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The Shamrock



The official newsletter of the SA Irish Regiment

Welcome back

Our Guys (and Gals) are back!



Our deployment Company returned from their Operation Corona deployment and we are very proud to have them back.



From the Editor

From: The Editor

As a Regiment we are overjoyed as the safe return of our deployment Company from their deployment. We are proud of their accomplishments, proud of their discipline and successes. Faugh a Ballagh!

We are also very proud of our Shooting Team. Our restructured team finished at number 22 in the gold cup shooting competition held in March. Now, that might not sound impressive, but it was such a huge improvement over past results that our team won the most improved team award. GO TEAM.

Again we thank everyone for their contributions to this newsletter. Remember: Contributions towards "The Shamrock" can also be emailed to irish.regiment@gmail.com

Remember: Newsletters can be downloaded from the internet. Go to www.sairish.webs.com to download Regimental newsletters and copies of the latest SA Soldier magazines in PDF format. You can also listen to the Regimental march on our website.

Faugh a Ballagh!
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From the OC's Desk

By: Lt Col. W.W. Kinghorn, MMM, DWD

The first half of the year has flown by with many successes and triumphs noted for the Regiment.

Firstly I need to congratulate our newly formed shooting team that successfully competed against some of the best regiments in the SANDF in the Gold Cup competition in March. They ended in 22nd place.

To any outsider this might sound unimpressive, but keeping in mind that this is a newly formed team that finished ahead of former Gold Cup champions, it comes as no surprise that they were awarded the trophy for the most improved team at the competition. We have high hopes for more

improvement during next year's competition. With hard work and determination I have no doubt that this is a goal that is achievable. We are proud of you guys, keep up the good work.

We are just as proud of welcoming back our deployment Company after their successful deployment to the border area. Their successes, discipline and determination under sometimes difficult condition have given us big reason to be proud of them.

Unfortunately together with good news, sometimes there also comes bad news. As a Regiment we were saddened to hear of the passing of several of our dedicated NCO's in a very short space of time. They will be remembered by their Regimental family. Faugh a Ballagh. Rest in peace brothers.

As we prepare for further challenges and commitments for 2017, we are determined to ensure that we build on the lessons learned from the past to successfully complete any task given to us by our Commander-in-Chief.

Faugh a Ballagh!
By: Lt Col. W.W. Kinghorn.
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Regimental Events

By: The Editor

All dates for are still subject to change. Please contact your company commander for more details on Regimental events.

- 17 March** – St. Patrick's Day
- 23 April** – Unit shooting exercise.
- 28 May** – Unit shooting exercise.
- 18 June** - Unit shooting exercise.
- 16 July** – Unit shooting exercise.
- 26 & 27 August** – Planned Combined Barberton parade.
- 17 September** – Unit shooting exercise.
- 22 October** - Unit shooting exercise.
- 12 November** - Freedom Regiments Parade
- 13 November** - JHB Remembrance Parade – JHB Cenotaph
- 27 November** - Sidi Rezegh Commemoration Parade (Date to be confirmed)

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Did you know?

By: The editor

During the Korean conflict, on October 25, 1950, with General Douglas MacArthur's United Nations forces closing in on a victorious end to the Korean War, approximately 300 000 Chinese troops began pouring across the border. Striking the spread out UN troops with overwhelming force, they compelled the UN forces to retreat all across the front.

UN units near the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir included the US 1st Marine Division and elements of the US 7th Infantry Division. Commencing on November 26, the UN forces endured extreme cold and severe weather as well as overwhelming Chinese forces. Over the next three days the 1st Marine Division successfully defended their positions at Yudam-ni and Hagaru-ri against Chinese human wave assaults. The Marines conducted a fighting retreat and finally reached Hungnam on December 11.

While not a victory in the classic sense, the withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir is revered as a high point in the history of the US Marine Corps. In the fighting, the Marines and other UN troops effectively destroyed or crippled seven Chinese divisions which attempted to block their withdrawal. Marine losses in the campaign numbered 836 killed and 12,000 wounded. Most of the latter were frostbite injuries inflicted by the severe cold and winter weather. US Army losses numbered around 2,000 killed and 1,000 wounded. Precise casualties for the Chinese are not known but are estimated at 35,000 killed. Upon reaching Hungnam, the veterans of Chosin Reservoir were evacuated as part of the large amphibious operation to rescue UN troops from north-eastern Korea. To this day the Marines involved on the battle are referred to as the "Chosin few".

IRISH SALUTE!
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From the Pipes and Drums.

By: *The Pipe Major and P&D Admin*
S A Irish Regiment Pipes & Drums
2016 Calendar of Events:

March 2016

17/03/2016 : St Paddy's Day (St Patrick's Day) TBC

April 2016

09/04/2016 : Vaal Highland Gathering
 16/04/2016 : Lyttelton Manor Highland Gathering (Regional)
 30/04/2016 : South Coast Highland Gathering (Championship)

May 2016

14/05/2016 : Jeppe Gathering (Regional)
 22/05/2016 : (Prov) Jan Smuts Parade
 28/05/2016 : De La Salle Highland Gathering (Regional)

June 2016

11/06/2016 : Cornwall Hill Highland Gathering (Regional)
 18/06/2016 : Pretoria Boys Highland Gathering (Championship)

July 2016

16/07/2016 : Springbok Vasbyt
 16/07/2016 : St Benedict's Highland Gathering (Regional Final)
 17/07/2016 : (Prov) Delville Wood
 30/07/2016 : Benoni Highland Gathering (Championship Final and SA Champs)

August 2016

21/08/2016 : (Prov) MAG Picnic – War Museum
 26/27/28/08/2016 : Barberton

November 2016

05/11/2016 : (Prov) Dickie Fritz Shell Hole Edenvale
 11/11/2016 : Shadow March (evening parade, at the War Museum)
 13/11/2016 : Mayors Parade
 27/11/2016 : Sidi Rezegh – SAIR Regiment HQ

Faugh a Ballagh!

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News from the Regiment – Our guys and gals are back.

Written by the Capt. G.W. Knott

Alpha Company SAIR deployment on Operation Corona KZN Sep 2015 to Mar 2016.

Alpha Company was attached to DLI as Bravo Coy for the deployment. Combat readiness training took place at Boshhoek Training Area in Ladysmith in August. Here the company's training was tested and evaluated. The Company's Log was also checked for completeness which we had about 95% by the end of the evaluation after our unit's Log department managed to send up a lot of our short items.

We moved from Boshhoek training area to DLI HQ in Durban for a well-deserved R & R break. Our advance team left after a few days to the mission area. Our HQ was the Pongola Military base. Here the advance team had to do orientation of our area of responsibility (AoR). Bravo Coy's AoR was from Belgrade to our west right across to Golela Port of Entry (POE) on our Eastern border which is a border fence distance of 126 Kms. All in all there was 10 TB's including the 2 x Platoon HQ's at Mshololo and Mbaloba. Other elements of the advance team were members who received shotgun training and all the drivers had to be tested in this week.

The rest of the main force arrived on the 7 th September where we were given induction training as a Company for this week. Platoon 2 & 3 was sent out to take over their respective TB's on the line from Durban Regiment members and Platoon 1 was then detached to take over the TB's on the Mozambique border line. Platoon 1 was also later to be attached to Alpha Company DLI as a Company plus. Bravo Company had the privilege of operating on the Swaziland border line being thinly stretched with just 2 Platoons.

