Force Commander. Lt Gen Mgwebi took over command of MONUSCO in February 2016.

Since his arrival in the DRC, Lt Gen Mgwebi has been carrying out complex mandated and difficult tasks in a vast, conflict-affected territory in the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement and in an environment fraught with operational as well as infrastructural challenges. SA Soldier recently visited DRC and converse with the MONUSCO Force Commander, Lt Gen Mgwebi.

In this insightful interview, Lt Gen Mgwebi speaks about his appointment, hopes for the mission, immensely sensitive and challenging work of MONUSCO’s military peacekeepers, especially with regard to protection of the population of the DRC, dedication of peacekeepers in furthering the cause of peace in the DRC despite severe operational challenges. He also highlighted that his term of

Congratulations on your appointment as the MONUSCO Force Commander. What was your first reaction when you heard, you had been appointed the MONUSCO Force Commander and how are positions like yours filled at the UN?

In fact it was discussed at the senior level of Department of Defence, SANDF and government for a very long time. When the government succeeded it had to nominate me for the position. The mere fact that it was discussed at those levels it humbles one because it was supposed to be my last year of service in the SANDF. So it is a humbling experience to serve in that high position and I am required to perform at the highest level and fulfil the requirements of the job. I am so grateful for this opportunity and for the Secretary General to accept the nomination from South Africa, taking into consideration that there were other nominations – I feel very humbled.

Give us an overview of the structure of the MONUSCO, the organisation, mission in general and then about your responsibilities in specific?

First of all, in the mission itself, there is a question of mission leadership. The senior person is the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and his got two deputies, one deputy is looking at the issue of Rule of Law, good governance, justice system and the other one is responsible for humanitarian aspects. Then at the same level as deputies, comes the Force Commander and of course there is also a Police Commissioner.

So one becomes part of the top leadership and participates, therefore in the strategies thinking of how the mission is going to execute its mandate. My responsibilities are to advice the SRSG with regards to the MONUSCO force activities and become a commander of the
forces that are here, other tasks are to give guidance and engaging with the troops, and to implement the Mission’s mandate by proper planning in respect of neutralising the armed groups and protection of the civilian population.

What did you see as your key priorities in fulfilling MONUSCO’s mandate?

First priority was to understand the UN system and get acquainted with the leadership and some of the key components of the mission and my own Force Headquarters people. The other was to understand the structure of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) as the people I am expected to work with very closely. Get to be briefed by the FARDC with regard to the security situation in the DRC. A major priority for MONUSCO is civilian protection. We support civilians through a lot of activities, including patrolling on the ground as well as aerial patrol. The second most important was to understand the different armed groupings which are here, and whatever programmes they might have and their method of operation. And of course the areas where they are and the difficulties and the challenges we are finding as the UN to engage them. The second part is the level of readiness of the DRC Armed Forces and their approach to the whole issue of working with MONUSCO.

What in your background experience, best prepared you for the Force Commander's position?

First of all the exposure and being part of the international community and working with multinational forces. Also being part of the Defence Joint Committees. I have almost 35 years of experience in the military. I have led troops from platoon leader, up to the level of Chief of Joint Operations. This long chain of command gave me experience on how to lead, how to manage, how to build strategies, how to prepare for any military scenario. A military career involves war and peace, and one has to manage, lead and know how to prepare for any military scenario. In my current and previous position, I successfully led and managed multidimensional teams to achieve results. In my previous assignments, I dealt with a great variety of administrative and management issues. In the field, in peacekeeping missions, such as in Burundi, I was a Force Commander, I gained relevant and important experience that has assisted me significantly in my current post as Force Commander of MONUSCO.

Were there any surprises when you actual arrived and began working?

There were no big surprises after I assumed my duties here. Actually just a confirmation of what I already encountered in the past. It is amazing how military officers and civilian staff from so many
countries around the globe, with different political, social, religious and cultural backgrounds, are able to work together so effectively and in such a harmonious spirit. I also was, and still am, impressed by the talent and commitment of so many in the MONUSCO.

How would you describe the current security in the DRC and, according to you, what are the primary factors that have contributed to the current state of affairs?

Well, the problems of Africa, for me as a military man, are not military. They are political. The DRC should at least share the issue of democracy and good governance, and rule of law. Because it is only those aspects that will reduce the level of tension and reduce the level of competition that is here. If we can solve that, we can reduce the level of division and support the politicians so that they can go forward. So those who are watching DRC should be supportive and help advocate those aspects of good governance. And of course the mandate itself and the attitude of the host country towards the UN become very critical in terms of making the mission a success.

What challenges does MONUSCO face in the execution of its mandate?

Well, the most problem is this so called Framework Brigades in the essence that they can co-exist with the armed groupings, they can know the base of the armed groupings about ten kilometres away from them but they would not go and attack that base because they call that target operations and they would only be available to protect the civilians, that is frustrating. The Security Council, when they renewed our mandate, was informed by us about the clause that said the FIB will neutralise and conduct targeted operations against the armed groupings. It should rather say the MONUSCO force will neutralise and conduct the targeted and offensive operations.

What has been the biggest problem you have faced during your assignment as MONUSCO Force Commander?

Well, the most problem is this so called Framework Brigades in the essence that they can co-exist with the armed groupings, they can know the base of the armed groupings about ten kilometres away from them but they would not go and attack that base because they call that target operations and they would only be available to protect the civilians, that is frustrating. The Security Council, when they renewed our mandate, was informed by us about the clause that said the FIB will neutralise and conduct targeted operations against the armed groupings. It should rather say the MONUSCO force will neutralise and conduct the targeted and offensive operations.

Can you tell us a bit about the actual impact of MONUSCO military peacekeepers on the ground in DRC?

MONUSCO’s military component has tangible contribution to the implementation of the mission’s mandate. Military peacekeepers in Congo are deployed in areas where innocent civilians and displaced communities require the most protection. The Force Intervention Brigade continues to support FARDC to maintain peace in Eastern DRC and to neutralise the armed groups terrorising the innocent civilians. In case of any emergency notification from our early response system, we are able to send troops to the affected areas in advance to defuse violence. It is worth mentioning that the military peacekeepers render emergency humanitarian aid to the conflict affected areas such as provision of food, water and medical aid as well as evacuation of the seriously wounded.

Have there been any positive developments in reducing or lessening the occurrence of violence?

Indeed, the FIB was the vital and still is military component in the high profile and
decisive operations that resulted in the defeat of the M23 in 2013 which has significantly changed the security landscape in Eastern DRC and created the much needed space for conflict resolution. Since then, they have been a very effective deterrence to further conflict.

Apart from the mandate of MONUSCO, what other areas has the mission’s military component been able to contribute to in DRC?

I think one of the primary and pivotal support functions performed by MONUSCO’s military component is the provision of escorts to humanitarian actors. Therefore I consider the facilitation of humanitarian access to be an immensely significant function performed by our troops. Similarly, we need to support our seventy bases mostly in the eastern part of the DRC. We take food and fuel to them, eg by road. There was mostly no bridges and roads and there were no UN bases, we needed to establish bases. Our Engineering troops have contributed greatly to fortifying the infrastructure in DRC through the construction of roads, bridges, and is currently busy with the development of Civil Aviation Authority offices, Level 3 Hospital, Logistical compounds and offices. They are supporting the civilians in their area of operation, some go as far as constructing schools, dispensaries and other community facilities. Through initiatives like this we win the hearts and minds of local communities and contribute to creating hope for a better future for this people living here.

Do you believe the UN is fulfilling its role in stabilising the violence in the DRC?

MONUSCO has a positive impact on stabilising the DRC. MONUSCO provides protection and also engaging the local government authorities sensitising the different communities about the value of coexisting and living together, solving their own problems by rather using peaceful means than violence. On the humanitarian side, MONUSCO provides accommodation, shelter and food while engaging the local authorities in terms of finding solutions to their problems. So in that sense MONUSCO is making a difference and trying to reduce the level of violation of human rights.

How important is it for women to take part in UN peacekeeping?

Women in peacekeeping are very important because in field missions and conflict areas, the most vulnerable people are women and children, so in many missions the female soldiers protect these groups because they easily understand the female victims’ problems and children’s challenges too. Women have their own part in any job, so they should not be denied a chance to play their part. They should play their part strongly and perform well. They should develop their confidence and build their capacity to compete with men.
How do you plan to plough back to the SANDF what you have experienced as Force Commander, as you will be retiring after your tenure of duty?

