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#### CONTRIBUTIONS:

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

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

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

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**2017 VOL 24 NO 3 • SA SOLDIER**
The Chief of the SA Navy, V Adm Mosiwa Hlongwane, on board the SAS AMATOLA, laid a wreath at the exact site where the SS Mendi went down in the English Channel a century ago. (Photo by S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole)

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FRONT COVER: A convoy of various types of specialised armoured vehicles drove-past the Moses Mabhida Stadium in eThekwini on Armed Forces Day. (Photo by Mr Witney Rasaka)
During the recently held Armed Forces Day celebrations in Durban the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, invited students from various tertiary institutions countrywide for a meet and greet luncheon.

The Minister also invited representatives of the Safety and Security, Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) who facilitate the funding of student studies. (In addition, read more on page 11 on the role that SASSETA plays in the lives of these young ones.)

Minister Mapisa-Nqakula warmly conversed with these young adults like a caring mother. She emphasised that it was vital for them to finish their tertiary qualifications. She said with emotion: “I know the difficult circumstances you come from. And that some of you are from child headed households … and that you have to return from university to no one waiting at home for you. I am very touched that I can interact with you.”

The Defence Minister pointed out: “We want women pilots and engineers. We brought you here because your skills are needed in the SANDF.” She added: “As I speak to you now, we have a woman leading the engineers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Lt Col Constance Tlhaole). She was not fast-tracked. She was trained.”

The Minister encouraged the students by saying: “A domestic worker has given birth to an engineer, a doctor … You have the opportunity – you can get your family out of the cycle of poverty. Be go-getters!”

The Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Editor of SA Soldier, Ms Nelda Pienaar, at the meet and greet. (Photo by Pte Paul Mpangala)

Minister Mapisa-Nqakula urged the students to help the learners at their alma maters where they matriculated to get them out of poverty. She stressed: “Be a role model to them. Tell them to start applying for bursaries already in June during their matric year. Remember where you come from. Plough back. I believe the sky should be the limit for our young ones.”

With Youth Month around the corner, the SA Soldier team would like to wish all our young readers a prosperous future.

Nelda Pienaar
Editor SA Soldier

*Translation into Tshivenda by Mr Lufuno Netshirembe, News Editor SA Soldier.
The burial of one of the pillars of strength

By AB Samuel Ramonyai,
an Intern at SA Soldier
Photos by Pte Paul Mpangala

A mazing as it may seem to some, death is a return. Man is soil and returns to the soil (Gen 3:19). The spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecc 12:7). The soul returns to the unseen whence it came (Psa 9:17).

The Department of Defence (DOD) mourned a decorated soldier, one of the pillars of strength, Col Moses Thekiso, who recently passed away after a short illness.

Col Thekiso was born on 14 December 1966 in Meadowlands. He started his schooling at Nkwe Primary School in 1977 and then went on to Kelokitso High School. He was there during the 1985 Soweto Uprising and completed his matric at Barolong High School situated in Mahikeng. After his matric he went into exile in various African countries.

Col Thekiso met his beautiful wife, Ms Lydia Magano, in 1995 and was married in 1998. This happy time ended with her death in 1999. She left him with two children, Thapelo and Palesa Thekiso. Towards the end he was still furthering his career as a Parliamentary Liaison Officer for the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) at Defence Headquarters in Erasmuskloof.

Maj Gen Lungile Dlulane, who worked closely in the same department with Col Thekiso, said we needed to strengthen each other as people. He remarked that Col Thekiso worked hard not to disappoint the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula.

Chaplain Mantsha Ndukula, in her sermon, said we should give thanks to God for everything. Quoting words that healed broken hearts from the book of Exodus 15:21, she said: “Bitter water made sweeter”. She remarked that in the middle of pain God can still change it to something sweeter.

She stated that arguing with God was just to fight a losing battle. With these words she gave courage and strength to the family and everyone else.

Col Thekiso was buried in Dobsonville.

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COMMUNICATION IS KEY FOR THE SA NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

Wonderboom Military Base, home of the SA Army Signal Formation, has hosted many conferences and events in the past. The Chief of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), Gen Solly Shoke, recently held a communication period in the base with commanders from all over the SANDF. He emphasised the importance of communication in the SANDF.

Addressing the members, Gen Shoke mentioned that it was high time for a communication period on this scale with all his commanders. He envisages holding a communication period at least twice a year in future.

The Chief of Corporate Services of the SANDF, Lt Gen Vusi Masondo, also addressed the members and facilitated the question and answer sessions. Lt Gen Masondo stressed the importance of discipline in the SANDF and said that discipline started with the particular person. I love the SANDF.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SA SOLDIER welcomes letters to the Editor. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters may be edited for reasons of style, accuracy or space limitations. Letters should preferably be typewritten. All letters must include the writer’s full name, address and home telephone number. The opinions expressed in letters are not necessarily the views of the Department of Defence/ SA National Defence Force. The volume of letters we receive make individual acknowledgement impossible. Please send your letters to: The Editor, SA SOLDIER Letters, Private Bag X158, Pretoria, 0001. Letters may also be faxed to (012) 355-6399 or sent via email to sasoldier@mil.za. We would like to hear your comments or ideas, particularly about matters concerning the Department of Defence. Regrettably, anonymous letters cannot be published - Editor.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Pta Sihlambanyiso Maswanganyi, 2 SA Infantry Battalion

SANDDF CONTINUES TO EMPOWER WOMEN

As a member of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) and a South African citizen, I wish to express my stance by recognising the SANDF’s commitment to advancing the constitutional obligation for gender equality as reflected in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998.

I must say the increasing number of female soldiers being recruited for the organisation reaffirms that South Africa, through organisations such as the SANDF and others, respects, upholds and defends its Constitution which provides for gender equality.

Contrary to what most African countries believe, that women cannot serve in a defence force, South Africa continues to reject the exclusion of women in the SANDF. This rejection of gender inequality seems to be working successfully for the SANDF and the country at large.

I did my Basic Military Training with women who finished their training successfully with all of us, and some of them did better than their fellow male trainees. In addition, I deployed internally and externally under the leadership of female platoon commanders who did exceptionally well.

Furthermore, on my last internal deployment at Macadamia my platoon won the best platoon award which was based on successes and compliance with the provisions prescribing how members of the SANDF should approach issues when involved in operations on the border between South Africa and Mozambique where we had been tasked to operate as 2 SA Infantry Battalion. The most inspiring thing about that platoon success was that we were led by a female Platoon Commander, Lt Matshira.

In fact there are many successes and qualities that female SANDF soldiers bring to the organisation, which was once taken as an organisation expected to employ men only.

So I wish to express my sincere gratitude and say thank you to the SANDF and the South African national leadership for creating a fair and enabling environment in a democratic South Africa which gives equal opportunities to everyone without considering gender or skin colour. I urge the SANDF to continue with its open recruitment which is transparent, unquestionable and fair to all South Africans.

Let all the institutions of employment continue to implement gender equality and continue promoting women to positions of responsibility just like the SANDF and others do. Such conduct by our institutions will continue to make South Africa a better place in which to live. So by continuing to empower women in government departments, such as the SANDF, we will surely inspire other African countries.

So by inspiring those countries we will be influencing the whole world positively and bringing about change and eliminating the misconception that women are incapable of serving in a defence force. This is part of what our struggle icons such as the late former President Nelson Mandela and his generation fought for and incorporated the National Defence Force after the dawn of democracy in 1994.

This is one of the reasons among others that confirm that joining the SANDF is an opportunity worth taking because it is an organisation that empowers its members without discriminating against gender or colour of the particular person. I love the SANDF.

Pta Sihlambanyiso Maswanganyi, 2 SA Infantry Battalion
SA ARMY AND SA AIR FORCE WARRANT OFFICERS DONATING WHEELCHAIRS

The previous Sergeant Major of the SA Army, SCWO Charles Laubscher, inspired Army Warrant Officers to donate ten wheelchairs towards the SA Air Force Warrant Officers’ Wheelchair Project. The handover ceremony took place after a monthly Chief Army Senior Sergeants Major meeting which was hosted at the Pretoriao Military Sports Grounds in Thaba Tshwane. The wheelchairs were handed over to CWO Rodney January by Col (Ret) Gowie Lötter during the SA Air Force Forum at the Pretoriao Military Sports Grounds. The Wheelchair Project was initiated by the Warrant Officers of the SA Air Force in order to lend a helping hand to people with disabilities in dire need of wheelchairs to make their daily lives easier. This came about when the SA Air Force Warrant Officers’ Forum, under the leadership of SCWO Dan Tshabalala, the Warrant Officer of the SA Air Force, challenged the Sergeant Major of the SA Army to donate wheelchairs for their wheelchair project. The SA Air Force appointed SWO Colin Palmer-Pilgrim as project leader to spearhead the initiative. The Warrant Officers of the SA Army, with the support of the SA Military Intelligence Veterans Association (SAMIVA) and Rotary Club South Africa, contributed funds towards the purchasing of ten wheelchairs. Base Sergeant Majors also donated money on behalf of their units towards the procurement of the wheelchairs. Among those in attendance were the SAMIVA Treasurer, Mr Lappies Labuschagne, and other members of the Association.

THREE SENIOR SANDF OFFICERS GRADUATED FROM THE ZIMBABWE STAFF COLLEGE

Three SA National Defence Force senior officers graduated from the Zimbabwe Staff College during a ceremony presided over by the Head of State, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwean Defence Forces, Mr Robert Mugabe.

The three senior officers: Lt Col Lufuno Mafune from the SA Army Air Defence Artillery Formation, Lt Col Batshele Mazibuko from the SA Army Infantry Formation and Lt Col Tebogo Toodi from the SA Air Force were enrolled on the Joint Command and Staff Course (JCSC). The JCSC accommodated 56 learners of whom 16 were from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Nigeria. The three senior officers from South Africa exploited the foreign learning opportunity provided by the SANDF to empower themselves with the vital skills necessary to negotiate intricate people management, leadership and a command function within a dynamic military environment. Speaking at the graduation ceremony where he presented the PSC “ZW” certificates, President Mugabe congratulated the learners for attaining a 100% pass rate. He commended the commitment of all learners and the Directing Staff at the College for a job well done. Mr Mugabe hailed cooperation with other SADC member states and others across the world who contributed towards Zimbabwe Staff College’s successful hosting of the JCSC. He also praised the People’s Republic of China for rendering support to the Zimbabwe Staff College and his country. President Mugabe said: “Zimbabwe remains grateful to China for its continued technical support to the Zimbabwe Defence Forces.” He described China as an “all-time ally and all-weather friend” of Zimbabwe and thanked the Asian country for its secondment of highly professional staff to the Zimbabwe Staff College in the form of People’s Liberation Army Training Team. He also commended the capacity of Zimbabwe Staff College to host a number of foreign learners at a programme pitched at a high standard. He also hinted that the next course would have a student from Kenya. This programme had learners from as far afield as Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia. The training is pitched at the operational level of war, with emphasis on joint and multinational operations. All training during the programme is practically oriented, based on the application and realisation of operational concepts. The programme covers both planning and presentation of plans for the decision-making process, the Estimate Process and the implementation of operational plans. An in-depth analysis of past and present campaigns is undertaken and Allied Students are encouraged to be creative and to apply their minds to given scenarios. The primary emphasis in the course is placed on development and holistic evaluation of the student’s competencies in the subjects of the programme. Lt Col Toodi, an SA Air Force officer prosecuted air warfare while LtCols Mafune and Mazibuko were on the land warfare theatre. Like other terms in the Zimbabwe Staff College’s JCSC, this leg of the course culminated with an external study tour. The course visited four different countries: Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Namibia and Nigeria to amplify the continental understanding of the students. (Lt Col Mafune and Lt Col Toodi visited the Federal Republic of Nigeria while Lt Col Mazibuko had the privilege to visit the Republic of Ghana.)