Our first success came in from Platoon 3 on 121215B SEP 15 when a taxi at Sitilo was stopped and 2 x UDP's

(Undocumented Persons) were found in the taxi. The MP's were called out and they then handed the 2 UDP's over to SAPS. The next success was from Platoon 2 on 121800B SEP 15 who arrested 4 UDP's that were also drunk at Belgrade 1. At Belgrade 2 crossing point on 140630B SEP 15 a 17 year old male high school pupil was arrested for possession of dagga. At the various crossing points along the border line only school pupils and serious medical emergency persons were allowed to cross into RSA without a passport. The school pupils were all listed on a register supplied by the various schools in the districts.

The day to day running of the Company consisted of morning SITREPs to Bn HQ by 07H00, Roll call was twice a day at 07H30 and 19H00. Daily Bn co-ordinating meetings followed by Coy co-ordinating meetings if needed. Every Monday was a meeting with SAPS. Platoon rotations worked on a 2 weeks out and 1 week in the base. Town pass was controlled by 2 town passes per member per week. This did not go down well with a lot of the members but we stuck to our guns and it soon became accepted as the norm. Weekly visits to all the TB's on the border line was done by both the COY Commander and CSM. The water bunker was also sent out twice a week to replenish the TB's. The general morale and discipline of the members was very good. Any ill-discipline was promptly sorted out and we were strict but fair in these dealings.

While Gauteng was experiencing load shedding we were experiencing water shedding at night due to the severe drought that was being experienced in the Northern KZN region. Day time temperatures were peaking in the lower 40's and this made operations in the heat of the day very unbearable. Strong winds and rain from Swaziland caused the Platoon HQ at Mshololo to be blown flat and caused damage to the tents on 3 occasions in late November.

The Company was also frequently requested to supply members to do joint operations with the SAPS and KZN Traffic Department. In these joint operations the members were to act as a protection element during roadblocks, shebeen raiding and cordon and search

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operations. Many fines and arrests were made during these operations and the members were happy to do these ops as it broke the normal routine.

December was a busy month starting with Goodwill Parcel handouts by the relevant sponsors and J TAC HQ KZN OC Col Mbeki. A formal visit by General Mandela to the border line TB's by Oryx and then rotation of Platoon 2 to Ndumo base on the Mozambique border. Christmas time and New Years' eve celebrations were held in the Company lines for as many members as possible. The food and mess decorations prepared by our chefs and fatigue team were of a high standard and well enjoyed by all.

January and February months saw a decrease in illegal crossings and fewer arrests of UDP's. There were still dagga related arrests and confiscations. Our biggest success came on 24 January the SAPS requested a reaction force to act as a protection element to SAPS members who were being threatened by a crowd at Sivule area as they were trying to save 2 suspected criminals from mob justice. When the reaction force arrived on the scene the crowd calmed down and the suspect's house was searched where we found our largest success of stolen goods being: 7 x 10 kg bags of dagga, 20 x 20 Lt drums of diesel, 1 x lawn mower, 1 x generator, 4 x goats and a SANDF uniform.

February saw the beginning of the end of our deployment which entailed a lot of administration finalizing as well as Log stocktake in order to get ready for handing and taking over to the incoming Battalion being 1 SA Tank Regt. On 20 Feb the Company experienced a serious incident. Sergeant Ntsintsi of Platoon 1 and 4 of his members were called by the Intelligence members to support them in an urgent dagga related arrest.

Unfortunately on their way down Sivule hill the driver had to swerve to avoid children in the road and thus caused the Samil 20 to roll over. All 5 members sustained injuries ranging from slight to very serious.



The accident scene

Municipal and Military medics arrived on the scene to stabilize and transport the members to the nearest hospital. Today, all of those members have fully recovered.

On 1 March saw the Company start the handing and taking over process as well as the reuniting of Platoon 2 back with the rest of the Company from Ndumo. Our Morale was dealt a blow when we found out that there were no busses arranged to take us to our home unit in Johannesburg and that we were to leave for Durban on 7 March instead. 9 March the Company boarded the busses for JHB at DLI unit. Once all kit and weapons were handed back at SAIR stores the deployment was at last over and the Company went home to enjoy their well-earned deployment leave.

Final value of the total successes achieved for the whole Bn = R7,812,928-00.

Many lessons were learnt during this deployment and the Company is going to be better prepared and enjoy a lot of successes in future upcoming Ops Corona deployments.

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Our Company Soccer Team

News from the Regiment – Our Gold Cup Shooting team.

Written by the Editor

SA Army Combat Shooting Competition 2016 was held in Bloemfontein from 7 to 11 March.

This year's SA Army Combat Shooting Competition was once again organised as a joint venture between the Reserve Force Council (RFC) and the SA Army under the guidance of the SA Army Reserve Shooting Competition. The week shoot saw over 1,100 members participating either in the shoot itself or support functions. 360 Reserve Force (ResF) and 460 Regular Force (RegF) members competed in their won categories whilst also competing against each other for the White Horse Trophy - the Best SA Army shooting team.

This culminated in the annual shoot off between the best two RegF and ResF as well as visiting international teams. This year Belgium sent two teams and Lesotho participated again.

This Gold Cup goes to the best shooting team in the Reserve Force. This solid 18 carat gold trophy was donated by the Robertson gold mining industry in 1922. The Gold Cup stands about 450mm high, weighing 54 troy ounces which is 1,681.3 grams.

This year the SA Irish team surprised both friend and fellow competitors when they finished in 23rd place. thereby earning the award for the most improved team.

Our team now has long range goals of finishing in the top ten for next year's Gold Cup Trophy competition.

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News from the SANDF – More money for military veterans department.

Written by defenceWeb

The Department of Military Veterans plans to greatly roll out benefits to military veterans over the next couple of years, with a focus on health care, housing and skills development.

The Department has been allocate R597.6 million in the 2016/17 budget period, R634.7 million for 2017/18 and R673.4 million for 2018/19, according to the latest government budget document.

In 2012/13 there were just 200 “deserving military veterans with access to health care services” but this had grown to 13 923 in 2015/16, with plans to increase to 16 000 in 2018/19.

“The department will also provide ongoing health care support to 16 000 veterans and their dependants by referring them to the appropriate health institutions, reflected in the 28.3 per cent increase in spending in the Health and Wellbeing Support subprogramme over the medium term [by 2018/19]. The subprogramme has a budget of R218.2 million over the medium term,” the veterans budget document reads.

There were only two “deserving military veterans with military housing” in 2013/14, but in the next three budget terms the Department plans to build 1 000 houses a year for military veterans, at a cost of R436.7 million.

Providing training and skills development to military veterans is an important part of the Department's mandate of providing socioeconomic support to military veterans and their dependents. 1 270 veterans were given access to skills and training in 2013/14, rising to 2 450 the following year. The Department plans to increase this to 5 000 in 2018/19.

R83.6 million has been allocated for bursaries over the medium term. “A memorandum of understanding with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme

and the Department of Basic Education will assist the department to provide access to education opportunities, such as the schooling of children up to grade 12, and tertiary education,” according to the military veterans budget.

It is the department's goal that 5 000 eligible military veterans and their dependants across the country are provided with ongoing education support by 2018/19.