Well I am not quite sure if it is up to me to plough back, it is up to those who empowered and send me to this mission. If the SANDF want to utilise me I’ll be ready to help them anywhere and in any manner because what I have acquired, I have acquired because I was given an opportunity by the SANDF and I have also done so at the expense of the SANDF. I cannot bask at the sun with the knowledge and experience I have gained. I am ready to plough back.

There have been some unacceptable perhaps even criminal actions by a few peacekeepers on sanctioned missions over the years. What is your office’s responsibility to ensure that each participating country is aware of the expected code of conduct and to ensure that it is understood not only at senior command level but that it is known and understood down to and at individual peacekeeper level?

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in peacekeeping is unacceptable. The UN maintains a Zero Tolerance policy for sexual abuse. I have issued a directive to implement a non-fraternisation policy to all troop contributing countries on the ground and we are committed to addressing it at all levels. This is a shared responsibility and we depend on a strong partnership to do so. We have strengthened our process for military contingents. I have also declared and instructed military police to conduct patrols to all areas deemed out of bounds for military peacekeepers especially in areas where our military installations are in close proximity to urban and civilian population. There are also teams that implement the mission strategy on training, prevention, enforcement and remedial action and advice commanders on related issues. Any allegations are investigated and if found true the perpetrator will be repatriated to his country and his name will be sent to the UN and the individual is not expected to deploy again in any of the UN missions.

Overall the brigade has positively transformed the practice of peacekeeping, the FIB has contributed to the relative stability the DRC now enjoys.

To young officers in the SANDF who are interested in pursuing an illustrious career such as yours?

I need to over emphasise that professionalism and good leadership are key to the success of any military entity. In this respect nurturing these two elements early in the career of officers and developing it as the officer grows in the profession is very important. Officers must be trained to be good field commanders and also remain good managers where they take responsibility and make decisions while also retaining accountability for all their actions. I should also emphasise that being a good professional officer does not only entail working very hard and continuous learning, but also being on the moral high ground. This implies impeccable conduct and discipline from the officer. It is critical we encourage young officers to work hard so they can rise to the top and not only lead national troops on international assignments, but also command multinational forces on the same missions.

Thank you for your time General, any closing thoughts?

I very much appreciate the opportunity to serve in this office. Overall I would say that the UN is doing a wonderful job in terms of setting conditions for the provision of peace within the DRC. The work we do is very noble. It is important to have good governments’ structures in place and willingness to act. We must be committed to providing peace and security to the people. Africans must act together to play our rightful role in maintaining peace and security in Africa.
The SA National Defence Force is committed to African peace and security as part of the Force Intervention Brigade

By S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole
Photos by S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole and courtesy of MONUSCO

On March 2013, faced with recurrent waves of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) threatening the overall stability and development of the country and wider Great Lakes Region, the Security Council decided by its resolution 2098 to create a specialised Force Intervention Brigade (FIB).

Similarly the FIB was designed to complement ongoing efforts at peacekeeping undertaken by the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). The FIB is considered to be a product of collective security as epitomised by the collaborative discussions among the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) on how to bring lasting peace to the DRC.

The FIB consists of three infantry battalions: Artillery, Special Forces and a Reconnaissance Company. The brigade currently comprises forces from three countries in the SADC region: Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania. These operate under the direct command of the MONUSCO Force Commander, Lt Gen Derick Mgwebi, with the responsibility of neutralising armed groups and reducing the threat posed by armed groups to State authority and civilian security in the eastern DRC.

At its inception the FIB was credited with disarming several armed groups in the DRC, chief among which was the March 23 Movement (M23). The brigade carried out targeted offensives and sometimes pursued armed groups in localities where they were hiding. The FIB hopes to secure the eastern DRC and to restore State authority.

Overall the brigade has positively transformed the practice of peacekeeping and has contributed to the relative stability the DRC now enjoys, especially by disarming armed groups. It has subsequently paved the way towards re-establishing the State authority of the DRC and played a huge role in strengthening the capacity of security sector actors in the DRC, especially the military.

Following the defeat of the M23,
The United Nations Force Intervention Brigade rescue team discussing the mission before departing.

Members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) have a humbling and different story to tell. Since their arrival at the mission area as part of FIB, they have worked to create the right environment for lasting peace in the DRC. The SANDF’s peacekeepers in their blue helmets work in hazardous conditions and put their lives at risk for the greater good of humanity. Theirs have been a life of duty to preserve life and property and have helped to build relations in many troubled parts of the continent in support of the government’s foreign policy. Admittedly some of the soldiers could not return home as they fell in the line of duty while contributing to international conflict resolution. Such is the tale of the SANDF’s UN and AU peacekeeping operations.

The Officer Commanding of 4 SA Infantry Battalion, Lt Col Andries Matlaila, currently deployed as part of FIB, spoke to SA Soldier and said that their offensive was aimed at reducing the threat posed by armed groups and promoting peacekeeping operations.

The United Nations Force Intervention Brigade continuously conducts training to sharpen their skills in Sake.
Members also continuously conduct Riot training.

playing a pivotal role in helping the people of the DRC to realise peace in their lifetimes. They have shown that they are well trained.

Lt Col Andries Matlaila, Officer Commanding 4 SA Infantry Battalion (right) with Col Monwabisi Dyakopu, the Second in Command of the Force Intervention Brigade and National Contingent Commander said that the terrain in the DRC poses quite a challenge to his troops, with thick jungle and mountains, making it easy for rebels to hide.

stabilisation of the area. One of their objectives is to protect civilians, monitor the arms embargo and support the DRC government. They are also charged with protecting UN personnel, facilities and equipment.

Lt Col Matlaila said: “Our troops of 4 SA Infantry Battalion have engaged in combat operations since our arrival in the DRC, in fact we have been carrying out offensive operations alongside a renewed Armed Force of the DRC (FARDC) as there are still numerous rebel groups active following the withdrawal of M23. At the moment the FIB is providing some support to the FARDC as it takes on rebel groups in the eastern DRC. We have assisted the FARDC to conduct operations against rebel groups in a triangle formed between the axis of Beni, Kamango and Irimu.”

He said that his troops were always on patrol to provide vital security and stability in our missions. Lt Col Matlaila added: “We work with other organisations to protect personnel and property, maintain close cooperation with other military entities and work to promote stability and security. We work with local communities and military personnel to bring about greater mutual understanding and we work together towards a lasting peace.”

He stressed that the unit was committed to bringing peace and security in the DRC and said that his troops had proven their worth and were

Members of the Force Intervention Brigade from 4 SA Infantry Battalion in action against armed groupings during one of the operations conducted recently in support of the Armed Forces of the DRC.
The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) granted authority for the deployment of three Rooivalk Combat Support Helicopters in 2013 to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as part of United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO) and in support of the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) comprising South African, Tanzanian and Malawian defence forces to bring the various armed groups operating in the eastern part of the DRC under control.

The successful deployment of the Rooivalk in active service in the DRC in support of peacekeeping operations has focussed global attention to the SA National Defence Force. Since its first deployment in support of the United Nations (UN) troops, the Rooivalk has proven its value and worth, and had done a sterling job and performed exceptionally well providing the UN forces with unrivalled firepower, mobility and protection from the air.

The introduction of the Rooivalk has been the game-changer in operations against rebel forces in the region and the helicopters are making invaluable contributions to the success of the MONUSCO. Several days after their arrival in the DRC, the Rooivalk flew its first ever combat mission in November 2013 against M23 rebels and fired multiple 70mm rocket salvos and 20mm cannons against M23 bunkers near the mountainous Chanzu region, close to the Rwandan border.

The helicopter was in support during an offensive in the Kabalo region against scattered M23 rebel’s positions. The Rooivalk were sent into action alongside Capt Tlhalefo Ronald Moroole, who has flown the Rooivalk in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
a couple of Russia Mi-35 attack helicopters also with the UN mission. The operations concluded after one helicopter had fired a number of rockets on enemy positions. UN management is impressed with the performance of the Rooivalk.

The operation was successful, with the Rooivalk’s tactical approach through the clouds taking the M23 defenders by surprise and their rocket fire being accurate enough to disperse them and destroy one of the 14,5 mm anti-aircraft guns that had been previously used to fire at the Rooivalk and other helicopters. The helicopter provided the winning edge for UN forces that had been locked in battle with M23 rebel groups in the eastern part of the DRC. The attack was combined with a renewed Armed Force of the DRC (FARDC). After the operation the M23 group called an end to its 20 month rebellion, saying it would disarm and pursue peace talks. At the time, the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, said that she believed M23 had to retreat because of the Rooivalk.