The three senior officers from the SANDF were exposed to a rich and comprehensive curriculum that will stand them in good stead as they assume senior leadership positions and are appointed in the higher echelons of our military. Their attendance at the Zimbabwe Staff College was owed to the cordial bi-lateral military relations South Africa enjoys with the host country. Zimbabwean Defence Force officers also reciprocate by attending military programmes in South Africa. Lt Col Lufuno Mafune and Lt Marumo Machete, email

UNIFORM OUR PRIDE

Growing up in a township was a blessing and a bit rough; however I am grateful because I had an opportunity to see soldiers patrolling our busy street with big “hippo” cars as we would refer to them as young stars. It was wonderful and is a beautiful story to tell today. The uniform is a form of identifying a person, department or company, and what values and specialties they can bring to the table. Our uniform is our pride; therefore let us wear it with pride and understanding of who we are and what we stand for. The SA National Defence Force has a unique, well-known uniform, we stand for. The SA National Defence Force has a unique, well-known uniform, we stand for. The SA National Defence Force has a unique, well-known uniform, we stand for. The SA National Defence Force has a unique, well-known uniform, we stand for. The SA National Defence Force has a unique, well-known uniform, we stand for. The SA National Defence Force has a unique, well-known uniform, we stand for.
STUDIES COMPLETED THROUGH STATE EXPENSE

Chief Warrant Officer Tumelo Lwana recently obtained a Diploma in Occupationally Directed Education Training and Development through studies paid at State expense. The Graduation Ceremony took place at the Wits Education Campus.

CWO Lwana is the first black member in the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) to be appointed Regimental Sergeant Major in the Personnel Service Corps. He is also the first Chief Warrant Officer in the Personnel Service Corps to be the Education Training Development Practitioner.


CWO Lwana is a Human Resources Practitioner in the SANDF with 38 years of service. He was appointed as Warrant Officer Human Resources Divisional Staff in the Human Resources Division.

He is married to Mary and is blessed with four sons and a daughter: Lerato, Leihlonolo, Lebogang, Tholang and Thato.

PO Matsobane Mabuela, Human Resources Divisional Staff

MILITARY WEDDING REVIVED AT A PARA WEDDING

A wedding is a wedding no matter how it is conducted, but there is something special about the military uniform at a wedding. This happened when Ntswaki the bride, tied the knot with a military man, Rfn Motlatsi Ramosoeu. Many guests, mostly family members and friends of the couple from all corners of South Africa, were welcomed to 44 Parachute Regiment in Bloemfontein where Rfn Ramosoeu is currently based as a soldier.

The ceremony took place in the Chapel of 44 Parachute Regiment in the presence of the Officer Commanding 1 Parachute Battalion, Lt Col Stephen Jiyane. Military Health Formation Headquarters in Pretoria was represented by Lt Col Puleng Bucibe. In the absence of the Officer Commanding 1 SA Infantry Battalion (1 SAI Bn) Maj Staat Mokgethi represented 1 SAI Bn together with his RSM, WO1 Mojalefa Sithole. Military personnel from Tempe in Bloemfontein came to support one of their own on this memorable occasion.

The service started with Chaplain Michael Nomtoto from 1 Parachute Battalion conveying a message from the General Officer Commanding SA Army Infantry Formation, Maj Gen Kudzani Maphwanya, who commended the couple and mentioned that marriage was a step towards growth and maturity. He wished them well in their married life and said no one must separate them.

Chaplain Nomtoto preached a powerful sermon. He said that Adam had the right to divorce his wife, but he chose to walk from the presence of God with his wife. He encouraged the couple to look after their marriage with all they had. He emphasised the importance of Commitment: to remain married when the hype is gone; Communication: passing on the message clearly; Conflict Management: must be a positive arrangement between the couple before help is sought. Before marrying the couple the Chaplain encouraged the husband be the head and a priest of the family.

As they slipped the wedding rings onto each other’s fingers, fiñulations and roars of joy were heard in the chapel. Mr and Mrs Ramosoeu walked from the chapel between a guard of honour in the military wedding tradition. The women and men of 44 Parachute Regiment were neatly dressed in their military uniforms as they stood guard of honour.

The newlyweds were transported to the wedding reception with a Gecko, which was held at the 1 SAI Bn Combined Club. The tables at the venue were decorated with a touch of maroon and white, while a floating parachute hung from the ceiling.

Most of the soldiers admitted that in their army careers they had never witnessed such a wedding. Lt Col Stephen Jiyane, representing 44 Parachute Regiment in the absence of the Officer Commanding, said it was the first time in his career of many years to experience a military wedding. He outlined the history and importance of military weddings and formal dinners, and concluded his speech by congratulating the newlyweds and wishing them well.

In my interview with civilian guests at the wedding, Thobeka Makhore (26) and her friend Ramosoeu Mohapi (23) both admitted that they had never experienced such excellence and they wished they could also be soldiers to have the same privileges.

As the sun was setting behind the mountains Lt Col Stephen Jiyane opened the dance floor with his outstanding dance routine. Like a true leader she took to the stage. Maj Mthuthuzeli Olayi, the Pastor of the church of the bride, popped the wine bottle to toast the newlyweds on a bright future, while Lt Col Puleng Bucibe led the newlyweds in cutting the related cake and origins of the custom.

The wedding could not end before the bouquet and garter were tossed by newlyweds. Rfn Dakalo Mudau (25) of 44 Parachute Regiment out-jumped the women who were all trying to catch the bouquet. She said she wanted to keep the wedding tradition in the military, especially in 44 Parachute Regiment. Unfortunately the paratroopers could not jump high enough to catch the garter as a civilian member, Shadrack Pitso (28) caught it.

The newlyweds, Mr and Mrs Ramosoeu thanked their family, friends and colleagues from their support. Rfn Motlatsi Ramosoeu concluded: “I did not want to be alone, that’s why I am marrying her”.

Rfn Motlatsi Ramosoeu has continued the military tradition which was forgotten for many decades and has made 44 Parachute Regiment proud.

I Cpl David Mabusha Tshivhula,
1 Parachute Battalion
AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT NORTH WEST HOSTED A HOLIDAY PROJECT

Altogether 110 children from the Potchefstroom Military Village and surrounding areas recently attended the annual #Be Yourself Holiday Project held at the Kopanelo Sports Facility in Potchefstroom. The Social Work Department at Area Military Health Unit North West identified the need for the development of the children of the military and compiled a specific programme to focus on the unique needs of members.

The Officer Commanding Area Military Health Unit North West, Col M.T.K. Sikhuphela, opened the event and welcomed all the children. She further thanked all those who contributed towards the event. Special thanks were also extended to the community of Potchefstroom for their devoted support of the project since its inception three years before.

This year, the three-day programme included a family day. The first day commenced with an educational programme, which was presented by the Love Life Team and dealt with the topic of the child in the family system.

The team ensured on the first day that the children were equipped with the necessary knowledge and life skills. The second day of the programme was a career exhibition. This gave the children the opportunity to learn about the different career paths Area Military Health Unit North West had to offer. Other invited external stakeholders such as Vuselela FET College, the Potchefstroom College of Agriculture, Old Mutual, Platinum Models and North West University also had the opportunity to showcase their programmes. This opportunity was well received by Euzene Jacobs, a Grade 7 learner from Promoza, who was among the children who attended the programme. Euzene said excited: “I have always wanted to experience what a real fire-fighter does on a daily basis. Today I even got the opportunity to wear their uniform. When I put out the fire, I was scared, but one day I would love to become a fireman.” Programmes of this nature should be embraced as they create a learning platform for children, even during recess.

These sentiments were echoed by Capt V.P. Koeshe, the programme director of the project, when she addressed all members present on the third day of the programme, which was a family day. Capt Koeshe said: “I would like to thank all who have been with us during these past three days. All your efforts and contributions are highly appreciated. To the children, let whatever you have learnt these past three days contribute towards building a better future for yourselves and, most importantly, do not ever forget always to be yourself.”

Old Mutual and Sanitech were two of the sponsors contributing towards a smooth implementation of the project.

Next year the project should grow even bigger and continue achieving its main objective, which is to educate, empower and equip the youth with career opportunities and to promote healthy family systems.

Pte Lebogang Mogotsi, email

ACADEMIC OPENING OF THE MILITARY ACADEMY

First-year students and staff of the Military Academy recently attended the Academic Opening for 2017. The unit was privileged to have Councillor Andre Kruger present to represent the Mayor of Saldanha Bay Municipality and Lt Gen Norman Yengeni, the Chief of Human Resources, and several high-ranking Department of Defence officials.

Prof Eugene Cloete, Vice Rector Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies from Stellenbosch University, was the guest speaker at the event. Addressing the attendees and students, Prof Cloete highlighted the four most important attributes of a good leader: the most important of which is trust. He emphasised that irrespective of other factors, people do not follow those who they do not trust. He said: “A good leader must also have empathy to care for their people. They must serve the people that they lead by giving up some of their privileges and, lastly, have respect. In this university, part of what we do is to train thought leaders, with the emphasis on thought.” He encouraged them to ask the question “why” about everything in the world – not only to gain information, but to raise their intelligence levels and, most importantly, to improve their emotional intelligence. Prof Cloete concluded by saying: “There is more to life than achieving your goals – if you help other people achieve their goals it will make you a significant person.”

The Military Academy wishes the intake of 2017 a prosperous three years at the unit and success in their studies.

Maj Engela Meintjes, Military Academy

LIVE SMART AND LEAVE SMARTER

The smart life does not end before the eyes of those we spend time with, but must be smarter when we are no more. When one is no more we often hear speakers paying their last tributes saying he or she has finished writing the book of his or her life, yet it is the individual’s responsibility to foresee while they are alive what book we are to write with their lives, so that when they are no more, that book may still give life to those who are left behind.

My comrades in arms let us face the fact that we did not raise ourselves: we have parents and siblings to take care of. Even if we are no more, the fruits of our hard work must still keep them going. We are parents too, we therefore need to do things in a way that when the sun shines no more for us in the morning our loved ones’ future must still be brighter. To all our soldiers, let us take the responsibility to ensure that our personal administration is always updated at all times and make use of the professional brokers who visit our workplace to get information on how we can live more smartly and leave smarter still.

It is very bad and painful when you are no more and the family has to deal with the tragedy of our lives, while we could have avoided all that by drafting a proper LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT. Yes we live now, but we do not know the day we will leave for good, let us think of our loved ones that we will be leaving behind, a life does not end with our departure.

A smart and well-disciplined soldier starts first by his or her personal administration. Let us all encourage each other to live smartly and leave smartly. Pte Serame Mooki, 1 Parachute Battalion

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Defence Minister signs a memorandum of understanding with Pakistani Defence Minister

For the first time since the advent of democracy, an incumbent Minister in South Africa undertook an official visit to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; both countries had been former British colonies and members of the Commonwealth. They could not initiate bilateral relations prior 1994 due to the draconian apartheid regime that led to embargos by Commonwealth countries which rendered South Africa crippled in terms of forming relations with any country. The fall of the repressive apartheid opened doors for programmes, exchange information and train soldiers. The MOU further bound the SANDF and the Pakistan Armed Forces to work together in the acquisition of defence equipment as well as to cooperate in research and development, technology transfer, co-production and joint ventures in the public and private sectors.

The two Ministers agreed to exchange information in an effort to fight acts of terrorism. The South African Minister of Defence said: “It will be very naïve to think that there is a country that is immune to terrorist attack and South Africa has a lot to learn from those who have experienced such attacks. Not only has Pakistan experienced this, but it has been extremely successful in repelling it.”

The Pakistan Minister of Defence said: “Pakistan has made significant achievements in the war against terrorism.” He stated that the Pakistan Armed Forces destroyed the terrorists’ hideout and helped displaced families. Mr Khawaja Muhammad Asif said: “Pakistan stands among the countries most actively fighting the war against terrorism.” Mr Khawaja Muhammad Asif confirmed that Pakistan was making huge strides in reducing its dependence on arms purchased from the West. He said: “We are strengthening ties with allies like South Africa.”