Partnering with private institutions is also high on the Department's agenda, with the number of partnerships a year set to grow from 13 in 2013/14 to 60 by 2018/19.

“Training and skills development, such as driver training programmes, will be delivered to 12 500 veterans and their dependants over the medium term, and the department will form partnerships with 180 private sector companies and organs of state to facilitate employment for veterans. R317.3 million has been budgeted for training and skills development in the Empowerment and Stakeholder Management programme. Training and skills development focus on short courses and hard skills offered through accredited service providers.”

Regarding memorials, the Department plans to erect four in 2015/16; two the following year, another two in 2017/18 and three in 2018/19.

“Recognising the role that military veterans played in the democratisation of South Africa...over the medium term, the Department of Military Veterans will focus on delivering benefits to veterans and their dependants, including access to health care, housing, and education opportunities. The bulk of the department's budget over this period therefore goes to the Socio Economic Support and Empowerment and Stakeholder Management programmes. The aim of the benefits is to empower veterans in a range of ways,” the veterans department noted.

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News from the SANDF – Denel offering firepower versions of its Casspir 2000.

Written by defenceWeb

Denel Mechem is offering its latest generation Casspir 2000 mine-protected vehicle in a variety of firepower versions, such as mortar, anti-tank and anti-aircraft.

The company said it is now able to produce a tailor-made Casspir according to the requirements of the client. Different modules are fitted onto the standard platform system and then modified according to client specifications. The new variants can serve as platforms for 81 mm mortar systems, anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. The Plofadder mine-clearing system, developed by Rheinmetall Denel Munitions, can also be fitted onto the Casspir hull.

“This significantly extends the range and versatility of the Casspir which can now be used as a reconnaissance vehicle, a troop carrier or as a fire-support vehicle equipped with mortars, anti-aircraft or anti-tank weaponry,” Mechem said.

The General Manager of Mechem, Ashley Williams, said his company is responding to opportunities in defence markets where clients need a single platform with a number of variants to meet operational requirements. “Our clients can now use the same family of vehicles that offer superior levels of protection and mobility, but in different roles,” Williams said, creating spares and logistics savings.

The conventional Casspir can be adapted to serve as a command-and-control vehicle, a field ambulance or a recovery vehicle. All variants are fitted with run-flat tyres and are available in 6X6 or 4X4 format and with a choice of manual or automatic transmission.

Williams says the latest generation Casspir is designed to withstand the blast of 14 kg of explosives under each wheel. It has a cruising speed of up to

40 kph per hours in most off-road conditions and a range of up to 800 km on a standard fuel tank.

Since it first came off the production line in 1979, the Casspir has been produced in different generations. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is a major user of the Casspir, in many variants. For instance, the South African Army uses the Casspir Mk II as a recoilless rifle platform, designed to equip the Motorised Infantry Battalions with an anti-tank capability as part of the Support Company anti-tank structure. Another variant is the Casspir 81 mm mortar carrier, used for indirect fire support. A few Casspir Mk III series were also manufactured in such variants for the South African Army. The SANDF does not use the Casspir NG2000 series and only has Mk IIs and Mk IIIs.

Denel Mechem recently unveiled the Casspir Eland heavy duty recovery vehicle based on the Casspir NG2000 series. The Eland is in 6X6 configuration and with its monocoque design it is larger and heavier than the 4X4 wheel variant, the Casspir Gemsbok. Two of these recovery variants have recently been ordered by the Angolan Defence Force.

Mechem is also busy with the production of the Casspir 6X6 Stallion

– a recovery vehicle based on a truck chassis with a protected cab and the ability to perform heavy duty recovery duties. The Casspir Stallion is also available in 4X4 and 8X8 variants providing clients a range of recovery vehicles – from light to heavy duty – based on the same vehicle model.

In May last year Mechem unveiled the new ‘Blesbok’ cargo truck version of the Casspir, which was in production for Angola. In 2013 Angola ordered 45 Casspir New Generation 2000B vehicles comprising 30 armoured personnel carriers, four fire support vehicles (able to carry two 23 mm cannons or a recoilless rifle), two command vehicles, two recovery vehicles, two ambulances, three logistics vehicles, a water tanker and a diesel tanker.

Earlier this month Mechem revealed that ten Casspirs were shipped to Sudan as the first part of a new long-term agreement with the United Nations that will see Mechem supply mine-protected vehicles for its peacekeeping operations in Africa. The ten Casspirs were shipped to Sudan in December 2015. These vehicles were equipped with special mine roller attachments to be used in the clearance of land mines and unexploded ordnance.

The long-term agreement also includes



the future supply of five Casspir Stallion recovery vehicles while a further order for five more vehicles is in the planning stage as well as orders for other special Casspir variants.

The Casspir is widely used for demining or peace-keeping operations and has been used from Afghanistan to Mozambique by the United Nations, the South African National Defence Force, police services and private security companies around the globe.

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News from the SANDF – Yam takes over as new Chief of SA Army.

Written by Guy Martin

Lieutenant General Lindile Yam on Friday, 11 March, ceremonially took over as the new Chief of the South African Army from Lieutenant General Vusi Masondo during a Change of Command parade at the SA Army College in Pretoria.

Masondo, with effect from 1 February, is Chief of Corporate Staff after being at the helm of the SA Army for more than four years after being appointed on 1 October 2011 and charged with the responsibility to command the largest military component of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Masondo was appointed Army Chief following a stint as force preparation chief for the Army. Prior to that he had been, among others, personal staff officer (PSO) to former South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Chief, General Sphiwe Nyanda; Director: Human Resource Maintenance and Senior Staff Officer: Personnel.

Masondo, looking back on his career as Chief of the Army, said that the Army has been involved in many peace support operations, but the highlight was being part of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which successfully dealt with M23 rebels. He said this came shortly after the Battle of Bangui in the Central African Republic and the M23 rebels had threatened that

they would perform a repeat of that battle.

With regard to future peacekeeping missions, Masondo said that Commander in Chief of the SANDF, President Jacob Zuma, may require the SANDF to send observers to Burundi.

Yam said he was already busy implementing Masondo’s short term plan for the Army and that one of his main priorities was making sure its prime mission equipment is in good condition and available to meet taskings, and that wherever the Army is deployed it does its job well.

With regard to the 2014 Defence Review, Yam said it was difficult to arrest the decline when Treasury has reduced the defence budget, but the Army is working on milestone one of the Defence Review within the budget it has been allocated.

In his Change of Command speech, Masondo said he had dedicated the last four years to making sure that the Army had never fallen short of its mandate to the people of South Africa, and had never had a situation where the Army fell short of its mandate.

“During my tenure, we managed to bolster our military equipment inventory with new prime mission equipment to enable our army and to arrest equipment decline; an undertaking that I believe Lt Gen Yam will continue to champion, emboldened by the now in effect Defence Review Report. We are indeed in good hands and with everyone putting their shoulders to the wheel, progress is inevitable,” Masondo said.

“We have come a very long and challenging way and, have recently celebrated the operational readiness of our force contribution to the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) force in September last year. That milestone meant that the SA Army now has combat-ready forces equipped with suitable hardware waiting to be rapidly deployed by the Chief of the SANDF and by extension Chief Joint Operations anywhere on the African continent to repress instability and prevent the loss of life that has

characterized most conflicts on the continent.