Aircraft Mechanics deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, include avions, armourers and Material Support Clerk (MSC) Technicians who ensure the serviceability of the Rooivalk.

Capt Thalefo Ronald Moroole, Capt Mpho Pudumo, Technical Officer of Rooivalk and the ground crew who ensure the serviceability of the Rooivalk.
Rooivalk helicopters have subsequently been involved and continue to be involved in over a dozen combat engagements against various armed groups in the DRC, such as the Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Mai Mai and other various armed groups.

Gen Carlos Alberto Dos Santos Cruz, former Force Commander of MONUSCO, said at the time that the Rooivalk performed very well as reinforcement to the mission and would definitely be used in future missions. He said Rooivalk helicopters are very good aircraft, very precise with very good technology and said that they need this kind of firepower for the missions.

SA Soldier recently visited the DRC and converse with Capt Tlhalefo Ronald Moroole, who has flown Rooivalk helicopters in the DRC, he said that the Rooivalk is primarily tasked with escorting Oryx and Mi-8 transport helicopters in areas the UN deems to have a high threat level (the SA Air Force [SAAF] has around five Oryx medium transport helicopters deployed to the DRC). The Rooivalk is also used to escort vehicles on the ground in medium to high threat level areas. Other missions the Rooivalk is tasked in include close air support, armed reconnaissance and shows of force.

Capt Moroole said that the terrain in the DRC poses quite a challenge to pilots, with thick jungle and mountains, making it easy for rebels to hide. He said that identifying targets is challenging in the tropical terrain, which also makes ordnance delivery a challenge – this often requires steep approaches to get cannon and rocket rounds through the foliage. Some of the other challenges he highlighted included bad weather, especially at night. However, the good training received back home, especially during jungle warfare gave them the edge.

He said: “The Rooivalk fleet available to the UN have performed exceptionally well in hot-and-high environments and in difficult operational circumstances. Its high cruise speed, exceptional climb rate and power to weight ratio offers confidence to the pilots and forces and create doubts among opposing rebel forces. "The helicopter offers a protective shield to forces on the ground, providing them with unprecedented levels of support, defensive cover and reconnaissance capabilities. However, when required, the Rooivalk is a highly effective combat machine with the capability of engaging enemy forces in any weather conditions and in the most inhospitable terrains.”

SA Soldier also spoke with Capt Mpho Pudumo, Technical Officer of Rooivalk, deployed in the DRC about her role and responsibilities. Capt Pudumo said that her main responsibility is to ensure the various missions which include reconnaissance, heliborne escort, close air support, deep penetration and anti-armour.

Apparantly the Rooivalk has been very active in the DRC in January this year, especially after the UN and Congolese government forces renewed action against rebel groups. Unsurprisingly, the Rooivalk has been shot at by rebels during engagements in the DRC, but has not sustained serious damage. Apparently the worst that has happened was a small arms calibre bullet passing through the horizontal stabiliser of one aircraft.

The addition of the three Rooivalk combat support helicopters has equipped the mission for the tasks that they have to execute in accordance to the MONUSCO mandate. Because of the helicopters the UN and FARDC forces achieved an overall victory in the engagement. These engagements will be the next significant test for the Rooivalk as it continues to support the forces in offensive operations against major armed groups in the eastern DRC. Logistical and air support assistance has allowed the FARDC to operate more freely than before and effectively target multiple armed groups simultaneously, coordinating actions across multiple fronts. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Rehabilitation (DDR) operations are also being further pursued.
SOUTH AFRICAN ARMY FOUNDATION

border safeguarding
COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE FOR
60 YEARS
COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE FOR
60 MORE
SA Army Engineers offer humanitarian assistance to the Congolese people

Over the years the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) has embarked on a number of initiatives to promote regional and continental stability under the patronage of the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU). With the expansion of UN Peacekeeping resolutions came the recognition that peacekeepers would need to serve in a variety of functions, both in the traditional military functions and humanitarian relief operations supporting post-war recovery, demining, disarmament and development. Humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping have been important to the SANDF’s efforts thus contributing to a better Africa.

Hence the deployment of SA Army Engineers as part of the South African Contingent to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) under the auspices of the UN with the responsibility of ensuring and enhancing the mobility and survivability of own forces. On their structure the SA Army Engineer Squadron has combat Engineers, operational construction, terrain intelligence and Engineer Support personnel among others.

The involvement of the SA Army Engineers has brought immense

In addressing some of the challenges, the Sappers have rehabilitated some of the bridges in Kisharu, Rwindi, Kalengera Bridge and Mabenga Bridge in Pinga for easier access.
areas in which the UN forces operate are mountainous and are composed of soft soil, bridges are in a state of disrepair and buildings, schools, hospitals, clinics and infrastructure are dilapidated and causes operational challenges for MONUSCO in achieving their mandate.

In the rainy season such areas may suffer from landslides that may close roads or make them impassable. All UN forces, non-governmental organisations, humanitarian agencies and community members use those roads and bridges to deliver medicines and food to refugee camps. The condition of those roads and bridges are too dangerous and not accessible.

In addressing some of the challenges, the Sappers has rehabilitated some of the bridges in Kisharu, Rwindi, Kalengera Bridge and Mabenga Bridge in Pinga for easy access, they also did road maintenance at Muningi road, access roads within Goma airport, Ring road within RVA Land in Goma, Amani Road for the Amani Festival in Goma and road to Facolary (Bangladesh Military Police). They managed to do site development at the WFP container in Sake, Cadastre Land for the current United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) refueling point in Goma, RVA Land Development Phase 1 and

Lt Col Constance Tlhaole, Officer Commanding of Engineer Squadron, deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo said the SA Army Engineers have never failed to deliver on SANDF ordered commitments regardless of their operational challenges.

value to the Congolese people and become a beacon of hope to the different parts of the turmoil stricken DRC. In this regard the Sappers has proven their commitment by ensuring that their contribution towards peace and stability will be a footprint that will forever be remembered by the people of the DRC, which is evident in the manner that they have conducted their assignments for the benefit of the mission and the Congolese people at large.

In this regard for the past year the SA Army Engineers had been involved in many projects in the DRC in response to the UN appeal to offer humanitarian assistance to the DRC. The roads, bridges and infrastructure are major concerns. The
For the past year the SA Army Engineers had been involved in many projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in response to the United Nations appeal to offer humanitarian assistance to the DRC.

currently busy with Phase 2 in Goma, the Youth Centre in Goma, the parking area at Ukraine Aviation and Fire Fighters Training area within Goma Airport and assisted with the mine awareness training to the various contingents and awareness training to the Force Intervention Brigade in Mavivi on Improvised Explosive Device.

On a recent visit to the DRC, SA Soldier spoke to the incoming Officer Commanding of the Engineer Squadron, Lt Col Constance Tlhaole, about her priorities as the incumbent. She said that the mission has many challenges with the main challenge being the operational matter which is logistics, unserviceable equipment, weather conditions also pose a threat during rainy season and affects their operational capacity. The other challenge being infrastructure, but she said as Sappers they have the responsibility to ensure that the own forces has the mobility in terms of bridges and roads. She further said that Engineers will continue to play a critical role in helping to find a lasting peace settlement in the DRC.

Lt Col Tlhaole said: “As Army
For the past year the SA Army Engineers had been involved in many projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in response to the United Nations appeal to offer humanitarian assistance to the DRC.

Engineers in peacekeeping mission we need to every day raise the will, build determination, to provide something for the people. We have many challenges, which are very difficult to list all of them, we don’t have roads and everything, how we try to compensate for these difficulties we have, is by compensating with energy, with determination, with dynamics. We may improve our performance not only by increasing equipment, but by increasing our actions, increasing our dynamics, our will, our means of taking action. We are going to compensate with hard work to achieve our mandate.”

She added that in this kind of mission, it’s impossible to get used to the human suffering. Lt Col Tlhaole said: “It is very important on a daily basis not to accept the suffering of the population. The suffering that we see every day along the roads in the small villages necessitates that we are really motivated every day to perform the tasks at hand. That is the spirit we need to have in this kind of mission.

“As a matter of objective, we should agree that when the SA Army Engineers is called upon to discharge its duties, be it in peace support operations or humanitarian assistance in countries affected by natural disasters or otherwise, Sappers have always distinguished themselves. The SA Army Engineers have never failed to deliver on SANDF ordered commitments regardless of their operational challenges, so we are looking forward with zeal, dedication and commitment to the task that lies ahead.”