Minister Mapisa-Nqakula indicated her interest in some of Pakistan’s fighter aircraft and said it was an area worth looking into for future procurement. She expressed her gratitude for the warm welcome and formal reception by her counterpart. She said she looked forward to future interaction between the two countries.
The Defence Minister invites students to the Armed Forces Day activities

By S Sgt Itumeleng Makhubela

The Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, invited students from different universities around the country as part of her outreach programme to observe Armed Forces Day activities. She also invited the Safety and Security, Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) officials who facilitate the funding of student studies.

The Defence Minister said they should use the Armed Forces Day celebrations to engage about career opportunities in the SA National Defence Force (SANDF). The Minister said she wished some of the students would join one of the four Services on completion of their studies, as the SANDF requires their expertise. She said that in the Military Skills Development System (MSDS) there were learners selected to study medicine and engineering in Cuba. Some have been selected to train as pilots in Russia. She said: “It gives one hope that there are young people who can offer their skills to the SANDF. We want to create a highly professional SANDF.”

The SASSETA Acting Senior Manager Skills Implementation and Monitoring, Ms Juwayria Amod, said would be able to point out the office of the Chief of Human Resource which areas of need could be funded, particularly concerning scarce skills.

She said the DOD and SASSETA are currently engaged in an artisan training programme as the government has identified the need to have sufficient skilled artisans.

She said: “We determine what training would be required and advertise for accredited training providers to apply. The Department of Defence will then choose learners that will attend those training programmes.”

Ms Amod explained that the task of SASSETAs was to ensure that there are proper skills and development of people working in the safety and security sector. The work of SASSETA covers, inter alia, the SA Police Service and the Department of Justice.

A second year student of Bachelor of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Ipeleng, said she had to take a gap year after an attempt to be put her on the SASSETA programme. She said: “The Minister of Defence heard of my story and challenges and, after her intervention, SASSETA is funding my studies and I am very grateful.”

The Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, invited students funded by the Safety and Security, Sector Education and Training Authority to the Armed Forces Day activities.
Celebrating the 2017 Armed Forces Day

By Sgt Ally Rakoma

Armed Forces Day is an appropriate occasion to honour the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) men and women in uniform for their patriotic service to the nation and to pay homage to all those who died in the line of duty.

2017 Armed Forces Day was held under the flagship of the SA Army at Masabalala Yengwa (Natal Mounted Rifles) Avenue, next to the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban.

This year’s celebration coincided with the centenary commemoration of the sinking of the SS Mendi troopship that was carrying black soldiers to serve in France in World War I, which went down...
off the Isle of Wight after it was rammed by the SS Darro in the English Channel. More than 600 members of the fifth Battalion of the SA Native Labour Corps (SANLC) died as a result.

During the 2017 Armed Forces Day the President of the Republic of South Africa and Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF, Mr Jacob Zuma, officiated. He stood to attention on the podium, his right hand on his heart as he took the national salute from members of the National Ceremonial Guard. This was followed by a 21 gun salute, a salute fly-past by an assortment of SA Air Force aircraft, military bands, marching soldiers, armoured vehicles and heavy artillery pieces towed past the podium.

The Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF presented Gold Mandela Medals to doctors who had taken care of our late Statesman, the late Tata Mandela, at the time he was ill and up to his death, after which they were involved with his funeral arrangements, lying-in-state and burial. He also conferred military medals on soldiers for outstanding duty and acts of bravery. Long Service Medals, i.e. the 40 years’ service, were conferred on the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Solly Shoke, and the Chief of Staff of the SANDF, Lt Gen Vusi Masondo, the Chief of Human Resources, Lt Gen Norman Yengeni, the Chief of Joint Operations, Lt Gen Barney Hlatshwayo, and the Surgeon General of the SANDF, Lt Gen Aubrey Sedibe.

After expressing his gratitude to the medal recipients the Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF extended his condolences
Members of the SA Army on parade. (Photo by Mr Witney Rasaka)

Members of the SA Air Force on parade. (Photo by Mr Witney Rasaka)

Some of the SA Army’s airborne assets. (Photo by Pte Paul Mpangala)

President Zuma pointed out that the event celebrated the contribution of the people’s National Defence Force to the consolidation of democracy. He said: “We chose the date of the sinking of the SS Mendi so that the day on which so many paid the supreme price for peace should be used to honour our men and women who are prepared to lay down their lives if need be, to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic and its people, our soldiers.

“Armed Forces Day provides an opportunity for the youth to learn about careers in the SANDF and to recruit young people through the Military Skills Development System. Over the past three years the SANDF has recruited over 11 000 young people. The SANDF has also trained 6 000 students who are part of the National Rural Youth Service Corps on behalf of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.”

President Zuma mentioned that the 616 mostly black men who died on the ill-fated troopship were internationalists who loved peace and justice. He added that it was unfortunate that their sacrifice did not earn them any respect from the rulers of the time and they were never decorated or awarded any medals at the end of the war. He said: “Together today, we restore the dignity and humanity of the black soldiers who perished on that fateful day. We salute their courage, bravery and commitment. We salute their quest for a more equal and just world, for the better world we are still working to achieve 100 years later.”

The ceremonial event culminated in a final showdown in the form of a capability demonstration where President Zuma, accompanied by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Chief of the SANDF together with Service and Divisional Chiefs, made their way to the Blue Lagoon Beach where a demonstration of combat military capability and overwhelming fire power was displayed.
The arrival of mechanised columns

By Sgt Ally Rakoma

The military convoy of mechanised columns of various types of specialised infantry vehicles from different, units based all over South Africa heading through Durban’s CBD to the vehicle park near the Moses Mabhida Stadium. These vehicles operate in varying types of terrain and can transport soldiers, equipment and supplies.

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) prides itself on the multitude of important capabilities and powerful force elements that are rapidly deployable over tactical or strategic distances and have special capabilities that can be utilised in difficult terrain, whether on land, in urban areas or against various threats.

The Military Police leading the military convoy into Durban city centre. (Photo by Mr Witney Rasaka)

Casspirs drive past. (Photo by Pte Paul Mpangala)

Military convoy at pit-stop on the N3 after the Mariannhill Toll Plaza. (Photo by Pte Paul Mpangala)
The unveiling of the Stone of Remembrance and the wreath-laying at the Durban Maritime Museum preceded the highly anticipated Armed Forces Day celebrations at the Moses Mabida Stadium where President Jacob Zuma, the Commander-in-Chief of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), was the chief functionary at the parade.

The ceremony commemorated all the patriots who died in the service of the country and honoured those willing to sacrifice their lives to ensure a safer South Africa.

The 21st February, in particular, commemorates the largest naval disaster in the history of South Africa. 2017 marks the centenary of the sinking of the SS Mendi in which more than 600 soldiers of the South Africa Native Labour Corps (SANLC) drowned after the ship was rammed by the SS Darro in the English Channel in February 1917.

The Chaplain General, Brig Gen (Rev) Andrew Jamangile, said the SANDF was paying homage to these men and a memorial stone had been unveiled in honour of these soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice when they met their untimely death in the English Channel following the collision with the SS Darro.

“We will remember the SS Mendi soldiers today and into the future because we have no right to forget what God remembers.”

The Commander-in-Chief of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), President Jacob Zuma, flanked by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Solly Shoke, took the salute before the unveiling of the Stone of Remembrance.
icy depths of the English Channel. Brig Gen (Rev) Jamangile said: “We have been permitted by God this morning to celebrate the lives of our great heroes for their sterling qualities and whose unselfish sacrifice has made an indelible and lasting impression on us. This is an important opportunity to offer this to God who has allowed us to share these moments and memories of our beloved soldiers.

“Let us give God the honour and glory for the lives of our heroes who gave their all. We will remember the SS Mendi soldiers today and into the future because we have no right to forget what God remembers.”

The Fifth Battalion of the SANLC spent their last night in South Africa quartered where the University of Cape Town’s Lower Campus now stands, previously the old Rosebank Show Grounds. They sailed from Cape Town to assist the British in World War I. On the morning of 21 February 1917, just south of the Isle of Wight, on the way to Le Havre, France, the 4 000 ton steamship SS Mendi was rammed and almost cut in half by an 11 000 ton liner, the SS Darro. The SS Mendi sank in 20 minutes.

About 21 000 black South Africans, all of whom were volunteers, served in France with the SANLC between 1916 and 1918. They dug quarries, laid and repaired roads and railway lines, and cut tons of timber.

Most of the men were employed in Le Havre, Rouen and Dieppe, where they unloaded supply ships and loaded trains with supplies for the battlefront. Of these men, 333 died in France during the war. The wreckage of the SS Mendi lies on the bed of the English Channel, approximately 11 miles south of the Isle of Wight.

An outstanding figure in the SS Mendi tragedy, the Reverend Isaac Dyobha, is understood to have calmed the men down as the ship sank. According to the testimony, the men formed up on deck as he addressed them, he said: “Be quite and calm, my countrymen, for what is taking place is exactly what you came to do. You are going to die, that is what you came to do.

“Brothers, we are drilling the death drill. I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers, Zulus, Swazis, Pondos, Basothos and all the others; let us die like warriors. We are sons of Africa. Raise your war cries my brothers, for though they made us leave our assegais back in the kraals, our voices are left with our bodies.”

Only white and coloured troops were awarded the Standard Victory and Service Medals after the war. The Department of Military Veterans is seeking surviving relatives of the men who died on the SS Mendi, to include them in the service that will mark the 100th anniversary of the tragedy.

As part of the process of reconciliation in South Africa, the Department also began to take steps to recognise properly those who gave their lives at home and on foreign soil and, in the case of the SS Mendi, at the same time bringing all South Africans involved in the SS Mendi still closer together.
The sinking of the SS Mendi, which has been described as one of South Africa’s greatest maritime disasters, was recently commemorated with a series of events in the United Kingdom to mark the centenary commemoration of the sinking of SS Mendi.

The wreath-laying ceremonies were in honour of the members of the fifth Battalion of the SA Native Labour Corps (SANLC) who perished when their troopship, the SS Mendi, was accidentally rammed by a passing ship, the SS, Daro, in thick fog on 21 February 1917. The SS Mendi sank off St Catherine’s Point off the Isle of Wight. On board were 805 black privates, 22 white officers and 33 crewmen. Altogether 607 black troops, nine white officers and all 33 crewmen died in the icy waters of the English Channel.

The commemoration of the sinking of SS Mendi offered us a unique opportunity to revisit, reinterpret and rewrite our complex history in a manner that is fully inclusive, respectful and educational. Secondly, the wreath-laying ceremony was to commemorate the SANLC men who served wholeheartedly at that time and left a sign of good hope for future generations. The presence of those present symbolised the commitment to remember to sacrifices made by people of different races in pursuit of freedom.

The majority of those who perished at sea are remembered at Hollybrook War Memorial in Southampton. Other men who died of the SS Mendi are buried elsewhere, nine at Milton Cemetery in Portsmouth, one at Hastings, one at Littlehampton, one at Wimeraux in France and two in Holland, one at Wassenaar and one at Bergen-op-Zoom. Some of the survivors drifted ashore in their lifeboats as far afield as Dorset.

The SANLC men on board the vessel came from a wide range of social backgrounds, but the majority were from Pondoland in the Eastern Cape. Most of them had never seen the sea before and very few could swim. A large number of men died on impact and others succumbed to hypothermia in the water. They sang and stamped their feet together in the death dance,
LEFT: Sentries saluting during the sounding of the last post at the Hollybrook War Memorial to commemorate the sinking of the SS Mendi.

BELOW: Hollybrook War Memorial bearing the names of the members of the SA Native Labour Corps who have no grave, but the sea, and who perished when their troopship, the SS Mendi, was accidentally rammed by the SS Daro.