“To Lt Gen Yam... I have no reason to question nor fault your ability to lead this pride of lions. As the outgoing Chief of the Army, I am glad to note that this organization is in good hands. There is no doubt in my mind that you are adequately empowered after having distinguished yourself over the years as a reliable patriot in all of the positions in which you were deployed.”

Yam was the General Officer Commanding SA Army Infantry Formation from 1 November 2011. He joined Umkhonto weSizwe in 1981 where he receive training in Angola and gained experienced as a combat action platoon commander in the Eastern Front.

In 1982, he was appointed as platoon commander and drill instructor. In 1984, he was wounded in action and spent time recuperating in Yugoslavia. During 1987, he completed the urban and rural warfare training and company commanders’ course in East Germany.

On his return to Angola, he served as a company and base battalion commander in Caculama, a company commander in the Northern Front, an instructor in tactics (battle handling) at the MK Training Centre Richard Barney Molokoane in Culcalama as well as a company commander and a battalion commander.

He opened a base in Tanzania from where he was sent to infiltrate South Africa and where he later became the Regional Commander of the Border Region.

In 1993/1994, Yam completed the Junior Command and Staff Course in Ghana and, in 1994 he was integrated into the SANDF with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He was the first member of the Non-statutory Forces to become an officer commanding when he was appointed as the Officer Commanding of 13 SA Infantry Battalion in November 1994. In 1997, he was appointed as the Staff Officer Grade 1 Operations in Group 8, East London. In 1998, he completed the Senior Command and Staff Course and

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in 2000, the Executive National Security Programme (ENSP). He also completed a course in Defence Management at the University of the Witwatersrand.

In 2000, he was appointed as the Officer Commanding Group 6 in Port Elizabeth with 22 military units under his command.

In November 2001, he was appointed as the Director Physical Training, Sport and Recreation (D PTSR) and as the South Africa representative of the International Military Sports Council, serving with representatives of 130 countries. He was then appointed as the Chief of the Eastern and Southern African Liaison Office and as an additional member of the CISM Board of Directors as part of the International Strategy and Planning Committee. He was also co-opted as South Africa's Mega Games Security Committee member before he was sent to the United Kingdom (UK) Royal College of Defence Studies in 1995 for the Global Security Course. He remained in the UK to become the Defence, Army and Naval Advisor for South Africa to the UK and Sweden (no-resident) from 2006 to 2009. He has a Damelin College Diploma in Personnel and Training Management as well as an MA Degree (Kings College) from the University of London.

Lieutenant General Yam returned to South Africa and was appointed as the Commandant of the Military Academy in Saldanha. On 1 November 2011, he was appointed as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the SA Army Infantry Formation and promoted to the rank of Major General.

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News from the SANDF – SA Army budget up

Written by Guy Martin

The South African Army is the single largest component of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) and receives the lion's share of the overall defence budget as the major contributor to the various taskings assigned to the South African military machine by its political masters.

This sees its budget for the 2016/17 financial year increased by just under half a billion Rand to R15 651 438 000 from the R15 202 376 000 voted to it by National Treasury in the previous financial year.

Overall the landward defence programme accounts for 34% of the Department of Defence's total medium term budget.

One of the biggest increases (14.9%) will come into effect in the 2017/18 financial year and the medium term, for the new Badger infantry combat vehicle; development of a mobile water provisioning system as well as a mass field feeding system and establishing a new command centre for anti-aircraft capability.

Over the medium term about 6 000 regular and Reserve Force members will be trained annually for deployment in the border protection tasking Operation Corona. Two more companies will be added to the overall deployment in the 2016/17 financial year, bringing to 15 the number deployed on South Africa's landward borders with Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. A total of R3.6 billion has been budgeted for border protection in the medium term.

A total of R4.6 billion has been budgeted for peace support operations. This figure was finalised before South Africa decided to withdraw from the hybrid AU/UN peace support mission in Sudan. Expectations are changes to this portion of the defence budget will be addressed by Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula during her budget vote in the National Assembly.

Other peace support missions South Africa has committed to are the UN's in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), where Lieutenant General Derrick Mgwebi recently took over as force commander, and two general military assistance operations in the DRC (advising and assisting that country's armed forces) and Mozambique (support in counter piracy operations).

The SA Army's infantry capability is the single largest item of expenditure at R6 208 million followed by its support capability at R4 424 million.

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News from the SANDF – SANDF Education Trust awards 68 bursaries for 2016 academic year.

Written by defenceWeb

The trustees of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Education Trust have upped the number of bursaries for this year to 68 – nine more than was originally envisaged in January.

Trust chairman Major General Roy Andersen said the total value of bursaries issued for the current academic year is R1 171 560.

The largest number of bursaries has been awarded to primary school scholars – 32 – with 21 secondary school scholars also earning bursaries and 14 going to students studying at tertiary institutions.

As part of its ongoing fundraising efforts the Education Trust went "to sea" late last year hosting a formal luncheon aboard SAS Isandlwana in Simon's Town. This was the first fundraiser staged outside Gauteng since the Trust was established in October 2013.

According to the Trust "a considerable amount of money" was raised during the luncheon. Pledges were received from African Methodist, Bongani Ramphele, Cedar Creek, City of Cape Town, Compass Travel, Chief of the SANDF, Damen Shipyards, Dr and Mrs Gulube, HCI Foundation, Iqabane Art Gallery, Irvin Khoza, Kunene Brothers, Marine & General Engineering, Nautic South Africa, PAM African Energy, Riodor Marine, S Viljoen, Southern African Shipyards, Statfin Holdings, TDK Trust, The Parring Family, Vice Admiral Hlongwane and Virgin Active.

The Trust was established by SANDF Chief, General Solly Shoke, to secure the primary, secondary and tertiary education of dependents of SANDF

members killed or seriously wounded during the execution of their duties after April 27, 1994.

The 2016 bursaries bring to just on R3 million the value of educational assistance provided by the Trust since 2013.

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News from the SANDF – SAAF confirms reactivation of 10 Squadron.

Written by Guy Martin

The South African Air Force (SAAF) has confirmed that it is reactivating 10 Squadron, which used to operate Scout and Seeker unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), indicating it could ultimately operate the Seeker 400 UAVs that Denel Dynamics is delivering to a “local customer”.

“The SAAF is intending to reactivate 10 Squadron which was closed more than a decade ago,” Brigadier General Xolani Mabanga at Defence Corporate Communications said in response to a defenceWeb enquiry.

However, he denied that the SAAF is currently operating the Seeker 400, which Denel in its last annual report said was in production for “our local customer”.

“The SAAF did not receive nor does it operate the Seeker 400. There are plans for discussions between Denel Dynamic and the SAAF on training UAV operations,” Mabanga said.

It has been speculated by many, such as defence expert Helmoed Romer Heitman, that the local customer is the Defence Intelligence division and that “there is still some indecision whether the Air Force will resume UAV operations on behalf of Defence Intelligence, or whether the latter will choose to establish an operating capability themselves, perhaps contracting Denel Dynamics to actually operate the aircraft.”

Denel Dynamics has been reluctant to comment on who exactly the local client is or how many have been

ordered, but the order is most likely for four to six systems.