During the medal parade held at RSA Engineer Squadron in Muningi Base, the Force Commander of MONUSCO, Lt Gen Derick Mgwesi, in awarding members of the Engineer Squadron with UN Medals lauded their spirit, dedication, immaculate standards of discipline and professionalism in the process of maintaining of peace and stability in the DRC.

Lt Gen Mgwesi said: “We are all dedicated to the noble cause of bringing peace, stability, harmony and tranquility to the Congolese people. Your contribution under the UN Flag is essential for MONUSCO to maintain a secure and stable environment in the region. All this achievements are indicative of your commitment to represent your country, the SANDF and the people of South Africa, towards peace and stability in the region as well as your loyal support to MONUSCO and the Congolese people.

“I thank all personnel for their commitment to fulfill the mandate of the UN and I congratulate you all for your endeavours and involvement in maintaining the mobility for the mission, and as a result, I trust that the SA Engineers will keep executing their responsibilities under MONUSCO with the same commitment, zeal and enthusiasm.”
South African ambassadors unconditionally serve humanity in the Democratic Republic of Congo

By S Sg t Lebogang Tlhaole and Cpl Simon Ramakhula, Joint Operation Headquarters Photos by S Sg t Lebogang Tlhaole and courtesy of MONUSCO

In July 2010, the United Nations (UN) Security Council adopted Resolution 1925, establishing the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO), the single largest UN mission. MONUSCO took over from an earlier UN peacekeeping operation, United Nations Organisation Mission in the Congo (MONUC) to reflect the new phase reached in that country.

The mission is authorised to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate relating, among other things, to the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in its stabilisation and peace consolidation efforts.

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) has among its contingent deployed to the DRC, 4 SA Infantry Battalion (4 SAI Bn) as part of Force Intervention Brigade, SANDF Specialist Contingent (SANDFSPC), Aviation and Engineer Squadron. The SANDF has in recent years positioned itself as a reliable partner in the creation of stability, peace, security and prosperity in the continent.

Besides its core mandate of bringing peace to the DRC, peacekeepers from the SANDF have been gallantly working also for the economic upliftment of the populace. The Contingent has helped local communities rehabilitate schools, orphanages, improve hospitals and strengthen vital infrastructure.

SA Soldier spoke with Capt Kenny Black, the Public Information Officer of the battalion, who took it upon himself to adopt and sponsor an 7-year-old Congolese boy, Meshack Fumba, with his school fees of 105 dollars for the year and bought school uniform and other school accessories for the child in his effort to support early recovery and development. He also is buying groceries for the family on a monthly basis.

Capt Black said that 4 SAI Bn, Engineer and Aviation Squadron have engaged in many projects as part of the mission to assist in the development of DRC and its people especially children. The battalion has donated Black boards and chalks to schools around Goma and has repaired the roof at one of the schools. He also mentioned that they have also pursued a project of Backpacks, they intend to donate backpacks to all the children of the
social responsibility

The Aviation Squadron showing off the desks and chairs that were made from old ammunition boxes to be handed over to the orphanage. Members of the squadron also bought a land to build an orphanage for the children who lost their parents due to war.

operations, the RSA Aviation Squadron did their part also in providing desks and chairs made from ammunition boxes for an orphanage based in Goma. The squadrons also negotiated with the local authorities and purchased a piece of land for the school in Bushara in Goma and are in the process of soliciting the funds to build a proper structure for the orphanage. Maj Senyatsi said that the project will start as soon as the Engineer Squadron cleared the site. Maj Senyatsi from Aviation Squadron said: “We started this project because we want these children to have good education. Our hopes and wishes are to leave a lasting legacy for the people of Congo especially these children.”

The Chief of Bushara, Mr Abraham Gavenya, speaking to Cpl Simon Ramakhula who accompanied the SA Soldier team to DRC from Joint Operation Headquarters said that the project means a lot to the community and the children from the area will have a good education. He said that as the Chief of the land his intention is to help this children affected by conflict to have proper education and grow up with a good background.

The efforts of the SANDF contingent to the DRC must be commended, for this unselfish act done for the welfare of the people of DRC. The members of the SANDF have surely left an indelible mark in the hearts of the people of DRC, which is there to stay for generations to come. While operating in a fragile atmosphere with poorly defined ceasefire lines, the contingent has been able to uphold the mandate of the UN and still create a place in the hearts of the locals with professional handling of crisis situations and a humane approach to the problems of locals. The success of the SANDF contingent lies in this very balancing act.

school before end of their tour duty. Capt Black said he also hope that someone from SANDF will take over the project of paying school fees for the little boy.

Capt Black said: “Besides our core mandate, the battalion has carried out developmental projects that contribute to enhancing peace coexistence among communities. These projects have developed and strengthen our relationship with the host population and have also developed a climate of trust between different actors involved in the peace process. The effort is exceptional and deserves a standing ovation for the sheer fact that it has been constructed exclusively out of voluntary contributions from the 4 SAI Bn peacekeepers that struck a chord of compassion with the local populace and gave them the invaluable gift of humanity.”

The RSA Engineer Squadron has also impacted and contributed in other areas apart from their mandate, they were involved in Community Outreach Projects and rehabilitated a school in Pinga, assisted Karamushinya Medical Centre in Rutoke with the reproduction of administrative forms, donated stationery at Don Bosco in Goma, donated school uniforms to 80 children of Munigi School and delivered 18 cubic metres of soil to the Children’s Voice Centre in Kibati and is involved in many other projects which are not mentioned in this article.

Amid all the challenges encountered by the contingent in its
First City Regiment prides itself with the performance and successes of Operation CORONA

In order to fulfil the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Constitutional mandate of defending the territorial integrity

Members of the Regiment also ensure that those people crossing the border to conduct their business in South Africa cross so legally.

and people of the RSA. The SANDF is currently deployed along the borders of the RSA as part of Operation (Op) CORONA to safeguard our country’s borders and also to support other departments of state such as the SA Police Service with Op RHINO/HORIZON in the Kruger National Park aimed at the protection of the Rhino species against criminal syndicates.

Currently 15 companies are deployed along the borders with Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The bulk of the troops is from the SA Army and is made up of Regular as well as Reserve Force members. This border includes land, sea and air borders. The total land border amounts to 4 471 km with a 2 798 km sea border and the total air border being 7 760 km. These distances pose a huge challenge on current force levels.

To this end the SANDF continues to build capacity for full scale deployment to the borders, safeguarding it to reduce

A member from Battlefield Surveillance is deployed as a force multiplier with the responsibility to scout the area for any border crimes.

Members of the Regiment prides itself with the performance and successes of Operation CORONA

Members of First City Regiment visited Richardson Farm. Mr Richardson thanked the Regiment for their continued efforts in safeguarding the borders.
the risk of the porosity of the RSA borders. This negatively impacts on the realisation of the desired developmental state and disrupts the plans and programmes of the Government. The companies deployed conduct foot and vehicle patrols, as well as patrols by specialised Infantry forces using horses, motorcycles and a variety of specifically trained dogs. In some instances the SA Air Force support operations through either A109 or Oryx helicopters. The SA Navy conducts specific operations along the South African coast.

During the visit to Joint Tactical Headquarters (J Tac HQ) Mpumalanga visitors received a briefing from Lt Col Andima, Acting SO1 Land with regards to operations conducted in J Tac HQ Mpumalanga’s area of responsibility. Lt Col Andima said that their end state was to ensure that the RSA/Zimbabwe/Mozambique/Swaziland international borders are stabilised and secured, and that all illegal activities within the area of their responsibility are neutralised.

The J Tac HQ Mpumalanga has three companies deployed along the Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland borders. The soldiers are from First City Regiment and are based at Sandriver, Macadamia and Zonstraal Bases. The team had an opportunity to visit all the bases and operational areas where the troops are deployed which included the company from 1 Parachute Regiment and the Battlefield Surveillance team that is deployed at the Kruger National Park to combat wildlife crimes and do border safeguarding.

Lt Col Roger Keeton, Officer Commanding of First City Regiment, said that beside their duties, the battalion also managed to support and help communities surrounding the area where they are deployed as part of their efforts towards social investment and the upliftment of the community. Lt Col Keeton said: “This way we will change the perception of the community towards the members of the SANDF. Since our arrival in the area we have provided water for the community, maintained the substation, donated uniforms for the learners from Maqhekeza Primary School. The previous battalion also arranged to build a house for the Shongwe family who was struggling to make ends meet and the house they lived in previously was in a bad state and collapsing. It was built in a mountainous and rocky area along with being in a state of disrepair. The family was destitute and had no means to fend for themselves. One member from the company also donated a fence to be erected around the whole yard.”