The parade consisted of members of the SA Navy.

knowing their fate. Regardless of clan or tribe, these men faced death together as South Africans. This year on 17 February, the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) held a wreath-laying ceremony at Milton Cemetery in Portsmouth in honour of nine members of SANLC buried there. The bodies of these nine members were washed ashore off Portsmouth and are interred in the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Milton.

Milton Cemetery was opened in 1911 and contains war graves of both world wars. The 1914 to 1918 burials are mainly in plot 1. After the war a Cross of Sacrifice was erected on the northern side of the
LEFT: Minister in the Presidency, Mr Jeff Radebe, and the Princess Royal, Princess Anne, laying a wreath at the Hollybrook War Memorial in commemoration of the centenary of the sinking of the SS Mendi.

the men on the SS Mendi did a century ago."

V Adm Hlongwane added that most men who died on that ship were volunteers who came to assist the United Kingdom’s war effort. They died as committed South African soldiers who knew that going to war meant they faced the possibility of never returning home. We are very proud of them. The Chief of the SA Navy said: “It is very

BELOW: The Princess Royal, Princess Anne, speaking with the descendants of men who died in the sinking of the SS Mendi.

Chapel in honour of all the servicemen buried there. The graves of the 431 men and women are maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) which includes the nine men from the SANLC.

Later that day the South African Defence Advisor to the United Kingdom, Brig Gen Sithabiso Mahlobo, held the Armed Forces Day celebrations at Pyramid Centre in Portsmouth. During that event, the High Commissioner of South Africa in the United Kingdom, Mr Obed Mlaba, and the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Mr David Fuller, unveiled the memorial plaque commemorating the SS Mendi.

Brig Gen Mahlobo said that 1917 signified a watershed moment in the history of our Armed Forces and is a moment in time that reflects the spirit of and an embodiment of our Armed Forces. He said that when standing on the shores we can cast our eyes seaward to the spot that marked the tragic loss of our brothers and we can share a quiet moment and reflect on what it means to us today. The spirit of our SANDF is nurtured by their sacrifice.

He said: “The valour and bravery displayed by our brothers on board the SS Mendi that fateful morning signifies a spirit of no surrender and the highest feat of morale, a factor that would ever sustain us through all the decades as we marched to regain our lost freedoms.”

In remembering the SS Mendi the Chief of the SA Navy, V Adm Mosiwa Hlongwane, said that the centenary commemoration of the sinking of the SS Mendi was a poignant reminder of the valour of the men who perished during the disaster. V Adm Hlongwane said: “This event and memorial are a reminder of everyone’s common heritage as South Africans and of the values of courage, deeds, pride, and putting the needs of society above one’s own needs, even sacrificing one’s life for a greater cause as

The SA High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, Mr Obed Mlaba, and the Mayor of Portsmouth, Mr David Fuller, unveiling the memorial plaque in commemoration of the centenary of the sinking of the SS Mendi.
Commemoration of the SS Mendi

Heartening to know that a South African minister, the Rev Isaac Wauchope Dyoba, had emboldened the troops to accept their inevitable demise took it was rammed by the SS Daro.”

Another ceremony was held at Hollybrook War Memorial in Southampton on 20 February 2017 to remember members of the SANLC who have no grave but the sea. During the ceremony at Hollybrook War Memorial the Minister in the Presidency, Mr Jeff Radebe, said that the ceremony was held to honour and remember all South Africans who perished far away from their homes and loved ones.

On 21 February 2017 a special wreath-laying ceremony was held on board the SA Navy frigate, the SAS AMATOLA, at the site where the SS Mendi went down in the English Channel. This coincided with the nation’s Armed Forces Day marking the centenary of the sinking of the SS Mendi. Relatives of the victims sailed from Portsmouth on the SAS AMATOLA, accompanied by Royal Navy destroyer, HMS Dragon, to lay wreaths at the site. The shipwreck has recently been awarded World Heritage and War Grave status and an increasing number of memorials are testament to contemporary recognition for and acknowledgement of the sacrifices made, not only the SS Mendi, but the SANLC men. The shipwreck was discovered in 1974 by Mr Martin Woodward.

Speaking to SA Soldier, Mr Woodward said that while investigating various wrecks a few miles south of St Catherine’s Point on the seabed a large wreck appeared out of the gloom. He said in fact it was a large merchant vessel, inclined to starboard with partially rotted wooden decking and high quality fittings.

“I dived down to the Mendi many more times after finding it, but the tragic story and huge loss of life involved persuaded me that the wreck should be left in peace. The few artifacts that I recovered in those early dives are exhibited in my museum along with the story of the loss of the ship and personnel.”

Mr Tennyson Nyovani, the grandson of Ebenezer Nyovani, said that he was 12 years old when he learned about the sinking of the SS Mendi. He added that once as a student at Soweto’s Impumelelo Combined School in Emdeni he was practising his recitation of SEK Mqhayi’s Ukutshona kukaMendi (the sinking of the Mendi) in the kitchen, his mother suddenly turned to him and said: “My son, I want to tell you one thing; your grandfather was on that ship. He died”.

Mr Nyovani said it sparked his interest and he asked his elders about what his mother had told him and they confirmed it. Mr Nyovani said: “I am so grateful that the South African and British governments are doing this to acknowledge our grandfathers. It makes us proud that this history, which was not well known until now, which was only footnote to history, will now receive its proper attention and be taught as such in schools. He said that these men were non-combatants, but they were heroes. Mr Nyovani said: “They died as combatants would do; they died for their country and for their families and indeed for the world.”

There is a plaque at the Delville Wood Museum in France in honour of those who lost their lives when the SS Mendi sank. Furthermore, the SS Mendi Memorial in the Avalon Cemetery in Soweto was unveiled by Queen Elisabeth II of England to commemorate this tragic event. The SS Mendi is also honoured by the modern SA Navy, which has among its fleet the SAS ISAAC DYOBA, a warrior class fast attack craft, and the SAS MENDI, a valour class frigate.

The story of the SS Mendi is a pertinent reminder of the sacrifices made by our people to make the world safe for democracy.
Durban opens doors for Armed Forces Day celebrations

The Armed Forces Day activities were discussed during a media conference at Durban Light Infantry. The panel, fltr: the Deputy Chairperson of Economic Development and Planning, Councillor Nkosientle Madlala, the Chief Army Force Preparation, Maj Gen Luvuyo Nobanda, the Chief of the SA Army, Lt Gen Lindile Yam, the Head of Communications, Mr Siphiwe Dlamini, and the Fleet Command Director Force Preparation, R Adm (JG) Solomon Petersen.

By S Sgt Itumeleng Makhubela
Photo by L Cpl Jonathan Mogano

The recently held Armed Forces Day celebrations took place in Durban. The day was meant to commemorate the fallen soldiers of World War I, in particular the sinking of the SS Mendi.

The Head of Communications, Mr Siphiwe Dlamini, said the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) had previously hosted Armed Forces Day in Bloemfontein, Gauteng, Potchefstroom and Port Elizabeth. The events programme, which stretched over a week, comprised a range of activities.

The Chief of the SA Army, Lt Gen Lindile Yam, said the Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF, President Jacob Zuma, had proclaimed 21 February of each year to be observed and commemorated as Armed Force Day. Thus, the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Solly Shoke, authorised the hosting of the celebration in Durban.

Lt Gen Yam said the SANDF was looking forward to building on the success of the 2016 Armed Forces Day and would reach out to the people of KwaZulu-Natal and the country as a whole. He said: “The previous Armed Forces Day celebrations and the participation of locals had been a great success and as the SANDF, we are looking forward to building on the achievement 2016 event and reaching out to as many people as possible.

“We do all this with a clear understanding that the SANDF is the people’s national defence force that will stop at nothing to ensure citizens of the country identify with the military which has the responsibility for their safety.”

The Chief of the SA Army explained that the SANDF was hosting this national event in honour of the soldiers who lost their lives 100 years ago at the sinking of the SS Mendi. These are the 600 SA Native Labour Corps members who will be recognised for their bravery and selflessness.

He said: “Let me remind you that it is a century since the sinking of the SS Mendi and the death of our members in the cold waters of the English Channel. I was privileged at the time of my assignment outside the country to be at the 90th anniversary of the commemoration of the sinking of the SS Mendi. The remains of the SS Mendi are on the seabed. The wreckage is protected in terms of the law of the United Kingdom and is recognised as a shipwreck, hence is protected.”

The Deputy Chairperson of Economic Development and Planning, Councillor Nkosientle Madlala, said the municipality was ready for the event to which more people were expected to flock. He said there would be road closures and temporary inconvenience.

He said the eThekwini Municipality was pleased that the Armed Forces Day celebrations were to be hosted in Durban, especially for the sinking of the SS Mendi centenary commemorations. Councillor Madlala said the celebrations presented an opportunity to interact with the communities around the city.

Councillor Madlala said: “SS Mendi represents the courage of our mainly black South African soldiers and their fellow white officers who drowned when it sank. We celebrate the bravery and heroism of those aboard the SS Mendi.”
Armed Forces Day Fan Park surges as learners flock in

By S Sgt Itumeleng Makhubela
Photos by Mr Whitney Rasaka

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) welcomed a throng of learners and university students to the opening of the 2017 Armed Forces Day Fan Park. The crowd was entertained by a precision drill demonstration and music by military bands of the various Services.

The Fan Park was opened to the public to provide a live-link view of the events on the big screen. It exhibited the SANDF’s military equipment and included music performances by various military bands and precision drill sessions.

The field engineering bridge-laying section and the recruitment team interacted with the youth and gave them an opportunity to learn about the SANDF and its activities.

Officiating at the opening parade, Lt Gen Lindile Yam, the Chief of the SA Army, said he hoped the public would enjoy themselves at the Fan Park and declared the 2017 Armed Forces Day celebrations open.

Lt Gen Yam said: “I bid a hearty welcome to everyone attending today’s opening of the Fan Park. A special welcome to the learners and their teachers who were mobilised to come and experience what their armed forces are doing.”

Brig Gen Tsoshane Lekalakala, the Coordinator of the Fan Park, said her role was to arrange the activities. She said that they had developed the concept of the Fan Park as a way of supporting the 2017 Armed Forces Day celebrations.

She said: “We have the four Services and various Divisions exhibiting to create awareness of SANDF activities and career opportunities.”

Brig Gen Lekalakala added: “We had an engagement with the Provincial Department of Education and presented the Fan Park concept with the idea of inviting learners. This was mainly organised to expose learners and the public at large to opportunities in the SANDF.”

She said they were expecting a large number of people to flock to the Fan Park closer to the 21st of February. She said that she hoped the exhibitions and arena programmes would be of interest to the public.

Brig Gen Lekalakala said: “For the 2017 Armed Forces Day, which is organised by the SA Army, we are trying to build on previous such days and expose the SANDF to the people. The activities following the opening parade in the Fan Park Arena were of a high standard.”

The Chief of the SA National Defence Force, Gen Solly Shoke, inspecting the exhibition of the Special Forces.

The Chief of the SA National Defence Force, Gen Solly Shoke, with the Chief of the SA Army, Lt Gen Lindile Yam, stroll around the exhibitions after the opening of the Armed Forces Day celebrations at a Fan Park.
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Every time our four Services of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) get together for a joint military parade the emotions that are stirred up by the occasion are a reminder of the rebirth of the SANDF which represents our military diversity that all South Africans are proud to identify with.

SA Soldier met with Maj Gen Luvuyo Nobanda, General Officer Commanding SA Army Support Formation, who was the chief coordinator of the 2017 Armed Forces Day celebrations, as this year the SA Army was charged with the responsibility to plan, coordinate and oversee the execution of 2017 Armed Forces Day.

What makes the week-long Armed Forces Day celebrations a very special event?