Armcor in its last annual report, covering the period up to 31 March 2015, said that final acceptance of the Seeker 400 was planned for the second half of 2015. It is believed that Seekers have been delivered to the South African National Defence Force after receiving military certification.

10 Squadron was the only SA Air Force squadron that operated UAVs and was based at Potchefstroom. It was reactivated in 1986 to fly and maintain the Kentron Seeker I. The squadron’s primary task was to provide reconnaissance and weapons delivery guidance. Orders were given for the squadron to cease flying in November 1990 and indications are it disbanded in March the following year. The first Seekers were then handed back to Kentron who operated them on behalf of the SAAF until they were declared excess to requirements.

In addition to the locally produced Seeker platforms, 10 Squadron also operated Israeli Aircraft Industries (IAI) Scout UAVs. They were deployed across southern Africa from Mozambique to Angola doing surveillance and artillery spotting work over hostile airspace.

The Seeker 400 builds on the successful technology developed by Denel Dynamics for its Seeker II and Seeker 200, which has been operational in the United Arab Emirates. It is a larger aircraft, has a cruising speed of 150 km/h and can carry two payloads weighting a combined 100 kg. The payloads can be interchanged in the field, allowing the Seeker to be tailored for different tactical situations.

The Seeker 400 can be used for a wide range of military and civilian missions, including maritime surveillance and disaster reconnaissance. It has up to 16 hours endurance at altitudes of up to 18 000 ft. At typical operating altitudes of between 4 500 and 9 000 ft, it is not visible to people on the ground and is effectively inaudible.

The UAV’s line-of-sight range is 250 km from its ground station, but this can

be doubled by using a forward ground station with deployed forces. This involves the UAV being launched from a convenient airfield and flown to the area of operations, where it is handed-over to the forward ground station to control during the actual mission.

Regarding weapons, the Seeker 400 has been designed to carry four small Impi-S weapon, a derivative of the 10 km range laser-guided Mokopa anti-tank missile. When carrying weapons the Seeker 400 will be known as the Snyper. Even with four missiles it will still be able to carry a 40 payload, typically the Goshawk II HD from Airbus DS Optronics.

The Seeker 400’s forerunner, the Seeker II, has been successfully deployed by international customers in five countries overseas. The Seeker II has being further upgraded by Denel Dynamics, rebranded as the Seeker 200, and offered to clients who want a smaller air vehicle or do not require the greater endurance and dual payload capability offered by the latest Seeker 400 version.

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News from the SANDF – SANDF shows its mettle at the Rand Show.

Written by Guy Martin

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) clearly demonstrated its position as one of the lead exhibitors at the 2016 Rand Show with an explosive opening ceremony on Friday, 25 March, featuring jets, helicopters and armoured vehicles.

Secretary for Defence, Dr Sam Gulube, officially declared the Rand Show open on Friday morning, saying that in light of the tough economic challenges the country is facing, along with high unemployment, the SANDF is proud to participate in the Rand Show in order to make the public aware of job opportunities within the South African military, such as pilots, doctors and engineers. He added that the show allows the SANDF to raise awareness regarding what it does.

The Shamrock

“Through the Rand Show we as the SANDF are able to educate and raise public awareness about our activities in the area of defence. This includes informing the public about careers in the SANDF and showcasing the capabilities of the national defence force,” he said.

Gulube emphasised that the SANDF is not just about war and defending South Africa, but that it also plays an important role in contributing to economic development, assists rural communities through activities such as bridge building and provides search and rescue and humanitarian relief services.

The opening ceremony on 25 March began with a flypast by two AgustaWestland A109 helicopters carrying South African flags. Once the show was officially opened, the SANDF demonstrated how it dealt with an ambush situation on a peace support operation, with a mock firefight being carried out. This included two Ratels firing blanks from their 90 mm guns, a new addition to the show.

The impressive capability demonstration involved elements from the South African Army and Air Force, with Gecko vehicles, mortars and troops being airlifted into the arena while a Rooivalk attack helicopter and a couple of Hawks, supported by an A109 Light Utility Helicopter, provided aerial support. An Oryx helicopter simulated evacuating a wound soldier via winch, while an A109 performed a similar extraction. Vehicles and troops were then airlifted out of the arena once the demonstration had concluded.

Following the capability demonstration, the Artillery Formation fired a round from its G1 gun. This was followed by members of 44 Parachute Regiment parachuting into the gusty arena. The crowd was then entertained by the SA Army’s Kroonstad band, a precision drill by the SA Navy, a special infantry motorcycle display, the SA Military Health Services band, a sword drill by the Navy, a dog capability demonstration, SA Navy band performance, Army Infantry school precision drill, military police anti-hijack demonstration and massed bands formation.

The Silver Falcons aerobatic display team also performed for crowds at the Rand Show grounds at Nasrec over the weekend. The Flying Lions aerobatic team are scheduled to perform on the closing weekend of the show (2 and 3 April).

Apart from its capability demonstrations, the SANDF has prominent static displays and a career expo, with all four arms of service exhibiting a wide variety of equipment. This includes a Ratel ZT3, Gecko rapid deployment vehicle, Badger infantry combat vehicle, radar systems, deployable bridge, Rooivalk combat support helicopter, Hornet special forces vehicle, boats, Olifant main battle tank, Rooikat armoured vehicle, G5 and G6 artillery, missiles, torpedoes, small arms, elements of a field hospital and emergency medical, disaster and search and rescue equipment.

This massive exhibition area takes up 10 000 square metres of space. “The SANDF used 10 hectares of space at the Johannesburg Expo Centre efficiently with edutainment exhibition stalls and capability demonstrations by all four arms of service,” according to Rendani Khashane of the Defence Reserves Division.

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News from the SANDF – South Africa’s commitment to AU/UN mission in Sudan is over.

Written by Kim Helfrich

The South African commitment to peacekeeping in Sudan is officially over when 8 SA Infantry Battalion started its gradual withdrawal on Friday 15 April.

There has been a South African military presence in the east African country since July 2004 under the Operation Cordite codename that started with the deployment of a handful of staff officers and observers to AMIS, the then African Union Mission in Sudan that was transformed into UNAMID, a hybrid African Union/United Nations mission.

When AMIS was terminated at the end of 2007 to become the first hybrid AU/UN peacekeeping mission on the continent, South Africa was aboard and responded to a request to increase its commitment to a standard UN infantry battalion.

Since then the South African military presence has been constant at around the 800 mark with various full-time force and Reserve Force units and regiments serving in the troubled east African country.

SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Directorate Corporate Communications said this week, in response to a defenceWeb enquiry dated March 8, the withdrawal of South African military elements from Sudan was authorised by SANDF Commander-in-Chief, President Jacob Zuma, as from April 1.

“The current South African unit serving in Sudan’s Darfur region is 8 SA Infantry Battalion. The battalion will remain in the mission areas until April 15 and will then commence with a gradual withdrawal,” the response read.

It also points out a project team has been “established” to ensure “a proper closing down” of SANDF structures in Sudan.

“The complete withdrawal of South African assets from Sudan involves the movement of personnel and equipment back to South Africa without compromising the safety and security of the SANDF,” the response read, adding “exact dates” for the withdrawal cannot be released.

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News from the SANDF – Navy positive despite severe budget constraints.