In this regard the SANDF prides itself with the performance and successes achieved by members of First City Regiment as part of OP CORONA along the borders. With the resources at their disposal, the First City Regiment has done well since their arrival in September 2016. They have managed to confiscate dagga valued conservatively at R198 496.55, as well as other contraband, mostly cigarettes valued at R710 890, liquor R17 690, clothing valued at R834 500 and footwear worth close to R1,9 million. They have confiscated other items such as hairpieces, java materials, aluminium pots worth more than R250 000. This is testimony to the soldiers’ effort and commitment to get rid of border crime.

Other noticeable seizures were that of livestock, mostly cattle and sheep, and 31 weapons, mostly hunting rifles and handguns including silencers. Then there were also R5,6 million worth of vehicles, mostly high-end SUVs captured before it could cross the border out of the country illegally. Among the thousands of people stopped by soldiers during regular patrols, 240 were found to be undocumented persons. They were handed over to the SAPS and the Department of Home Affairs officials for further processing. They also apprehended 56 poachers and recovered 30 rhino horns.

The members of First City Regiment on their visit to Maqhekeza Primary School. Some of the learners benefited and received school uniforms.
Joint Tactical Headquarters Limpopo Operation CORONA successes

By Sgt Ally Rakoma
Photos by L Cpl Jonathan Mogano

Since the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) returned to the borders in 2009 to fulfil the Constitutional mandate of safeguarding the landward borders under Operation (OP) CORONA it has had considerable successes and continue to yield positive results.

Lt Col Yandisa Gaxeni, Battalion Commander, 6 SA Infantry Battalion Operation CORONA Deployment said that security is beefed up and soldiers are working very hard apprehending illegal immigrants, recovering stolen vehicles and counterfeit goods along the RSA/Zimbabwe border.

Confluence of the Limpopo river with the Sand river and the border to Zimbabwe.

He highlighted to SA Soldier that vigilance at our borders and ports of entry has increased and currently 6 SAI Bn has deployed companies at the Swartwater, Roobokkraal, Pontdrift, Beitbridge, Malala drift and Madimbo. He mentioned that one of the serious challenges is illicit cigarette smuggling which has negative implications for our country’s economy.

Capt Gumede broadly outlined the role and function of JTAC HQ Limpopo and its operational successes. He elaborated on a number of operational successes that have been recorded with regards to apprehending of illegal foreign nationals.

Recently the SA Soldier team accompanied by Capt Hendrik Gumede, S03 Operational Communication Officer of Joint Tactical Headquarters (J TAC HQ) Limpopo, visited the J TAC HQ Limpopo in Polokwane and proceeded to Musina operational area where 6 SA Infantry Battalion (6 SAI Bn) is being deployed as part of OP CORONA under the auspices of JTAC HQ Limpopo.

Lt Col Yandisa Gaxeni, Battalion Commander, 6 SAI Bn OP CORONA deployment, said that Musina is the busiest town due to black market importers from the neighbouring Zimbabwe and is located near the border.

Our young soldiers at Madimbo Operational Base are contributing to our country’s quest for security and economic stability.

Members from Charlie Company conducting foot patrols in Mapungubwe National Park.
Maj David Williams, Charlie Company Commander (middle) with soldiers stationed at Pontdrift Operational Base.

arrests of criminals, recovery of stolen vehicles, undisclosed kilogrammes of meat, dagga confiscated, confiscation of illegal weapons, medication and contraband goods with an estimated value of R6.2 million.

Maj David Williams, Charlie Company Commander, Pontdrift Operational Base, elaborated on successes of 6 SAI Bn Charlie Company deployment successes at Pontdrift Operational Base. The base’s area of responsibility stretches from Pontdrift, Beitbridge, Groblersbridge to Mapungubwe National Park wildlife conservation area around the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers, linking the international borders of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. He pointed out that soldiers had confiscated one Quantum, one Hyundai truck and three Toyota bakkies which were handed over to Musina SA Police Service (SAPS) with an estimated value of R752,000. A total of 197 illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe (90 men, 60 women and 20 children) were arrested. An RSA citizen with an undisclosed amount of dry meat suspected of animal poaching, and drivers without licences were arrested. Traffic fines amounting to R6 500 were issued, while a stolen Discovery landrover was recovered and emounded at SAPS Musina. Abandoned goods with an estimated total value of R1 802 770 was also seized.

Maj Arthur Kekana, Bravo Company Commander, Madimbo Operational Base, highlighted the successes of 6 SAI Bn Bravo Company stationed at Madimbo and its area of responsibility which stretches from Mabalingwe up to the Sandriver. He said that South Africa is perceived to be Africa’s economic hub. He added that they sought to exert more pressure on illegal activities on the borders so that they limit criminal syndicates that do not pass through the border posts as they could easily walk or drive through.

Among the items seized by Bravo Company were cigarettes to the value of R678,275, a stolen Toyota Hilux vehicle to the value of R150,000, and 15 kg of dagga with a street value of R30,000. Traffic fines were also issued.

Keeping up with the Department of Defence’s (DOD) strategic objectives and priorities to provide support to the people of South Africa, SANDF members has embarked on community outreach programmes and social investment projects among the local communities in dire need, situated along all areas where soldiers are stationed. Their contributions include using own resources and money they contribute as donations, to build shelters for the poor and needy. Members also undertake feeding scheme projects to support school children, families and orphans with food hampers, and by buying school uniforms and organising sports activities to raise funds.

SA Soldier interviewed members deployed in the field. Rfn Humbulanzi Makhavhu, a female Reserve Force member from Transvaal Scottish Regiment, stationed at Madimbo Operational Base, highlighted that despite long distances on foot patrols they also operate in inhospitable terrain with wild animals, snakes, insects, scorpions and mosquitoes.

Cpl Ndumiso James, Pte Zolani Twetwa and Pte Siphiwo Ngetu from Charlie Company, expressed satisfaction on progress made by their Company at Pontdrift Operational Base. They noted progress with regard to the curbing and eradication of criminal activities along the border and with the alarming rate of wildlife poaching, illicit trafficking and vehicle theft, which have been attracting much international attention.

Rfn Abraham Hlathi and Scout Charné Sarrahwitz also from Charlie Company pointed out that through safeguarding the borders they are taking ownership of national security and South Africa’s future economic growth thereby creating an environment conducive to growth and prosperity.

Rfn Elias Mosima from 2 SA Infantry Battalion (2 SAI Bn), detached with 6 SAI Bn is getting ready to go on foot patrol.
The success of Operation CORONA in Ladybrand

Maj Peet Visagie, the SO2 Land Operations, and WO1 Rothea Lamprecht, SO3 Operations Communication, once again conducted Operation (Op) CORONA and community outreach projects at Ladybrand in the Free State. Op CORONA is the border safeguarding operation of the SA National Defence force (SANDF).

The primary objective of Op CORONA in Ladybrand is to stabilise the Free State and Lesotho border area and to prevent illegal cross-border movements and activities. In addition they conduct Joint Interdepartmental and Interagency operations in order to maintain the socio-economic stability and territorial integrity of the RSA.

Maj Visagie remarked that border traffic between the Free State and Lesotho was always very busy throughout, and intensified during the festive season. He said that along this border of about 485 km illegal activities such as stock theft, vehicle smuggling, weapon smuggling, crossing of undocumented persons, and illegal and illicit goods were taking place.

The SANDF, with the SA Army in the forefront, deployed the troops to neutralise crime and illegal movements taking place between the northern and southern borders of the Free State and Lesotho. The SANDF has been government’s go-to department for border protection since 2008/09 when this task was taken over from the SA Police Service.

The major task of these troops and support personnel deployed as part of Op CORONA is border protection. Maj Visagie remarked that the operational statistics and successes from April 2015 to November 2016 on the Ladybrand (RSA)/Lesotho border included: the apprehension of 5 070 undocumented persons, 6 657.5kg dagga found, 655 stolen stock recovered, 3 099 incidents of illegal grazing and 26 stolen vehicles recovered, 54 vehicles impounded, 185 arrests were made and 54 firearms found.

He mentioned that despite their main task, which is to protect the borders, they have learned to do community outreach projects as part of ploughing back into the community during the operation. According to Maj Visagie, community outreach projects were one of the objectives of the Battalion during its deployment period.

In doing their community outreach projects, the SANDF rural development efforts, Joint Tactical Headquarters Free State and 10 SA Infantry Battalion with its partners, handed over to the Mosenye’s family.