Maj Gen Nobanda said that Armed Forces Day celebrations were always special as the South African public gets to witness what the SANDF is all about. “As part of social cohesion and nation building we want to tell the people from all sectors of our diverse population that this is their defence force. We want to instill a sense of pride and harness the proudly South African spirit and inform the public what the SANDF’s core business entails and to expand their understanding of the military’s role and purpose to society during peacetime”.

Briefly highlight some of the other supporting activities planned as part of the celebrations.

He said that this event was growing every year and this year coincided with the centenary commemoration of the sinking of the SS Mendi, where sons of South Africa perished in 1917, in the English Channel. Maj Gen Nobanda indicated that President Jacob Zuma, the Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF, would be the main functionary at the wreath-laying ceremony. He went on to say that our collective histories had been forged across the centuries by acts of bravery, supreme courage, valour and sacrifice. This is a legacy that speaks of the commonality that binds us together as South Africans.

Other activities included the Chief of the SANDF’s Charity Golf Day attended by stakeholders and captains of industry, which helps alleviate the plight of the children of our deceased soldiers through the SANDF Education Trust.

Maj Gen Nobanda added that there were displays and exhibitions at the Fan Park that showcased a multitude of capabilities and the state-of-the art hardware and technology user systems. He said in support of the Department of Defence Human Resources Strategy that sought to rejuvenate the SANDF that we have recruitment personnel to conscientise young people about a wide range of careers and opportunities available in the SANDF.

The Deputy Coordinator, Brig Gen Heinrich Stroebel, the Chief of Staff Army Support Formation, told SA Soldier that the annual celebrations had proven once again that our strength lay in togetherness. He said: “We want to bring an understanding to South Africans why the country needs a combat-ready SANDF.”

Brig Gen Stroebel noted that the Armed Forces Day weekend had been conducted on the basis of joint airborne and landward combat capability demonstrations, static displays and rescue operations integrating the four Services, namely the SA Army, the SA Air Force, the SA Navy and the SA Military Health Service.
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armed forces day

SA National Defence Force live capability demonstration

By Sgt Ally Rakoma

The broader community of eThekwini descended on New Beach area in Durban on Saturday morning during Armed Forces Day celebrations to witness the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) displaying its military might and combat power during a capability demonstration.

Capability demonstrations and static displays delighted the onlookers as they stared in amazement as fighter jets and combat helicopters flew by as gunfire and explosions rocked the beachfront. They witnessed landward, airborne and maritime combat-readiness manoeuvres and a mock rescue operation from the rooftop of the Gooderson Beach Hotel.

An asymmetric threat scenario was conducted, which included a demonstration of maritime, land and air defence manoeuvres utilised during anti-piracy operations, boat drills, interdiction operations, fighting terrorism, search and rescue operations utilising air support, aerial strikes, a Special Forces’ airborne and sea-landed rescue operation, simulated anti-ship missile launches, firing of mortars by the ground forces, fast-roping for rapid reaction, hostage release, as well as aerial, landward and maritime domain awareness.

The capability demonstration was followed by a night shooting display at the Blue Lagoon on the Monday evening. This involved the Multiple Rocket Launcher, tracer rounds and target flares of specialised weapon systems.
systems of the SA Army. Long range artillery pieces fired illumination shells, pyrotechnics and released flares that lit up the ocean.

In an interview with SA Soldier, Col William Dixon, Senior Staff Officer Airborne at the SA Army Infantry Formation, elaborated and said that capability demonstrations were integrated exercises that highlighted the importance of combat-readiness and the integration of the different components of the Special Forces, SA Army, SA Air Force, SA Navy and SA Military Health Service. Col Dixon added: “Thus we are increasing our level of readiness and find it of great strategic value as we conduct our combat firepower at the highest level.”

Col Dixon said that the focus of the exercise was on urban, airborne and maritime operations by all forces in line with our doctrine. He stated that a range of air defence capabilities would be deployed to provide air support for surface operations, whether on land or at sea, as well as evacuation, search and rescue activities. He said the exercise involved various aspects of operational, strategic, tactical and technical military actions.

What are the challenges in conducting an exercise of this nature?

Col Dixon replied that what complicates an exercise of this nature is that it cannot be conducted in a densely populated area where people might be endangered. The planning must also involve the local authorities and municipality, as the military has to comply with eThekwini’s civil safety standards. Secondly, the required logistics support elements and various Services members have to handle sensitive situations, which is a mammoth task. Planning takes about three months.

What is the benefit of conducting joint military exercises?

Col Dixon said that the benefit was that they enhanced the joint operational preparedness of the SANDF by demonstrating the interoperability of the joint force elements and improving multi-role mission capabilities as part of the force employment strategy. The demonstration is carried out exactly as in a real operation.

How many personnel are involved in this capability demonstration exercise?

Col Dixon said that over 400 personnel were involved, including SA Air Force pilots, air crew and members of 500 Squadron, Naval personnel, airborne and landward forces from 1 Parachute Battalion and 6 SA Infantry Battalion, as well as elements from the SA Army Engineers, Ammunition Corps and 7 Medical Battalion Group.
The Government’s National Development Plan places young people at the centre of South Africa’s Vision 2030 to provide equitable access to opportunities. This reality has already begun to take shape in the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) where thousands of young people enlist in the Military Skills Development System (MSDS).

This dynamic empowerment opportunity saw a large number of young people lined up for MSDS application forms at the recently held Armed Forces Day celebration week at the Fan Park in Durban.

The SA Soldier team met with Col Monica Mogotsi, Senior Staff Officer Marketing and Recruitment, who said that career exhibitions were meant to inform young people of the extensive range of career choices and job opportunities available within the SANDF, including scarce skills opportunities such as engineering and artisan skills.

Col Mogotsi said that all four Services and Divisions displayed their state-of-the-art military hardware and showcased their capabilities that made the event even more appealing and memorable to young people. She added: “The SANDF acknowledges its role in the social rejuvenation of young people as an imperative of the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans and the SANDF leadership. We host Grade 12 learners, particularly those doing Mathematics and Science, youth in higher education institutions, out-of-school youth and young graduates. We expose them to careers in various fields that they can consider to make valuable contributions to the development of our country.”

She explained that the SANDF continued to support broader government initiatives and has recruited more than 11 000 young people nationwide through the MSDS. She added that it was a positive developmental outcome.

Col Mogotsi noted that they had identified a matriculated youngster who had excelled in Mathematics and Physical Science in 2016 and who had achieved 100% in Grade 12 subjects. He was Siphesihle Jwara (18) from Inhlakanipho High School in KwaMashu. He would like to pursue a career in Aeronautical Engineering in the SA Air Force.

She emphasised the importance of Mathematics and Science and stressed that to access careers linked to scarce and critical skills, such as engineering and professional occupational opportunities in the SANDF, young people must have passed Mathematics and Physical Science.

Col Mogotsi gave this message to young people: “Our present era signals a time for hope and provides glorious possibilities for you. Today is better than yesterday, tomorrow will be even better than today; realise your dreams and aspirations because you are the nation’s soul.”

Curious young people who are eager to join the military queuing for the Military Skills Development System application forms.
Grade 12 learners were afforded the opportunity to board the submarine, the SAS QUEEN MODJADJI I.

Today the SANDF opened its doors to young South Africans for the greater good of our country. We also now know about the role of the military in a democratic society.”

Nontobeko Mkhaliophi (19) had this to say: “Thumbs up to the SANDF for its nationwide initiative to reach out to young people. This also promote social cohesion and nation building. My experience of visiting the SA Navy is a humbling one and my highlight was the submarine, the SAS QUEEN MODJADJI I. The SANDF has breathed new life in me and I am considering joining the SA Navy. I was informed that in the military both men and women pursue effective careers and have equal opportunities.”

Sfiso Ngcobo (17) reiterated that he learnt that in the military one is afforded an opportunity to choose training in specific areas and he was fascinated by the utilisation of modern technology.

Experiencing the magic of flying

During the Armed Forces Day celebrations, the SA Air Force gave a group of 22 Grade 12 learners from Burnwood Secondary School an opportunity to fly in a military aircraft - a Beechcraft King Air 200. This was to give them a real-time feeling of what it meant to be members of an air crew at Virginia Airport, north of Durban. Members of the SA Air Force explained the operations of the aircraft and the learners were really amazed.

The enthusiastic learners who were so excited and positive were presented with an opportunity they embraced and enjoyed tremendously. Accompanying them on this excursion were their teachers.

A REAL-TIME FEEL: A group of 22 Grade 12 learners from Burnwood Secondary School posed in front of the SA Air Force Beechcraft King Air 200 aircraft at Virginia Airport, North of Durban.

They expressed their admiration of the SA National Defence Force for adding a sense of belonging and being a force of great pride for the country.
The environment comprises the surroundings within which humans exist. This includes the land, water, atmosphere, micro-organisms, plant and animal life, and conditions that influence human health and well-being.

During the Armed Forces Day celebrations in Durban, the Military Integrated Environmental Management, Directorate Environmental Services under Logistics Division, as part of its outreach programme, conducted environmental education on recycling, waste management, pollution, environmental protection, as well as the associated health impacts.

Capt (SAN) Adri Liebenberg, Senior Staff Officer (SSO) Military Integrated Environmental Management: Logistics Division, when speaking to SA Soldier, said that environmental planning ensures that the planning and execution of military activities are carried out with due consideration of environmental factors and that any negative impact is minimised and managed proactively in compliance with environmental legislation.

She highlighted that any activity associated with military operations or exercises required mitigating measures to prevent a potential negative impact on the environment.

Asked about their role during the Armed Forces Day celebrations, she said they were there to give awareness talks to educate our soldiers and members of the public, mostly learners, about living in harmony with our natural resources, such as plants, water, soil, marine resources, recycling of waste generated through sorting different waste in separate receptacles, biodiversity and protection of the integrity of our environment.

Lt Col Hannes Potgieter, SO1 Military Integrated Environmental Management Policy and Control, added that in their exhibitions they focused on various areas, for example: protection of the natural environment, which includes animals, birds and plants. Secondly, the prevention of pollution and cleaning up should pollution happen, management of waste, efficient use of water and electricity and the prevention of environmental damage. He said that this was applicable to all people whether at home or in the work environment.

What happens after the static displays and live shooting capability demonstrations? Col Corrie Ferreira, SSO Ammunition, explained that in all the areas to be utilised for demonstrations they first conduct tests in order to ensure compliance with the safety regulatory framework.

Col Ferreira added that after testing the area is licensed to comply with the national explosive regulations to ensure there was no damage to property or facilities or injuries to people and animals. He said: “After each demonstration we sweep the area to make sure there are no shell casings or other debris left. If necessary, environmental impact assessments and rehabilitation measures are undertaken.”

The Chief Coordinator for Logistic Division (2017 Armed Forces Day), Brig Gen Tersia Jacobs, Director Engineering Support Services: Logistics Division, pointed out that the Department of Defence ensures the environmentally sustainable management of military activities and facilities in compliance with regulatory obligations in terms of the National Environmental Management Act.

Brig Gen Jacobs added that it was a significant step as it guided all efforts to ensure environmental protection, sustainability and environmental impact management.
The Department of Defence Hospitality Team serves Armed Forces Day participants

By S Sgt Itumeleng Makhubela
Photos by L Cpl Jonathan Mogano

The Department of Defence (DOD) Hospitality Team supported the 2017 Armed Forces Day by catering for the VIP functions and at the Fan Park and the Tent Camp. According to Lt Col Deon van der Nest from the Directorate Hospitality Services at the Logistics Support Formation they arrived two weeks prior to Armed Forces Day in Durban.

Lt Col Van der Nest, the Armed Forces Day Hospitality Service Centre Operations Commander, and about 115 members prepared meals for over 3 000 people at the Tent Camp, the VIP functions and the Fan Park.

He said: “This is the first time we are deploying a DOD Hospitality Team comprised of members from the different Services. We utilise our main equipment, viz the field kitchen, refrigerator, mobile stoves, containerised kitchen unit and gas burners.”