Written by Dean Wingrin

Despite a productive year of operations, the South African Navy (SA Navy) still faces a number of critical challenges, primarily amongst these being an unfavourable budgetary disposition.

As thousands of visitors lined the quayside of Naval Base Simon's Town this past weekend enjoying the annual

SA Navy Festival, Vice Admiral Mosiwa Hlongwane, Chief of the SA Navy, briefed journalist about the current state of the Navy.

In his second year at the helm commanding the SA Navy, Hlongwane noted that although this period has been “a challenging and enjoyable period,” the SA Navy was operating under budgetary restrictions and new challenges that require different remedies and approaches.

Although the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has been forced to reduce capacity and operational effectiveness in order to stay within its meagre budget, it appears that once again the SANDF has been instructed to reduce its budget by R5 billion. This will have a direct effect on the Navy, which must reduce its budget allocation by a further R147 million.

“You can imagine how many things you could do with R147 million,” Hlongwane lamented.

As a result, the Navy Command Council will be meeting to discuss the budget cut and the implications thereof.

The man tasked with command and control of all vessels and units of the Navy is Rear Admiral Bubele Mhlana, Flag Officer Fleet. He has to deal with the implications of the budget cuts.

“I think it is a matter of ambition versus reality,” he said. “For us in the military, we understand the constraints that are there, but we always strive to do with what we have,” he clarified.

Warning that it was very easy to “reach a dead end” which was very dangerous,” Mhlana foresees that due to the economic cycle, things may improve and recover from the current slump.

Mhlana said that the reduced budget “is a serious concern because it also goes to understanding the effect on the equipment, whereby we have to maybe cut or reduce the number (of people) that we normally recruit.”

However, he continued, “It will mean that we are able to fund at least most of our ambitions.”

One of those ambitions is the acquisition of new Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) under Project Biro.

“Of course Biro is very important to the Navy and we all want to realise it,” Hlongwane said. “We have budget constraints, but at the moment we don’t think it will affect Project Biro. Although the project is underfunded, we also wanted to discuss the issue of the projects in the coming work session.”

The Navy Command Council will be discussing contingency plans if not enough funds are made available for Project Biro.

“Yes,” Hlongwane stated, “we have indicated that we are facing budget constraints, but the country needs Biro. We are certain that we’ll realise Biro as it is at the moment.”

Operation Copper, the combined South African and Mozambique maritime counter piracy operation in the northern Mozambique Channel, continues to rely on the SA Navy for the majority of the allocated resources. A Joint Task Force comprising Offshore Patrol Vessels, Boarding Teams and Maritime Patrol aircraft continues to be deployed to the Mozambique Channel.

Operation Copper, Deputy Chief of the Navy Rear Admiral Hanno Teuteberg emphasised, is just part of the Maritime Security Strategy designed to safeguard the South African sea lanes of communication on both sides of Africa.

Although the SA Navy is concentrating on the East Coast, Teuteberg observed that with the reduction in piracy off the coast of Somalia down to Tanzania, the Gulf of Guinea on the West Coast is increasingly becoming the new area of focus.

Once again, the budgetary constraints are brought to the fore when it comes to the operational status and availability of the fleet’s vessels.

Mhlana said that since last year (2015/16 financial year which ended on

31 March 2016), “we have seen a tremendous participation of the navy in various exercises and operations. At the beginning of this year we fully participated in Armed Forces Week whereas at the same time we deployed a frigate in India.”

“I’m comfortable to indicate that we are a Navy at sea, we are doing what we are supposed to be doing, we have challenges as the Chief of the Navy has indicated, planned maintenance like refits which then affects availability of some platforms at full level of capability.”

The submarine side has not been neglected, as twice during the last year two submarines were at sea at the same time. Currently a submarine is on a long 40 day deployment.

As for the time the Navy vessels spend at sea, Rear Admiral Sagaren Pillay, Chief Director Maritime Strategy, said that in the SANDF Performance Plan, the SA Navy needs to achieve 12 000 sea hours.

Since the start of the current financial year on 1 April, Pillay said that based on the first 21 days, “there is every indication that the South African Navy will achieve that particular target.”

Pillay noted that during the previous financial year, the Navy achieved approximately 10 000 hours. “Our achievement was pretty much in terms of what we planned and what was achieved we regard as being satisfactory.”

The issue of staffing within the South African Navy is the responsibility of Rear Admiral Rusty Higgs, Chief of Naval Staff. He says that keeping trained personnel within the Navy “is an issue with which we have been grappling with for decades.”

The Navy recognises the reality that they are severely budget constrained at the moment. “We have to operate within that, we have to cut our suite according to the cloth, the diminishing cloth which we have. It is a major factor,” said Higgs.

The Shamrock

“Because of finance constraints, ships are not spending as much time at sea as the Navy would like. This has the knock-on effect of the Navy not being able to qualify people.”

Higgs said that “it’s a continuous battle which we fighting. At the moment the situation is relatively stable.”

The upgrading of the Durban naval facilities continues, with the Naval Station Durban upgraded to Naval Base on 8 December 2015. Once again, there are budget implications in bringing the Naval Base to full operation capacity. One of the stumbling blocks is the requirement for additional accommodation, particularly for married personnel.

The plan is to increase the workshop and dockyard capacity so that the Durban base can perform all required DEDs (Docking and Essential Defects/Planned Maintenance) for the OPVs.

During the past year, the SA Navy conducted several exercises with partner navies such as Germany and France. “These,” Hlongwane explained, “are critical in terms of sharpening our forces and achieving high levels of readiness.”

SAS Spioenkop has just returned from a ten week deployment to India where she participated in India’s Presidential Fleet Review and the fifth iteration of Exercise IBSAMAR, held jointly with the Indian and Brazilian navies. Whilst in transit, she conducted diplomatic port visits to Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Madagascar. An example of the importance of such visits was that it stimulated renewed interest from the Malagasy Government and Navy to forge closer ties of cooperation in military and maritime security matters.

On matters relating to international maritime cooperation, the SA Navy hosted the 21st SADC Standing Maritime Committee (SMC) which brings together littoral and landlocked states that have a vested interest in the Southern African coastline, whilst Hlongwane attended the 2016 Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in Bangladesh.

The SA Navy was at pains to emphasise that it is fully committed to safeguarding South Africa’s sea lanes but at the same time not hide the truth of the tremendous budgetary constraints. “Yes indeed, we have a budget constraint,” the Chief of the Navy said, “but we are trying to do what we can do with the little we have. So it’s really affecting us.”

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News from the SANDF – SharpEye radar system installed aboard SAS Drakensberg.

Written by defenceWeb

UK based company Kelvin Hughes has installed and commissioned a SharpEye radar system onto the South African Navy’s fleet replenishment ship SAS Drakensberg.

The installation includes X and S Band SharpEye radars, IMO compliant displays and a dedicated tactical display with Kelvin Hughes Advanced Agile Tracker for helicopter approach and control.

Kelvin Hughes told defenceWeb that the purchase order was placed in July 2013, while sea acceptance tests were carried out in January 2016.

Local installation and commissioning was carried out by Radio Holland Maritime while Kelvin Hughes provided training locally in Simons Town, with further training a possibility.

The solid-state SharpEye features digital pulse compression and Doppler processing of the radar returns, allowing it to detect objects with a low radar cross section, from semi-submersed objects to the smallest of uncooperative craft, even in the most severe of weather conditions, Kelvin Hughes said in a release issued on Thursday.