The renovation of the Fouriesburg crèche, the handing out of mattresses and blankets to the children of the crèche as well as the handing over of 120 pairs of school shoes to unprivileged learners at Ladybrand Primary School were also done as part of Op CORONA in Ladybrand.
Operational successes in the Eastern Cape

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) took stock of its operational successes, humanitarian and social responsibility projects. SA Soldier and Massmart visited deployed members on the borders to give prominence and highlight the successes that are recorded.

During the visit the opportunity was also used to review some of the community outreach projects that were completed, such as the building of bridges to determine if they were still sustainable and serving the communities.

Mr Siyabulela Koyo, Head of the Department for Infrastructure, Planning and Development at the Intsika-yethu Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province, said the involvement of the Department of Defence and the work it has done is huge.

He said the municipality has the responsibility to develop new infrastructure planning, construct roads and bridges, electrification and maintenance of capital projects in the municipality.

He explained that the budget allocation that is given to rural municipalities such as his does not cover all the aspects that are required to complete projects.

Mr Koyo said: “For instance it is not affordable for us as a municipality to build bridges that are longer and require serious technical input in terms of design and execution. The partnership between the Department of Defence and the Department of Public Works to build these bridges assisted us a lot. To have the assistance from the SANDF and their engineers to construct these structural bridges was a huge support. You can see that these bridges were built by people who understand and work specifically within that field.”

Mr Koyo said the interaction they had with the SANDF made them realise that there are qualified engineers within the Department that could construct a proper bridge. He mentioned that they have learnt a lot from the SANDF engineers.

He said the two bridges that were constructed in the area of Tsomo and another at Mahlubi in the Eastern Cape have assisted the communities a lot.

Mr Koyo said: “The difficulty was that people who are on the other side of the river had to cross the river to reach clinics and schools. They found it impossible to access schools and other services as a result of the flooding.”

Across town in the area of Maluti near the Maluti Border Base, the SANDF is assisting with the construction of new classroom blocks for the Caiphus Kgwaqa Primary School. The Principal, Mr Jerry Lepheyana, said he appreciates the initiative that is taken by the SANDF in assisting communities.

He said the community was delighted that the school was identified by the SANDF for refurbishments and/or
The border between South Africa and Botswana was once considered a quiet posting where not much happened, but increased criminal activity means that this has all changed. In recent months the border has seen growing numbers of illegal aliens crossing it and the smuggling of contraband. Between March and September last year members of Alpha Company Regiment Oos-Rand were deployed at Joint Tactical Headquarters (J Tac HQ) North West as part of Operation (Op) CORONA. Regiment Oos-Rand had apprehended undocumented persons, recovered stolen vehicles, recovered firearms, recovered sheep and cattle, confiscated dagga, issued traffic fines, recovered stolen goods and confiscated contraband goods.

Regiment Oos-Rand began Op CORONA deployments in March 2013. When operations first began accommodation consisted of a tented village, situated close to the main gate at the Skilpadshiek at Lehurutshe in the North West. The problem that the SA National Defence Force faced was that after three years of border safeguarding operations, the tents had deteriorated to such an extent that when it rained personnel and equipment ended up soaked. In 2015 the decision was made by J Tac HQ North West to relocate the company to the old Bophuthatswana Defence Force Base, which is now the Gopane Military Base. Through hard work by members of J Tac HQ North West and the Regional Works Regiment, the base was made operational again, in time for the next rotation. Alpha Company of 14 SA Infantry Battalion has now been tasked with the job of developing the base over the next couple of months.

Mr Lepheyana said the new classrooms will improve conditions in the school and create a conducive learning environment. He also indicated that the school encourages its learners to explore opportunities in the SANDF.

In addition, the SANDF is conducting borderline control through Operation CORONA and have recently included the Lesotho border. Part of its operational responsibilities is conducting roadblocks by setting up Vehicle Check Points, thereby preventing livestock theft, seizing contraband and dealing with other cross-border crimes.

Sgt Celani Baliso, a Platoon Sergeant for Platoon 1 of Alpha Company, is deployed at a Platoon Base near the border post in Bedford. He said they have recorded a lot of successes in their operation.

He mentioned that the members are motivated by the logistical support they get from the base. He said: “We started with the deployment in September. There is a lot of work that we do here, but the members are coping very well.”

Rfn Peter Nana, who is deployed at Emhlabeni in Maluti, said his section’s main responsibility is border control and to monitor that nothing is passed across the border illegally. He said most of the illegal activities in the area include livestock theft and contraband such as dagga. Rfn Nana said the deployment is challenging and exciting as the residents along the border between South Africa and Lesotho causes trouble over livestock.

Rfn Nana said: “We have to monitor the area because when the cattle and sheep graze unattended, they are vulnerable. We have recorded a lot of successes.”

By Mr Shawn Smillie, Freelance Journalist from Massmart

Regiment Oos-Rand achieved successes in border safeguarding

Building of new blocks and classes.

He said: “Already there are three classrooms which are dilapidated and on the verge of collapsing which poses a hazard to the learners and the school personnel. The new structure will accommodate the learners safely and will increase the school’s enrolment as the community grows.

“We have a massive challenge with these old structures as they have been heavily affected by weather conditions and as a result, prevent learners to attend school due these hindrances.”

Commuters are searched at Bedford near the border post.
Caught between a rock and a hard place

Article and photo by Mr Shawn Smillie, Freelance Journalist from MASSMART

It is so simple that many are surprised it works. Along a stretch of the border a line of rocks has cut down the number of stolen vehicles crossing into Mozambique by a fifth. This is Operation ILITSHE, (Zulu for rock) and it is the brainchild of Lt Col Wollie Wolmarans of Joint Tactical Headquarters KwaZulu-Natal. It is an initiative that has not gone unnoticed and last year it earned the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) the KwaZulu-Natal Premier Services Excellence Award.

Between Muzi and Farazela in northern KwaZulu-Natal lies a 26 km stretch of border that has for a long time been a thorn in the side of law enforcement agencies. It is here where most of South Africa’s stolen and hijacked vehicles slip across the border. For decades there have been efforts to shore up this section of the border which is only protected by a cattle fence.

At one stage the idea was for a trench to be built along the border, but the concern was that it would be unsafe, as it would fill up with water and become a danger to livestock and possibly children. Placing railway sleepers along the boundary line was also suggested, but this was considered too expensive. But this all changed in August 2015 when Lt Col Wolmarans visited a stone quarry in Mbodla, KwaZulu-Natal.

There he spotted a pile of rocks. “I looked at this and said wait a minute,” recalled Lt Col Wolmarans. “It was as clear as daylight, here we had an obstacle.”

For Mr Johnson Mlambo, a Director at Bombo Stone, Lt Col Wolmaran’s visit was a blessing in disguise. He said: “This is waste rock that we cannot use, and it is taking up room in our yard.”

After the rocks were transported to the border, troops placed the rocks along the fence line. The only real cost was diesel. The results had been dramatic. “During 2015,” Lt Col Wolmarans said:

“On average 80 stolen vehicles were taken across the border. Authorities calculate this from the number of gaps cut in the fence along the border and from vehicle tracks. The festive season usually sees the most cuts in the fence sometimes up to 110 such incidents. In November this had dropped to just 19. Just before Christmas, in December, there had been a reported 11 cuts in the fence.”

On 23 July 2016, the KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Mr Senzo Mchunu, hosted the Service Excellence Awards Ceremony to honour civil servants who have made outstanding contributions throughout the year. Lt Col Wolmaran’s Operation ILITSHE was in the running for the Best Public Service Creative Innovator of the Year Award. The competition was fierce, remembered Lt Col Wolmarans. “There were three categories, bronze, silver and gold. When we did not get bronze, or silver, I thought: oh well, we did not get it. Then he proclaimed we had won gold, which was just unbelievable.”

As part of Operation CORONA, members of 1 Special Service Battalion are now at this section of the border. For the troops who were recently deployed at the Lesotho border, operating in the summer heat of northern KwaZulu-Natal is something different. So far they have confiscated R3 million worth of contraband, and recovered nine stolen vehicles. In the last three months there have been three shooting incidents.

In one incident occupants of an Isuzu double cab fired on SANDF members close to Gate 6. “We returned fire,” said Lt Daniel Mthembu. “The driver stopped the car and ran into the bush.” Troops later swept the area, but could not find the driver.