He explained that it required extra input to manage hospitality services for three venues and having to prepare meals for a significant number of people.

Lt Col Van der Nest said they run three shifts with 32 members on each shift they started work at 22:00. Later they prepared and served brunch and supper. He indicated that the combined hospitality team was doing a lot of work considering that the SA Navy members did not normally use field kitchens as they cooked in the ships’ galleys, while SA Air Force members did not normally prepare meals for substantial numbers.

He said: “Most challenges are logistical and we try to manage equipment usability, rations supplies and pantries the best way we can.”

LS Boitshoki Tshikedi from SAS WINGFIELD was one of the chefs of the DOD Hospitality Team who prepared meals for the SANDF members that participated in the 2017 Armed Forces Day celebrations.

She explained that the difference between a mess and a field kitchen is lack of equipment. She said that all the gadgets in the mess are operated by electricity, whereas it has to be done manually in a field kitchen. LS Tshikedi said: “This has been an interesting experience and an opportunity to learn since you get to meet people from the other Services.”

LS Boitshoki Tshikedi from SAS WINGFIELD explained that the difference between a mess and a field kitchen was lack of equipment.
The crowds visiting the Johannesburg Expo Centre in Nasrec were there over the Easter holidays to witness another thrilling display of the capability performances of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF). The Rand Show, one of the biggest commercial shows, is a platform used by the SANDF to conduct its public engagement programmes through various activities and exhibitions.

As is customary, the arena was a hub of activities, from pulsating capability demonstrations to simulations that last about 45 minutes each. The SANDF also exhibited equipment ranging across all four Services and covering a massive 10 000 sqm - filling Terrace 1 and Hall 10.

Officiating during the opening the Secretary for Defence, Dr Sam Gulube, said the Rand Show afforded the SANDF an opportunity to interact with all South Africans with the purpose of educating them about their huge responsibilities. Behind him stands R Adm (JG) Musa Nkomonde, the SA Navy Inspector General.

Dr Gulube indicated that the SANDF utilised the Rand Show as a platform to reach out to South Africans and showcase its capabilities and the many career opportunities for the country’s youth.

The Secretary for Defence said: “The Rand Show as the largest commercial show in the country provides plenty of family oriented entertainment and educational activities and, having been here for over six years, our soldiers’ hearts have been touched by the smiles, admiration and awe-inspired looks of children and adults, even those who visited previous installations of this kind. Our soldiers can recall the excitement that visitors to

The Secretary for Defence, Dr Sam Gulube, said the Rand Show affords the SA National Defence Force an opportunity to interact with all South Africans with the purpose of educating them about their huge responsibilities. Behind him stands R Adm (JG) Musa Nkomonde, the SA Navy Inspector General.

The Head of Communication of the Department of Defence, Mr Siphiwe Dlamini (right), presented an award certificate of appreciation to Mr Craig Newman, the Chief Executive Officer of the Johannesburg Expo Centre. Mr Newman said he appreciated the participation of the SA National Defence Force at the Rand Show and is looking forward to the partnership continuing.
the SANDF stalls have experienced. “We do this because it is important for the military to build a consensus on defence with the citizens of our country and make them understand what we do. It is after all the very same people that gave us the mandate to carry arms on their behalf and we thus remain accountable to them.”

Dr Gulube explained that some of the performances are a depiction of real-life situations where soldiers are involved in humanitarian efforts in aid of fellow South Africans in times of distress as well as in peace-enforcement and peace-building operations across the African continent.

He said the SANDF invited visitors to touch, look at and feel the country’s wide-ranging inventory of battle equipment.

Dr Gulube said: “Our being here as the constitutionally mandated armed forces of our democratic republic has results from the partnership we entered into with the Rand Show organisers. This partnership enables us to reach out to the people of South Africa and educate them about our role in safeguarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic.”

The Head of Communication of the Department of Defence, Mr Siphiwe Dlamini, believes the SANDF excelled with their performances and displays at the Rand Show. He said the Rand Show enabled the SANDF to demonstrate that it was a force ready and capable of defending the sovereignty of the country.

Mr Dlamini said people shared positive stories of the performances and displays during the Rand Show. He added: “We scanned the media outlets and there has been positive feedback. The planning that went into making sure that there was a successful presentation of the SANDF at the Rand Show is commendable.”
Induction of Judge President Dunstan Mlambo as Honorary Colonel for the Legal Satellite Office Polokwane

By Sgt Ally Rakoma
Photo by Pte Paul Mpangala

Academic institutions of higher education are known for conferring honorary degrees on esteemed leaders and prominent members of society who have distinguished themselves. The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) acknowledges such contributions by bestowing military honours on deserving members of society.

The Defence Legal Service Division, under the leadership of Maj Gen Bailey Mmono, Acting Chief Defence Legal Services, recently conferred an honorary degree on Judge President Dunstan Mlambo, Honorary Colonel (SA Army) at the Legal Satellite Office in Polokwane. The induction parade was held at the Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Building in Mbombela (Mpumalanga).

Maj Gen Mmono in his address expressed a hearty and warm welcome on Col Mlambo on behalf of the SANDF, the military community and in particular, the Defence Legal Services Division. He explained that during 2012 the former Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, had appointed Judge President Mlambo as an additional Chairperson of the Court of Military Appeals.

Col Dunstan Mlambo was born on 18 September 1959 at Bushbuckridge. He completed his law degree at the University of the North (Turfloop) in 1983 and worked as a legal assistant in the Department of Justice of the now defunct Ka-Ngwane Government until 1986. In 1987 he started his professional career by serving in the fellowship programme of the Legal Resources Centre in Johannesburg. From January 1988 to December 1989 he was in private practice at Bowman, Gilfillan, Hayman, Godfrey, Inc.

In January 1993 he started his own law firm called Mlambo and Modise Attorneys. Col Mlambo was accepted as a Labour Disputes Facilitator and Mediator by the Independent Mediation Service of South Africa, a position he held from 1991 to 1997.

He also served as a Judge Moderator on the National Bar Examinations Board of South Africa from 2003 to 2009, on the board of Directors of Legal Aid SA in 2001 and was elevated to the Chair in 2002, a position he still holds. In addition, he served as the Chairperson of Africa Legal Aid in Accra (Ghana). He is also Chairperson of the Court of Military Appeals and a member of the Judicial Oversight Committee in the Office of the Chief Justice and is Judge President of the North and South Gauteng High Courts.

On his appointment, Col Mlambo said that he accepted the honour and was conscious of the added responsibilities that come with it.

The Chief of Staff of the SANDF, Lt Gen Vusi Masando, welcomed the new Honorary Colonel of Legsato Polokwane and said that the occasion also served to create a link between the military and broader society.
The Chief of Joint Operations acceptance of command parade

By AB Samuel Ramonyai, an Intern at SA Soldier
Photo by Mr Witney Rasaka

“Whereas the post of the Chief of Joint Operations Division has been entrusted to you with effect from 1 January 2017, you are hereby charged to serve your country in this post with loyalty, courage, dignity, and honour; to discharge your duties and responsibilities with zeal and diligence and to set a good example to those placed under your command,” said the Chief of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), Gen Solly Shoke.

General Shoke recently hosted the Chief of Joint Operations acceptance of command parade in Thaba Tshwane. The aim of the event was to confirm and hand over the command of the Joint Operations Division to Lt Gen Barney Hlatshwayo.

Accepting the responsibility entrusted to him by the Chief of the SANDF, Lt Gen Hlatshwayo said it is his privilege and honour to be entrusted with the reins of responsibility. He assured Gen Shoke that he would give his support and cooperation to the country and the Joint Operations Division.

Lt Gen Hlatshwayo remarked that he was excited to be leading the division to greater heights. He is convinced that by working together with his stakeholders the division will be able to meet whatever challenges it might face. Their collective efforts will ensure that it delivers quality service to the people.

Addressing the members on parade, Lt Gen Hlatshwayo acknowledged and thanked his predecessors for their services to the Department of Defence (DOD) as a whole. He also thanked his wife and children for always supporting and backing him in his military career.

He highlighted that he had had a long and fruitful career in the Joint Operations Division and in various other posts. He remarked that he was grateful for the exposure he had had the division and the experience he gained over the years. It was his intention to use this to ensure that the division operated effectively and efficiently under his command.

Lt Gen Hlatshwayo said: “The ability to conduct successful operations is the ultimate reason for the existence of military forces. War places the greatest demand on military forces. The conduct of military operations is demanding in physical, psychological, mental and moral terms and that is why these forces are trained and equipped for that. Therefore the way the SANDF is organised, structured, trained and equipped must be taken into account.”

He commented that what was needed was a cohesive joint military force to conduct a campaign against a potent and capable military adversary. Crises can occur unexpectedly in military operations. Where a military force is required, it must be deployed rapidly, appropriately and proportional to the situation.

Lt Gen Hlatshwayo stated that the division had been involved in a number of operations, both internally and externally, since its inception. The big external ones are the Peace Support Operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and until recently in the Sudan, as well as the maritime operation in the Mozambican Channel.

There have been various humanitarian support operations in our neighbouring states and other African countries. These operations were conducted in line with our international agreements whose mandates emanate from the Constitution.

In conclusion, he said that his wish was to see the division work together as a team to ensure that they fulfilled their mandate, but also not to forget to enjoy work and to respect each other.

Lt Gen Hlatshwayo had the opportunity to be trained by dedicated and highly qualified instructors both within and outside South Africa. He was exposed to various training environments and was utilised as a staff officer. He played a leading role in the integration of all the forces into the SANDF and then had the privilege of commanding them.

The Chief of the SA National Defence Force, Gen Solly Shoke (left) hands over the sword of command to the Chief of Joint Operations Division, Lt Gen Barney Hlatshwayo, while Brig Gen Philip Mavhungu, Chief of Staff of Joint Operational Headquarters, looks on.
The outgoing Inspector General of the Department of Defence (IG DOD), Maj Gen Mxolisi Petane, recently handed over the reins to his successor, Maj Gen Tsepo Buhali during a Change of Office Parade at Swartkop Air Force Museum in Thaba Tshwane. (A Change of Command Parade is a formal military tradition of handing over a unit from one commanding officer to another.)

The Chaplain General, Brig Gen (Rev) Andrew Jamangile, opened the event with Scripture reading from Philippians 4:11-13. In his sermon he mentioned that Maj Gen Petane was a noble contestant through God’s strength. Addressing Maj Gen Tsepo Buhali, the Chaplain General said: “You are the new recipient of this position, take what God offers you. Be encouraged and say: I can do all things through God who strengthens me”.

When addressing the attendees, the outgoing IG DOD praised the Chiefs of the Services for attending the event. Maj Gen Petane acknowledged their presence and said he was grateful for the invitation. He explained that the post he held required much time reading, writing and signing critical documents on a daily basis. He advised his successor to be prepared to read, write and sign scores of documents. However, Maj Gen Petane assured Maj Gen Buhali that there would always be aid from colleagues whenever difficulties arose.

Maj Gen Petane took charge of the Defence Inspectorate Division on 1 January 2005, and remained in that position until 31 March 2017.

The incoming Inspector General

Maj Gen Buhali was born on 11 July 1966 at Standerton where he did his early schooling and proceeded from there to Emndeni Secondary School in Soweto where he completed his matric in 1985. He became involved in the underground structure of the African National Congress (ANC) and Umkhonto we Sizwe and took part in various MK operations in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vaal areas.

In 1988 he went into exile where he received formal military training and served the ANC in various capacities. While in exile he underwent pilot training and qualified as a pilot at the East African Civil Aviation School in Soroti, Uganda.