Mark Butler, Kelvin Hughes’ regional sales manager, stated that SharpEye systems are currently being deployed on ships from 27 of the world’s navies.

The South African Navy has long been seeking to upgrade the radar systems aboard the SAS Drakensberg, which is

the largest naval vessel to have been wholly designed and built in South Africa. Her primary role is to support and assist naval vessels at sea, enabling the South African Navy to deploy its forces for extensive periods over long distances.

Kelvin Hughes said that because the ship is designed and equipped to operate two large helicopters simultaneously, a key benefit of the Kelvin Hughes radar system is its ability to provide a Helicopter Control and Tracking capability which satisfies the requirements of flight safety.

In addition to being used as a replenishment ship, SAS Drakensberg has also been used to patrol for pirates in the Mozambique Channel as part of Operation Copper. In April 2012 she helped European warships catch seven Somali pirates in the Channel.

SAS Drakensberg was launched in April 1986 by Sandock Austral and commissioned into service in November the following year. She has a full load displacement of 12 500 tons and a length of 147 metres. She can carry 5 500 tons of fuel, 750 tons of ammunition and dry stores and 210 tons of fresh water. In addition, 50 000 litres of fresh water can be made every day. Two Oryx helicopters, two landing craft and two RHIBs can be accommodated on board as well.

The Drakensberg is the largest ship built in South Africa to date and is reportedly the first naval vessel to be completely designed in the country. In addition to her replenishment role she is employed on search and rescue duties, patrol and surveillance duties and has considerable potential for use in disaster relief.

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News from the SANDF – Defence Minister looking outside National Treasury to fund the SANDF”.

Written by defenceWeb

South Africa’s shrinking defence budget looks set to shrink even further in the coming few years and this has necessitated Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-

Nqakula and her senior command structure to think out of the box to keep the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) operational and viable.

Addressing the National Assembly this week, she pointed out it was in South Africa’s national interest to have a defence force capable of supporting national security imperatives, foreign policy objectives and the country’s economic interests.

Defence has been allocated R47 billion for the current financial year, an amount the Minister maintains is half of what is needed to train, maintain and effectively deploy airmen, military medics, sailors and soldiers.

She told MPs the SANDF must have the capacity to defend and safeguard the sovereignty of the Republic, keep and enforce peace outside its borders and have an offensive capability to deter potential aggressors.

“In order to do this, the defence force should be sufficiently resourced and skilled to execute operations across the full spectrum of conflict. An inadequately resourced defence force will have a negative impact on operational outputs, including the loss of life. As a country we have come to the point where we must make a critical decision on the future of the defence force.

“The longer we delay arresting the decline, the harder and more expensive it will become to reverse this trend.

“The budget for the financial year 2016/17 is R47 billion which is approximately 1.05% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Our MTEF [medium term expenditure framework] allocations indicate for the financial year 2017/18, our budget will decline to 1.03% of GDP and for financial year 2018/19 further decline to 0.98% of GDP. These figures indicate a persistent decline of the defence budget.”

She told MPs these decreases would have serious implications on South Africa’s defence function, giving six examples. These are the ability of the Department of Defence (DoD) to rejuvenate the SANDF; employees’

compensation will be affected; the force will continue to age; there will be insufficient soldiers to sustain operations; skills gaps in the defence force will increase and the loss of expertise will be accelerated.

An example of how the diminishing defence budget has impacted on the SANDF is the reduction in number of military skills development volunteers, down to 3 863 last year from a high of 8 955 four years earlier.

Similarly, over the last seven years the reduction in the operating and capital portions of the defence allocation has adversely affected training and operations. This, the Minister said, had far-reaching implications for the DoD and South Africa, given the ever-increasing demands placed on the SANDF.

“Defence is consistently 50% under-funded with compounding effects on the ability to conduct operations,” she said.

With no sign of a change in approach from National Treasury as regards any increase in the defence budget, Mapisa-Nqakula has asked her department and Armscor to “think creatively about a strategic investment plan to enable the SANDF to executive its constitutional mandate”.

Among options being considered to provide extra funding is leveraging DoD and SANDF property assets; a more efficient collection of reimbursement from the UN for peace support missions; leveraging DoD intellectual property; rightsizing the DoD and SANDF human resource component; disposing of redundant equipment and in-house maintenance and repair of assets and facilities.

On leveraging of SANDF utilised property, Mapisa-Nqakula told the National Assembly the DoD was engaging with National Treasury on a method to leverage a percentage of the property assets, to support both the national fiscus and the DoD. She would be taking this issue further with Parliament.

She did not give any firm timelines or indications of the amounts expected to

be realised from the future funding assistance options.

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News from the SANDF – Sudan government forced South African withdrawal from UNAMID.

Written by defenceWeb

South Africa’s withdrawal from the hybrid AU/UN peace support mission in Sudan last month was because the Sudanese government had made it “increasingly difficult” for proper logistic support to be provided to deployed soldiers.

This is according to Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, who told MPs during her budget vote in Parliament this week that this contributed to “making it impossible for our forces to protect the women and children of that country”.

“As a result a decision was taken to withdraw from UNAMID with effect from April 1. The force will not be replaced. A team of logistic experts will manage the withdrawal of remaining SANDF assets and equipment over a six month period.”

The approximately 800 South African soldiers who were the final South African National Defence Force (SANDF) deployment in Sudan flew back to South Africa aboard UN chartered aircraft on April 23, 25 and 27. They landed at AFB Bloemspruit before being debriefed at the nearby De Brug mobilisation centre and then returned to their home unit – 8 SA Infantry Battalion.

The South African troops have been replaced by Pakistani and Sudanese elements to ensure continuity of operations in Darfur. South Africa has been part of UNAMID since its establishment at the beginning of 2008 as a successor to the AMIS, the then African Union mission in Sudan.

Both full-time and Reserve Force units of the SANDF have been deployed to the east African country for periods of up to 12 months. President Jacob Zuma,

Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF, announced the withdrawal from Sudan in February.

Mapisa-Nqakula briefed the National Assembly on other SANDF deployments, such as the SA Navy’s continued patrolling of the Mozambique Channel in conjunction with the SA Air Force (SAAF) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) counter-piracy tasking, Operation Copper.

“Since the deployment of naval assets in the Mozambique Channel no further incidents of piracy have been reported. Nevertheless, we are mindful of developing challenges in the Gulf of Guinea and have entered into discussions with the Namibian and Angolan governments to pursue joint maritime patrols along the west coast.”

Operation Corona, the national border protection tasking, now sees 15 companies deployed along South Africa’s landward borders.

“This,” Mapisa-Nqakula said, “is still short of the 22 companies stipulated in the National Security Strategy. Despite the shortfall the SANDF achieved major successes during the past financial year. Reserves currently contribute more the half the forces deployed along the borders”.

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News from the SANDF – SA Army flexes its muscle with capability demonstration.

Written by Guy Martin

The South African Army held a major capability exercise outside Bloemfontein, in the third week of May, in order to showcase the combat readiness of the country’s ground forces.

The exercise, held at the General de Wet training ground outside Bloemfontein, replaces both Exercises Young Eagle and Seboka, in an effort to save scarce resources.