By closing gaps in the fence line, Operation ILITSHE has made it easier for the troops to recover stolen vehicles before they cross into Mozambique. So far only sections of the 26 km long border have been lined with rocks, but the ultimate plan is to have the whole fence line covered in this manner.
The SA National Defence Force shows a sound social investment

Article and photos by
S Sgt Lebogang Thaole

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vercrowding in government schools is a serious issue throughout developing countries, where it is not uncommon for 80 or so learners to be expected to study in a classroom built to hold 40 or less. The lack of a classroom can impede everything from class discipline to basic literacy. Without the sufficient materials, it is difficult for learners to put into practice what the teacher demonstrates at the front of the class. Learning or teaching is often unsuitable for a large crowd with limited indoor space.

As part of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) rural development efforts, the Joint Tactical Headquarters KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) with its partners handed over a fascinating multipurpose learning facility to Sinothile Primary School in Pongola. The SANDF built this bright, safe, child-friendly school so all learners can have the opportunity to pursue a quality education and to reach their full potential.

The SANDF continue to bring this type of facilities to rural communities as they continue to play a pivotal role in rural socio-economic and infrastructure development.

The building team from Durban Regiment who was responsible for building the Centre with community members as partners.
Members of Durban Regiment also donated school tracksuits, uniforms and shoes to the learners.

developments.

This is because infrastructure development is a key priority in government, and the need is most evident in the rural communities. The project commenced in 2013 when Lt Col Ntsunguzi deployed as Battalion Commander of 9 SA Infantry Battalion initiated Project Outreach. The aim of the project was to keep good working relations with the community where he was deployed.

SANDF members who were deployed in the North of KwaZulu-Natal at the border between Swaziland and Mozambique warmly welcomed the project and decided to donate funds to extend the school. The gesture was welcomed by the Departments of House of Traditional Leaders, Local Government and Education.

Currently Lt Col Duncan Russell as the Battalion Commander of Durban Regiment took over the area of responsibility from Regiment Botha. Durban Regiment continued with the project with great enthusiasm and regarded it as a step forward to do something that will have a positive impact on the community and will be a landmark for the successive battalions. The Headmaster of Sinothile Primary School approached Lt Col Russell that she needed help to build a hall or classroom for her learners. The plan was drawn up for a 9 x 14.6 square metres building, which will accommodate eighty learners and it was approved by the Local Municipality in Pongola.

The school had two classrooms accommodating seventy six learners in one block. Each classroom was shared by Grade 1 and 2 and the other classroom was shared by Grade 3 and 4. The situation was not conducive for optimal learning, hence the need to extend the building of the multipurpose facility. The multi-purpose construction officially commenced on 5 May 2015. Cpl Nongqunga, the Battalion Engineer from 1 Construction Regiment, was the leader of the building team. The team consisted of seven members, including the team leader, and they worked for a week at a time assisted by Mr Jabulani Shoyisa who is the community builder.

In addition the team also repaired and renovated the existing building and serviced the JOJO water tank and made the school more child-friendly. The members of the Durban Regiment also donated school tracksuits, uniforms and shoes to the learners. Not only did the SANDF members make an indelible mark in contributing to the Mandela Month, but the project will leave a legacy for future generations to come. These improvements to the learning environment have shown to have a positive effect on children’s education and are a good investment in the long term health of the school. This shows a sound social investment policy and a willingness to plough back to communities where it matters the most.
Soldier social responsibility

SA National Defence Force relieves the plight of the less fortunate

Article and photo by
S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole

As part of ploughing back into the community and the SA National Defence Force’s rural development efforts and community outreach projects, Joint Tactical Headquarters Free State and 10 SA Infantry Battalion (10 SAI Bn) with its partners recently handed over a house in Manyatseng Location, Ladybrand in the Free State, to Mr Piet Mosenye who was 106 years old. The house was built through a partnership between the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) and the private sector.

10 SAI Bn is deployed under the auspices of Joint Tactical Headquarters Free State as part of OPERATION CORONA to safeguard our borders and quell cross-border crime along the South African border with Lesotho. Community outreach projects is one of the objectives of the Battalion during their deployment period.

The Battalion Commander under whose directive all community outreach projects resort, thus requested the Chaplain of the deployed Battalion, Chaplain (Cpln) Rufus Maruma, to establish a Social Responsibility Committee to ensure extensive civil-military engagement in their area of operations. Cpln Maruma, with the aid of a Social Worker of the Department of Social Development, Ms Pontsho Siqwele, found Mr Mosenye and his family in dire need of a proper house. Mr Mosenye and his family had been staying in a shack for several years until their plight was identified by the Social Worker, after which the SANDF intervened.

The SANDF members responded positively to the project and donated funds to build the house. The Battalion continues to be involved in the project with great enthusiasm and regards it as a step in the right direction as it will have a positive impact on the community. The aim of the project is to maintain good working relations with the community where they are deployed.

The project commenced in June 2016. Cpl Motseotsili Koagile, a signaller and radio operator at 10 SAI Bn, designed, planned and built the house with the help of Cpln Maruma, L Cpl Makungu Nyati, Mr Thabo Kometsi and Mr Thabiso Kometsi. SANDF members built the house while they were performing their normal duties. The house is of a decent standard.

The gesture by the SANDF was not just to highlight the plight facing our communities, but was meant to showcase the positive impact on the affected families in the community. This was an important step in the SANDF’s provision of decent housing for disadvantaged citizens.

The success of this project illustrates how, through meaningful partnerships, government can achieve more towards improving the lives of people. The partnership with Ladybrand Crushers, Cashbuild Ladybrand, the staff of the Senorita Ntabathini District Hospital and community members to provide shelter for the family is indeed a great milestone for the SANDF.

The General Officer Commanding Infantry Formation, Maj Gen Rudzani Maphwanya, took the opportunity to engage with members of the community and called on the private sector to reach out to previously disadvantaged communities. Maj Gen Maphwanya said: “It is through your tireless efforts that we are today handing over this house to the family of Mr Mosenye. We are very grateful for the role you have played in your various capacities in ensuring a better life for this family.”

He said the project was part of the SANDF’s efforts to bring about sustainable and positive change to people’s lives. Maj Gen Maphwanya said: “The SANDF will continue to bring these projects to the rural communities as they play a pivotal role in rural socio-economic and infrastructure developments. This is because infrastructure development is a key priority for government and the need is most evident in the rural communities.”

Mr Piet Mosenye (106) could not hold back his tears when the General Officer Commanding Infantry Formation, Maj Gen Rudzani Maphwanya, handed him the house.
Joint Tactical Headquarters Limpopo presents a house to a needy family

By Capt Hendrick Gumede, Joint Tactical Headquarters Limpopo

The Officer Commanding Joint Tactical Headquarters Limpopo, Col Joseph Tshugulu, presented a house to the Luruli family in Tshigonde village next to the Madimbo operational base. While deployed on an operation, Maj Thomas Manyike, Charlie Company Commander, and his company members identified the Luruli family as a family that most urgently needed a proper house. The Company celebrated International Mandela Day with the Luruli family by digging the foundation of the house. Company members donated some money to fund the project. Many thanks are due to WO2 Michael Tloubatla who used his skills and knowledge to build the house. Col Tshugulu invited Ms Sarah Rambuda, Mutale Municipality Mayor, to witness the handing over of the house built by the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) members for the Luruli family. Addressing the Luruli family and guests, Col Tshugulu said: “As I officially hand over this new house to the family, I wish to state: please look after the house, and always keep it and the surrounding area clean to ensure the life span of the house and a better environment to live in.”

Col Tshugulu added: “The SANDF remains extremely concerned about the current illegal activities that are happening on our borders. Some of the villagers are directly or indirectly assisting the cigarette smugglers and undocumented persons to commit crimes. These practices are indeed unconstitutional. Whoever does this will meet with the full might of the law.”

Col Joseph Tshugulu, Officer Commanding of Joint Tactical Headquarters Limpopo, and Ms Sarah Rambuda, Mutale Municipality Mayor, cutting the ribbon to the entrance of the newly built house before presenting it to the Luruli family.

The newly built house by the SA National Defence Force members for the Luruli family.

The initial Luruli family house.
Members of the SA National Defence Force giving back to the community

At Sinothile Primary School, near Pongola, teaching was a bit of a problem, but that was only until the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) arrived. As part of a community outreach project the SANDF added another classroom, which allowed the school to introduce a grade seven class. This was a successful endeavour of a previous deployment, but this year members of 1 Special Service Battalion (1 SSB) will be continuing to help the primary school and will be adding a couple of projects of their own to assist the surrounding community.