He was integrated into the SA Air Force in June 1994 and has served there in various posts until 2006. From 2007 to 30 March 2017 he served at the Military Police Division where he was appointed Provost Marshal General on 1 November 2010. A position he held until his appointment as Inspector General of the Department of Defence.
Bidding farewell to retiring Generals

By AB Samuel Ramonyai, an Intern at SA Soldier
Photo by Mr Witney Rasaka

Saying goodbye to colleagues and other soldiers is never easy. The Chief of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), Gen Solly Shoke, thought it befitting to host a farewell function in honour of Maj Gen Happy Bhembe, Maj Gen Lungile Dlulane, Maj Gen Bailey Mmono and Maj Gen Mxolisi Petane recently at Logistics Support Formation Combined Club.

The aim of the function was to honour and acknowledge the remarkable contributions made to the Department of Defence (DOD) by four Generals who had been pillars of strength to the SANDF and the country over the past 41 years.

The Chief of the SANDF took the opportunity to acknowledge the contributions made by these colleagues. Gen Shoke spoke of their contributions over the past years. These were a foundation for building a solid SANDF fully capable of defending the country’s territorial integrity and its people.

Gen Shoke said: “You have served the people of this country by defending it and its people. As you are going to rest, after a long journey in the SANDF, keep yourselves healthy because we still need you. Prepare yourselves to live for long; a way out of the SANDF should not be a way to plan your funerals. We wish you good health and a long life.”

He added: “In the military we always do what other people cannot do, so it is rare to find civilians doing what we do. Consequently you deserve special treatment. In other countries when a General retires he gets a house, a car, a personal assistant and a driver because what we do, not everybody can do.”

The Chief of SANDF said that they must draw strength from the fact that whatever they have done, they have done for the people of this country and for the love of this country. Their efforts, their dedication and their work have been noticed. He wished them well and to be strong, as they will always be part of the SANDF.

In their farewell speeches Maj Gen Bhembe, Maj Gen Dlulane, Maj Gen Mmono and Maj Gen Petane gave one common answer: “If I had another chance, I would come back”.

They have shown that even if they needed to come back, it would not be possible as they needed to give new blood a chance as well. They emphasised that they were moving out to afford new blood an opportunity to close the gap and come with new ideas to take the SANDF to new heights.

Their words suggest that in the military success has been the output of joint effort and commitment to working as a team.

The message they have left to the incoming group is that they need to continue to promote the SANDF brand and this should not only be for Generals. It should be the responsibility of every member of the force to create a good image of this organisation and always to seek to carry it forward.

The Chief of the SA National Defence Force, Gen Solly Shoke (4th from left), Maj Gen Mxolisi Petane (2nd from left), Maj Gen Lungile Dlulane (3rd from left), Maj Gen Bailey Mmono (3rd from right) and Maj Gen Happy Bhembe (2nd from right) retiring Generals at the farewell function.
SA Navy opens its gates to the public

By Mr Lufuno Netshirembe
Photos by Pte Paul Mpangala

The SA Navy Festival was recently held in Simon’s Town. During this yearly event the SA Navy opens its gates to the public. The festival affords the public an opportunity to see what the SA Navy is all about. The festival’s invited guests, and all and sundry, are given access to the boats, ships and submarines. Not only does the festival provide good entertainment value but also boosts the local Simon’s Town economy. Small, emerging and well established businesses had stalls where they sold food and other products. The festival also served as a good recruitment tool for youth wishing to join the SA Navy, as they are given a rare preview of what it means to be a sailor (soldier).

Addressing the media at the opening of the 2017 SA Navy Festival, the Chief of the SA Navy, V Adm Mosiwa Hlongwane, lamented the passing on of three SA Navy soldiers during the Armed Forces Day celebrations in Durban. He said: “Let me take a moment to pay tribute to the lives lost last month in Durban when three of our young sailors, Leading Seaman Amrithal Ramdin, Able Seaman Francois Mundel and Seaman Henro ter Borg, along with a contractor of Riordor, gave their lives trying to save two civilian contractors of the Department of Public Works.” He indicated that the SA Navy would not forget the efforts of Sub Lieutenant Sello Ndimande who drowned during the event.

Parading during the opening of the SA Navy Festival by the Isivunguvungu Band, one of the components that comprises the Isivunguvungu Foundation for Youth.

TS Woltemade cadets display their marching skills during the opening procession of the SA Navy Festival.

A gun-run display in the main arena. Among the skills displayed was disassembling and assembling a cannon in a few seconds, which requires team-work, strength and agility.
The SA Navy “pulled all the stops” to entertain the public in a gun-run demonstration, a fire-fighting demonstration, a precision drill demonstration, cannonade, Silver Falcons precision aircraft manoeuvring, protection Force tactical display, an anti-piracy display and tug-boat excursions.

A memorial ceremony, which signalled the end of the SA Navy Festival, was held at Fleet Command Headquarters where the Chief of the SA Navy laid a wreath with his command cadre in remembrance of the fallen SS Mendi soldiers who paid the ultimate price when the SS Darro emitted no signal and rammed the SS Mendi, which sank in no more than 20 minutes killing all black privates from the SA Native Labour Corps (SANLC).

Citing from the poem by Laurence Binyon: “For the fallen”, the Chief of the SA Navy emphasised the last line of stanza four: “We will remember them.”

The public was given an opportunity to board a tug-boat for a short excursion which was the highlight for most people.

The Chief of the SA Navy did not shy away from being realistic about some challenges in the SA Navy in general. V Adm Hlongwane said: “Despite the challenges we are faced with, we, the SA Navy are doing our part because the people of South Africa have placed their trust in us. We therefore work harder and smarter and do more with less.”

V Adm Hlongwane indicated that the SA Navy was doing all it could and had made recognisable strides in dealing with those challenges. He highlighted the successes that the SA Navy has enjoyed and indicated that in addition to the successful participation in various exercises the SAS AMATOLA had been deployed on Exercise KETANE where she took part in the SS Mendi centenary commemoration in the United Kingdom and then went on to complete Exercise GOODHOPE VII in Germany.

The SA Navy supports various Cape Town and Simon’s Town community projects aimed at keeping the youth off the streets where drug abuse and gangsterism are rife. It is during the SA Navy Festival that these youths perform their acts.

One of the projects is the Isivunguvungu Foundation for Youth, a non-profit organisation affiliated with the SA Navy. Part of this Foundation is the Isivunguvungu Band. This music project was originally started in 1996 by the SA Navy Band, after negotiations with the SA Navy Band Director, Cdr Mike Oldman, who joined Isivunguvungu in 2005. This SA Navy Band music academy participates annually in the opening procession of the SA Navy Festival.

The SA Navy Fleet Motorcyclist Association (SAN FMA) was formed in 2009 with the permission of the Chief of the SA Navy. The Association was founded by uniformed and non-uniformed members of the SA Navy (currently serving or retired) and their immediate family members. The SAN FMA participates in the opening procession of the SA Navy Festival every year. The main purpose of the SAN FMA is to raise funds for various charity organisations.

Cadets taking part in the SA Navy Festival include the Delft, Uitsig Generation and Seaview Cadets. These cadet groups are supported by the SA Navy as part of its social responsibility and community outreach programme. Every year these cadets display their skills during the procession.

Strelitzia Youth Development from Mitchell’s Plain was established in 2010. The establishment mainly concentrates on the development of youth faced with different social ills. Strelitzia Youth Development participates in marching competitions tutored part-time by members of the SA Navy. Each year they take pride in displaying their marching skills during the opening procession of the SA Navy Festival.

PO Vill Govender, Chief Sonar Operator, guiding the public on board the frigate, the SAS MENDI.
South African Sea Cadets enjoy the annual SA Navy camp

Dr Buhle Khanyile, a Social Psychologist and life coach with a passion for working with young adults, addressed the Sea Cadets on the first evening of the annual camp and challenged them to make use of their youth wisely. This included the friends they chose, experiences they sought and balancing their responsibilities. This interactive session set the tone for the camp annually hosted by the SA Navy for Sea Cadets from the various coastal cities and towns, including Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. The units included TS Lanherne (Port Elizabeth), TS Kromme (St Francis Bay), TS Knysna (Knysna), TS Outeniqua (Mossel Bay) and TS Woltemade (Cape Town).

The camp was hosted by SAS SIMONSBERG and was a highlight for the young men and women aged 13 to 18, especially those interested in a career in the SA Navy. The 80 Sea Cadets were divided into mess decks and divisions representing the four Valour Class Frigates upon their arrival and their daily tasks evolutions resulted in their making new friends and interacting with Cadets from other units. They were exposed to naval life along with its discipline, which included preparing mess decks, heads and bathrooms for rounds as well as the fitness level required. This gave the Sea Cadets a taste of life on a ship. The qualified SA Navy Instructors provided theoretical and practical training in seamanship, firefighting, first aid, sailing and local guard duties while the visit to the SA Naval Museum, the “beach party” at Diving School and a tug ride in False Bay provided much fun and excitement.

The latter was the highlight as the Cadets had an opportunity to see and feel what happens at sea.

The theoretical and practical knowledge gained will be taken back to their home units and shared with their shipmates to raise the level of instruction. The evening programme included a lecture on naval customs and traditions and two DVDs depicting the tragedy of the troopship SS Mendi along with the centenary commemorations in 2017. Added to this were some motivational films to reinforce what they had and learnt.

The highlight of the evening programme was a “top secret mystery exercise” in which the four divisions/frigates competed. Each team had to collect and arrange a set of prescribed objectives, some of which reinforced their training. It tested their leadership, communication, planning, creativity and execution skills.

All the divisions were rewarded with Coke, popcorn and the DVD of their choice on the final night. Thank you to Coca-Cola for sponsoring their product to enhance the experience.

All the Sea Cadets wrote individual letters of thanks and appreciation to the SA Navy and the Officer Commanding SAS SIMONSBERG, Capt (SAN) Judy Rustin-Patrick. These were presented later. Special mention was made of the great food, friendly galley staff, lessons and skills learned, including learning to speak confidently in public, skilled instructors as well as a desire to join the SA Navy upon leaving school.

The Sea Cadets greatly appreciated the certificate which was presented to each one at the end of the camp by the Officer Commanding SAS SIMONSBERG. These will be treasured for years to come and will be shown to family and friends.
The 2017 Armed Forces Golf Day was one activity among others that led up to the Armed Forces Day Parade. The Military Command Council and various other sponsors participated in the Golf Day held at the Durban Golf Club.

The Chief of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), Gen Solly Shoke, said the Golf Day was meant to fund the SANDF Education Trust and they had decided to organise it just before the Armed Forces Day Parade.

Gen Shoke said that the SANDF Education Trust ensured that dependants of soldiers were not left in despair when these soldiers passed away. He added: “Most of you should be familiar with how we decided to start the SANDF Educational Trust. We believe that if you want to empower someone provide them with the opportunity to study. Currently there is a learner who has obtained seven distinctions and whose education is funded by the Trust. Maj Gen Roy Andersen, the Chief of Defence Reserves, has arranged that his tertiary education be sponsored by Aspen, the pharmaceutical company. So whatever amount of money you provide, it will go a long way.”

He said: “This is a wonderful day and a build-up to the Armed Forces Day celebrations. This also happens to be the centenary of the sinking of the SS Mendi in the English Channel.” Gen Shoke added that it was important for SANDF members and fellow South Africans to acknowledge those who paid the supreme sacrifice in the service of the country.

The Chief of the SANDF said: “We would like to honour them in a manner befitting the occasion. I have also requested the organisers of the event to invite surviving veterans of World War II and their families to come and celebrate the day with us.”

Gen Shoke said 600 members of the SA Native Labour Corps died during the sinking of the SS Mendi and one of them happened to be the grandfather to the Chaplain General of the SANDF, Brig Gen (Rev) Andrew Jamangile.
Meet the National Coach of SA National Defence Force Road Running

By Lt Col Thérèse Doman,
SO1 Visits and Events:
Defence Corporate Communication
Photo by Mr Witney Rasaka

“t is important to know that at the end of the day it is not the medals you remember. What you remember is the process – that of learning about yourself, challenging yourself, sharing experiences with other people, the honesty the training demands – those are things nobody can take away from you, whether you finish twelfth or you are an Olympic Champion” - Silken Laumann, Canadian Olympian.