Starting in January, members of 1 SSB deployed on the Swaziland and Mozambican borders as part of Operation CORONA, will be heading to the primary school to do some plastering. “I have found a couple of guys who have knowledge of plastering,” said the Battalion’s Chaplain, Cpln Othusitse Tau. The two companies have raised money to plaster the walls of the older classroom. Years of pulling posters stuck with Prestik off the walls have left holes.

The Principal, Ms Goodness Buthelezi, hopes this latest project will have the same effect as the previous one. The new classroom improved not only the morale of the learners, but also of their parents. “Since the erection of the new building, marks have improved a lot and the parents come here now and they are happy. They say this is a school,” said Ms Buthelezi.

1 SSB may have inherited the school project, but Chaplain Tau has a couple of other initiatives he wants his troops to undertake. As with all previous deployments Cpln Tau started looking for projects where his soldiers could make a difference. Besides normal soldiering, he says there is a responsibility in terms of the social well-being of the community in which they serve. Cpln Tau said: “I usually go to the municipality and identify the non-governmental organisations in the area. I then visit them and identify their needs.” One of the projects involved the Siziwe’s Day Care Centre in Sivule near Pongola.

Cpln Tau’s soldiers have been providing food for the children. The children and Ntshangase have also found an innovative use for the ration packs they are given. “We use the empty ration packs as lockers for the children. Each one has the child’s name on it and in it we put in their juices, food and snacks,” explained Ntshangase.

The soldiers will be helping out in another way at the day care centre whose swings are now old and in need have repair. The plan is to build a new set of swings made from old tyres. It should not take them long to make them. The plan is also to build a sandpit for the children, using tractor tyres.

Not all outreach programmes are due to the municipality. The orphanage is near Pongola, the Uthandolwethu Children’s Home Outreach ministry, and is run by Ms Rosemary Malinga. The ministry is home to six children, some of whom are orphans, others abandoned at birth and one is mentally handicapped.

Lt Col David Madolo of 1 Special Service Battalion with the Principal, Ms Goodness Buthelezi, and Chaplain Othusitse Tau in the classroom at the Sinothile Primary School which the soldiers will be plastering shortly.
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In Command or Under Command – Under which command affiliation is God in your life

Col (Dr) Sybrand van Niekerk, Chaplain at Joint Operations Division

“Outstanding characteristics (of Montgomery) were his professional thoroughness in planning set-piece battles and the projection of his self-confidence so as to arouse enthusiasm among his troops.” Alan Palmer

Lt Gen B.J. Montgomery, before the battle of El Alamein in 1942, was giving a command briefing to some officers on the forthcoming battle. In his characteristic (bombastic) commanding manner he explained his battle plan and indicated how he was going to destroy the enemy within 12 days. During question time a junior officer tentatively raised his hand and asked: “General, Sir, the Almighty God, is He in command or under command?”

This is a question we all need to answer. Under which command affiliation does God fall in your life? In our military courses we are taught that a unit, or an individual, can resort under different command affiliations. When these command affiliations are interpreted in a spiritual sense, they indicate:

In area:
You live among believers, near churches, but personally you are not interested in matters of religion.

Under administrative command:
You have a baptism certificate, and may even be on the “books” of a church, and will hopefully be married and buried out of a church. You attend Chaplain’s Periods and go to church on Christmas, but that is the full scope of your religious activities.

Under operational command:
“Every soldier prays when the bullets fly.” You experience God as a piece of body armour: there when needed, but otherwise a heavy burden and restricting your free movement.

Under command:
God is under your orders. God needs to adjust His plans for your life to your plans. Your prayers are like instructions: “I want... Give me... Bless me!”

In command:
God is in command and control of your life. Jeremiah 7:23

...but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you.

Soldiers know how to take orders and give orders. To be in command while also being under command. The Roman centurion in Matthew 8:8-10 is an excellent example:

The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have You come under my roof. But just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, “Go,” and he goes; and that one, “Come,” and he comes.”... When Jesus heard this, He was astonished and said to those following Him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”

So, let us commit our lives to the command and control of the Almighty God. Pray about your day, your week, your future and your life goals to find out what God wants you to do, and what He does not want you to do. When I see a Bible verse where God says, “Do this...”, I immediately react by answering God, “Yes Lord, I will try. I want my life to please You. I ask you to help me through your Spirit. Please give me the ability to obey You in this way. Lord, please change my thinking whatever way You need to, that my life would be in line with this verse.”

General George “Old Blood and Guts” Patton, himself a commander with a very abrasive personality, knew how to be under the command of God. The winter of 1944 found 15 000 of his troops surrounded by 50 000 German soldiers in Bastogne, Belgium. As Patton tried to relieve his troops, he realised that torrential rain would prevent him from having air support. He sent the chaplains of the Third Army the following message:

“Urge all of your men to pray, not alone in church, but everywhere. Pray when driving. Pray when fighting. Pray alone. Pray with others. Pray by night and pray by day. Pray for the cessation of immoderate rains, for good weather for Battle. Pray for the defeat of our wicked enemy whose banner is injustice and whose good is oppression. Pray for victory. Pray for our Army, and Pray for Peace. We must march together, all out for God.”

Who is in command of your life? The Almighty God, is He in command or under command?”
Goodwill parcels for the ambassadors of peace on the borders

Article and photo by Mr Shawn Smillie, Freelance Journalist from MASSMART

To the Chaplain, Col Kingsley Masemola, these troops were the shepherds who, as part of Operation CORONA, were manning South Africa’s borders during the past festive season. “I imagine you as shepherds looking over us on the border,” said the Chaplain to the troops of 14 SA Infantry Battalion (14 SAI Bn) at the Maluti Military Base, close to Matatiele, in the Eastern Cape.

Col Masemola, together with Brig Gen Mannetjies de Goede and Brig Gen Elvis Phale, had flown to Matatiele to hand over goodwill parcels as part of the Goodwill Parcel Project. 14 SAI Bn was not alone. During that week seven other units along the border received their goodwill parcels. Brig Gen Phale, who was officiating on behalf of the Chief of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), Gen Solly Shoke, told the troops: “I am extremely proud of what has been accomplished over the past couple of months in the execution of your duties in the internal operations arena”. He added that this comes at a time when South Africa is facing a lot of challenges within the country that emanate from beyond the border. Brig Gen Phale told the troops that this was the 15th year of the Goodwill Parcel Project and that this year alone R2,75 million had been sponsored by a number of companies.

Brig Gen Phale said: “You must remember that the cornerstone of the SANDF deployments has always been its professionalism, sound conduct and support of operations, work ethics, discipline and dedication. I urge you to continue to give credible and dependable support to this country of ours in a bid to create a bright and secure future for everybody living in it.” Not everyone was on hand to receive their goodwill parcels, as some platoons were based along the border and would get their gifts later. The delegation also visited Alpha Company of 14 SAI Bn based at Gopane Military Base at the Skilpadshek border post in Lehurutshe, North West. Like their sister Company on the Lesotho border, they had begun their deployment in September last year. They are the first troops at the Gopane Military Base since its acquisition by the SANDF in 2015. The base is run down, and Alpha Company will be in addition to their usual border duties, fixing up their new home.

Brig Gen Phale said: “The important work you are doing here includes the maintenance of territorial integrity, security and stability which are conducive to economic growth and the social uplift of all citizens in South Africa.” He reminded them that their families at home would not be forgotten while they were away on deployment.

Brig Gen Phale said: “A hamper filled with various items will be delivered on their doorsteps on Christmas Day, this is thanks to the SANDF Spouses Forum.” One of the soldiers who received a goodwill parcel was L Cpl Shavaughn van Rooyen. This was the second time she did not see her three children over Christmas at Klerksdorp. L Cpl Van Rooyen said: “My presence here is needed, but next year I will be home for Christmas.” Like all the troops deployed over the festive season her family will be receiving a hamper. “They are thankful for it,” L Cpl Van Rooyen commended.

Ms Thandi Radebe of Old Mutual, one of the sponsors of the Goodwill Parcel Project, said that after experiencing the hardships the troops had to endure on the border she had more respect for the SANDF. She said: “We appreciate what you are doing for the country, and I am hoping that as the project continues we will give you more”.

Brig Gen Mannetjies de Goede, Director Force Preparation Infantry Formation, presenting goodwill parcels to the soldiers at Gopane Operational Base in North West Province.
Medicinal myths and a lack of care for our natural environment will be the forces behind the extinction of this magnificent animal.

The South African National Defence Force is a pillar in the reactive physical campaign being fought against poaching on the ground and in the skies. We also engage in proactive educational campaigns to spread awareness about the intrinsic value of this magnificent animal.

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