S Sgt Koos Skhalo Apane’s athletics achievements during the time he was still at school were never recognised. Only when he started working during the South African Forces Institute (SAFI) was his running talent noticed at a fun run. After this he joined the Pretoria Military Marathon Club.

Members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) who have an interest in athletics and who would like to meet the National Coach of Road Running, need no introduction to S Sgt Apane. Koos was born on 8 August 1966 at Cullinan. He attended Primary, Secondary and High school in Hammanskraal. His passion for running started at an early age as a youngster while he was still attending school. At school he excelled in middle distances, i.e. 800m, 1 500m and 5 000m and frequently came first in the aforementioned distances during school athletics.

In 1988, while S Sgt Apane was employed at the SAFI Sports Shop, a friend, Funny Mokgatholela, introduced him to road running for the first time. He excelled in middle distances, such as 10km and 21.1km. This is where his journey in road running initially started.

S Sgt Apane needed job security and therefore showed an interest in joining the former South African Defence Force in 1992. He served in the former South African Medical Service (later known as the SA Military Health Service [SAMHS]) and qualified as an Operational Medical Orderly. In 1992 he became a member of the Pretoria Military Marathon Club. From 1992 to 2002 he served at the sickbay in Thaba Tshwane as an Operational Medical Orderly. While there he was selected to represent the SANDF at the third World Military Games in Croatia. He participated in the 42.2km Marathon and achieved overall 11th position in the world and 1st overall of the South Africans who participated.

Brig Gen Jansen, now retired, saw his potential and nominated S Sgt Apane for the Physical Training Instructor (PTI) Course, which he successfully completed. S Sgt Apane was then staffed as a PTI at the Joint Physical Training, Sport and Recreation Centre based at the SAMHS Academy in Thaba Tshwane. Neels Gerber of Tukkies observed S Sgt Apane’s achievements and potential during road races. He later approached him and offered to coach him. S Sgt Apane was coached by Neels Gerber from 2004 to 2010. During this period, S Sgt Apane achieved his personal best (PB) times during the following races:

- Wonderboom Junction 10km race (31.16min)
- Cartoria 21.1km race (01:06min)
- Bronkhorstspruit 32km race (01:45min)
- Athletics South Africa 42.2km Championships (02:17min)
- Two Oceans Marathon 56km race (03:35min)
- Comrades Marathon 89km (06:53min)

The achievements and training programme followed by S Sgt Apane sparked interest among fellow Pretoria Military Marathon Club (PMMC) members. The PMMC nominated him to attend the Level 2 Coaching Course in Cape Town, after which he was appointed as the official coach of the PMMC. During 2012, S Sgt Apane was appointed as the National Coach of SANDF Road Running and was given the opportunity to attend the National Coaching Course Level 3.

S Sgt Koos Apane is proud of the medals and trophies he has earned.
which included combined road, track and field as well as cross-country. It is worth mentioning that the following athletes excelled under his coaching and training programmes:

- S Sgt Colyn Witbooi, who was selected for the provincial team during 2016 at the SA Cross-Country Championships in 10km and 21.1km
- Cpl Kgomotso Mabena, who was nominated to represent Gauteng Province at the SA Cross-Country Championships in 2015
- Chaplain Jan Essau, who managed an overall first position at the Two Oceans 21.1km half marathon in 2004

Coach Apane is very proud of the athletes he coaches and their achievements. The SANDF athletes from Gauteng Province excelled at various championships in all categories ranging from seniors to masters. The SANDF team participated in the 10km Athletics South Africa (ASA) Championships during 2014, and they managed to achieve a third place in the veterans’ category and a first place in the masters’ category. During 2015 the SANDF team participated in the ASA Cross-Country Championships and the team managed to achieve a second place in the veterans’ category and a second place in the masters’ categories.

S Sgt Apane believes in leading by example and he is of the opinion that the performance of his athletes is a reflection of his coaching abilities. Running is the greatest passion in his life, and he is proud of his athletes’ achievements.

Sgt Ally Rakoma

A strong bond of unity among SA National Defence Force (SANDF) members and learners from various schools around the eThekwini Municipality added a sense of belonging and togetherness during the sporting activities which were taking place throughout the week to celebrate Armed Forces Day at the Hoy Park Sports Clinic and Technical Sport Village in Durban.

Sporting activities included rugby, soccer, cricket, volleyball, netball, obstacle tests, running with tyres, tug-of-war and the practical R4 rifle electronic learning aiming correction system (ELAC shooting simulator).

Sport highlights cultural diversity within communities. Participating in sport not only teaches youngsters to play, but also helps to keep them off the streets and reduces their exposure to potential dangers such as alcohol, drug abuse and other social ills.

SA Soldier interviewed Lt Col Gerrit Jansen van Rensburg from Directorate Physical Training, Sport and Recreation. He said: “Sport signals a message of pride and a feeling of shared identity that glue us together as a nation. Young boys and girls from different schools participated in various sporting codes and coaching clinics guided by SANDF members who also briefed them on each sporting code and the safety aspect.”

Highlighting the importance of sport, he said that on an individual level sport stimulates physical and mental activity and character-building. He also mentioned that the level of attendance was very good and there had been almost 4 000 participants. It was like a family event and drew hundreds of participants from different age groups, including adults. “It is part of the SANDF’s outreach programme to promote optimal social, physical, mental and emotional well-being thereby instilling a culture of mass participation and healthy living.”

Some members of the SANDF who were accompanying the learners to the various SANDF activities and sporting events had this to say:

Sgt Paballo Khasi said: “Through the Armed Forces Day celebrations the SANDF is directly engaged with diverse young people. Via the celebrations the SANDF was able to reach more young people of KwaZulu-Natal. They are eager to join the military, they ask us questions and we give them prompt responses.”

Cpl Hlengiwe Basi said: “The SANDF encourages patriotism and is investing much effort to encourage young people to join the military and is creating opportunities for horizon-broadening experiences through the Military Skills Development System.”

Pte Vuyokazi Mnguni said: “The atmosphere and activities taking place here are very exciting for the young people of KwaZulu-Natal. They are empowered through exposure to our military and I believe this is a starting point for a positive developmental outcome.”

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On Sunday, prior to Armed Forces Day, the Chaplain General, Brig Gen (Rev) Andrew Jamangile, together with his team of Chaplains held a well-attended thanksgiving inter-faith service at the Durban City Hall.

The event was held in support of the 2017 Armed Forces Day to commemorate the fallen from the sinking of troopship SS Mendi in the English Channel in 1917 and to honour all South Africans who made the supreme sacrifice for their country in all wars and conflicts on the home front or in faraway lands on peace missions.

A Sermon was given and prayers said, including inspirational words of wisdom. Members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) were told that life happens to all of us and God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, self-discipline and courage. Representatives from other faith groups expressed their gratitude and admiration to the SANDF and its leadership.

The Deputy Moderator of the Full Gospel Church, Rev Isaac Mufamadi, said that life is a divine gift that must be lived, enjoyed and embraced with courage. He said that a soldier must have a heart that resists discouragement and shared the Scriptures from Jeremiah 29:11, Jeremiah 1:5, Galatian 6:2 and Romans 18:10.

In concluding the service, Brig Gen (Rev) Jamangile expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all those who attended the service and elaborated by saying that the military was one of the noblest callings. He stressed that soldiers were a significant group in society and encouraged members to stand firm in the Lord.
Bidding farewell to an extraordinary employee

By Ms Maria Kekana, an Intern at the Chief Directorate Human Resources Development

Colleagues, family and friends of Dr (Col) Mxolisi Xabanisa gathered recently to wish him farewell on his retirement. The guests gave an account of his character and what it had been like working with him. He was thanked for his contribution to their personal and professional development.

Dr (Col) Xabanisa was described as someone who was helpful, patient, a teacher, a guider, more than a soldier, and with an inviting character. He has been an inspiration to others, particularly in education, with many looking up to him. Brig Gen (Dr) A. van der Walt, his supervisor and a career colleague, praised Dr (Col) Xabanisa as a scholar and advised attendees that should they need guidance in terms of their educational aspirations, they should not hesitate to approach him.

A former colleague mentioned how he got to know about him through his writing before working with him. Dr (Col) Xabanisa was lauded as being very strict and particular when it came to writing and education in general. His work is known in the SA National Defence Force and he had two of his articles published in the SA Soldier magazine, namely “Pedagogy vs Andragogy” and “Determine what leadership behaviour you exhibit” in 2005 and 2003 respectively. One article highlighted the differences between teaching a child and teaching an adult and the other introduces a standard by which leaders can assess their leadership styles on the basis of their behaviour.

Addressing the guests, Dr (Col) Xabanisa once said: “I am thankful to my family - including extended family, in-laws, colleagues and friends, to people that are very special to me and those who contributed to who I am, such as Brig Gen (Ret) Claire Bless”. He enthusiastically encouraged everyone to read and share their knowledge with others.

After school he decided to embark on a journey to undergo military training in different countries for a period of more than 20 years. Col (Dr) Xabanisa studied in exile.

Upon his return from exile he was integrated into the SANDF. He mentioned the highlights while working for the SANDF, which include being in the first batch that opened up the Service Corps, and being there from 1995 to 2000. For a few months he worked with Brig Gen Bless at the “Respect for Cultural Diversity” of the Civic Education Centre of Excellence. He continued to work at the College of Educational Technology (COLET) from 2000 to 2006. COLET was one of the first institutions to be SAQA accredited in the SANDF. He worked as a senior researcher and instructional system designer at COLET and, together with his colleagues, worked hard for COLET to be SAQA accredited.

He stated: “The transformation at COLET enabled me to become the first high-ranked black officer (as a Lt Col) to work there.” He was awarded a certificate titled “Approachable” while at COLET. He was then posted to Joint Ops (J Ops) as Senior Staff Officer (SSO) Strategy and Planning for two years, from 2006 and 2007.

Dr (Col) Xabanisa also worked as a senior lecturer at the SA National Defence College (SANDC) from 2008 to 2014. He was armed with research skills at the highest level and was glad to have been able to make a meaningful contribution to such an organisation as the SANDF. Brig Gen Thembelani Xundu, one of the speakers, mentioned that Dr (Col) Xabanisa, a dedicated and highly disciplined and trained cadre of Apla, had contributed immensely to the careers of many of the SANDF generals. Col (Ret) Gqadu stated that while Dr (Col) Xabanisa had been a force in the promotion of some of the officers and generals in the SANDF he himself stayed for more than ten years in one rank (Lt Col and Col). In his final post in the SANDF, from 2015 to 2016, he was SSO Military Professional Education, Training and Development.

He said: “I was also able to go back and visit them again, especially when I was a Directing Staff at the SANDC.” Dr (Col) Xabanisa visited more than 25 countries on six continents in his military career.

He holds a PhD in Curriculum Instructional Design and Development (completed at the University of Pretoria, SA, in 2010), an MA in Higher Education Supervision and Administration, completed at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), USA, in 1994, an MA in Adult Education (UDC), USA, in 1992 and a BA in Public Administration and Law (Juniata College, USA in 1989) among other qualifications.

After many years of service the time has now arrived for the father of three has to retire. When asked about his feelings about retirement, he indicated that he still had the desire to work for the SANDF even though he had to leave. After retirement he wishes to embark on trying to find ways to improve the lives of South Africans and contribute to their livelihood in a different capacity. His colleagues will surely miss his humbleness and great sense of humour. He says, in agreement with Prof Renfrew Christie, “A professional soldier should be able to read, write, and publish”. Col (Dr) Xabanisa stated: “Professional soldiers should strive to be disciplined and analytical and have faith in each other and in God.” He wished everyone and the organisation well and prayed that God might continue to protect and bless everyone.

Ftr: Brig Gen Thembelani Xundu, Col Edwin Gqadu and Dr (Col) Mxolisi Xabanisa.
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