The exercise saw live night firing on Wednesday evening followed by a major firepower demonstration on Thursday, which was attended by hundreds of invited guests.

Most Army assets took part, with an emphasis on mobile firepower, supported by two Rooivalk attack helicopters from the Air Force, which fired cannon and rockets at targets on the range. The South African Air Force also contributed several Oryx helicopters, which were used to land and extract troops and equipment. A single A109 Light Utility Helicopter acted as an aerial observation platform.

The exercise began with the spectacular detonation of 800 kg of explosives by Army engineers in a demonstration of their ability to create a crater as an obstacle. Next up a C-130 Hercules dropped five Pathfinders, who managed to parachute safely to earth despite a brisk wind. Once they had made sure everything was right on the ground, a C-130 dropped dozens of paratroopers as well as some cargo.

Supported by Rooivalks, the Oryx then brought in extra troops. Once the friendly troops were out of the way, soldiers arrived in Mambas and began firing at targets. They were soon joined by Ratels, then Rooikat armoured cars and Olifant Main Battle Tanks, which all expended hundreds of rounds of live ammunition.

The Plofadder mine breaching system demonstrated its ability to breach a minefield with a massive wall of explosives. Mortars, rockets and ZT3 missiles were also fired, turning the training ground into what looked like a warzone and sending vast clouds of dust and smoke drifting across the range.

The exercise culminated in all participating vehicles lining up in front of the crowd and saluting the Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General Lindile Yam, who said the capability demonstration was a success. He emphasised that it was important South Africans feel safe. "The army is all South Africans insurance for life and death. It protects against the bad guys coming in," he said. "For peace to prevail we need strong armies to ward

off enemies of peace hence the SA Army’s constant push for enhanced force preparation to enable a heightened form of mission readiness, like the demonstration you just witnessed today.”

He said that protecting troops was an important priority for the Army, as the African battlefield is changing and South African troops often find themselves engaging the enemy in dense jungles and urban zones (such as in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo) which require soldiers be adequately prepared for.

Economic prosperity is reliant on military security and peace, hence the importance of having a combat ready Army, Yam said. "The very reason for a defence force is to allow a country the space to manoeuvre to be able to flex its economic muscle.

“The SA Army as a force has the manpower, hardware and combat capability...to always have combat ready elements comprising almost 13 companies on the domestic front, responsible for border control duties and a standing force commitment towards peace and security operations on the continent under the United Nations and the African Union respectively.”

While Yam applauded the 2014 Defence Review for aiming to arrest the decline of the SANDF, he expressed concern over budget cuts and funding shortfalls. He said he was concerned by the lack of funds the South African National Defence Force is facing as a whole and the need to replace equipment - he said the new hardware arriving in 2017 was not enough. "But, while we are receiving new equipment next year, the numbers are concerning.”

“The SA Army finds itself having to juggle stringent austere cost cutting measures on the other side with the crucial necessity to still fulfil its domestic and continental responsibilities towards peace and security. We navigate these contested waters with a clear determination to never fail in our commitment to the international community as well as the

citizens of our country who expect to sleep at night knowing that their safety and interests are uppermost on what we do as an army.”

Yam said some people say that South Africa should not be committing itself to external operations when there are burning issues inside the country such as border control, but he said the military is committed to do more with what it has and employ innovative ways to use uniformed personnel to meet its constitutional mandate.

“My message to you today is that the SA Army is ready and willing to be deployed in domestic and continental duties to advance the AU’s Agenda 2063 and work towards a peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa in concert with our brothers and sisters,” Yam said on Thursday.

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From the Chaplain

Written by: Captain M C Pelser (Our honorary Field-Chaplain)

In the army....

In the following article I want to show you that there are a lot of similarities between the SANDF (or any other defence force or army for that matter) and serving in God’s Army. I will be comparing the SANDF with God’s Army.

1. Joining

- In the army you have to **enlist** to join the army. The minute you enlist you are a member of the army that you serve in now.
- In God’s Army you also have to enlist. You have to **believe** in Jesus to be a Christian.
- *John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

2. You are no longer a civilian

- As soon as you join the army you are **no longer a**

civilian. You are now a soldier. You must now start acting like a soldier!

- In God’s Army you are **no longer a lost unbeliever.** You are now a child of God. You now have to start living and acting as a Christian.
- *2 Tim 2:3-4 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*
- *2 Tim 2:19 - Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity*
- *Eph 5:8b - Walk as children of light*
- *Eph 5:10 - ...find out what is acceptable to the Lord.*

3. You are now a soldier!

- In the army you have now become a soldier. The minute you join the army **you are a soldier.** No matter if you have been a soldier for 1 day or 30 years.
- Once you accept Jesus as your saviour, **you are a Christian**, the same as those Christians you read of in the Bible.
- *Rom 12:5 - ...so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*

4. The enemy will attack!

- From the moment that you join the army the **enemy** are now looking for you and will **attack** you at every opportunity.

- From the minute you become part of God’s Army the **devil** is now looking for you. He will try to **attack** you and destroy you when and where he can.
- *1 Pet 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he can devour.*

5. You are now under a commander.

- In the army you are under the authority of the **Officer Commanding.**
- In God’s Army you stand under the direct command of our Commanding Officer, **Jesus Christ.**
- *Matt 28:18 - And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

6. You are now part of something.

- In the army you become part of a **unit.**
- In God’s Army you are now part of the **communion of saints:**
 - Ministry
 - Church
 - Sell group
- *Rom 12:4 - ...in one body...*

7. You are trained according to doctrine.

- In the army you are trained according to **military doctrine.**
- You must now be trained according to the **Christian Doctrine** – Bible.
- *2 Tim 3:16 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness,...*

8. You wear uniform for protection.
 - In the army you are given a **uniform** to wear and **equipment** to protect you.
 - Belt
 - Body armour / bullet proof
 - Boots
 - Vehicles
 - Helmet
 - Rifle
 - In God`s Army you are given the Armour of God to protect you. You must now put on the **Full Armour of God**.
 - Belt of truth
 - Breastplate of righteousness
 - Shoes to spread the gospel
 - Shield of faith
 - Helmet of salvation
 - Sword as the Word of God
 - *Eph 6:14-18*
9. You are now under a code that guides your conduct.
 - In the army you are bound by the **Code of Conduct**. Should you not act according to the Code of Conduct you are disciplined and reprimanded.
 - In God`s Army you are also under a code of conduct. When you act outside the **will of God** you are to be disciplined and corrected.
 - *1 Tim 5:20 - Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.*
10. You are trained to fight and to be on operations.
 - In the army you are training to go to **war / operations against the enemy**.

- In God`s Army you are training to go to **war against the devil**.
 - *Eph 6:11 - Put on the whole armour of God, that you may stand against the devil.*
11. You have to know your enemy.
 - In the army you are briefed to **“Know your enemy”**.
 - In God`s Army you are also trained to **“Know your enemy” (devil)**.
 - *Eph 6:12 - For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly place.*
 12. You have to listen to those who train you.
 - In the army you have to **listen to your instructor** when in training.
 - In God`s Army you have to **listen to spiritual leaders** (those put above you by God) and who teaches you.
 - *1 Cor 16:16 - ...that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labours with us.*
 13. Your training is based on passed experience.
 - In the army the training you receive is based on past **experiences of soldiers** that has gone through battles before.
 - In God`s Army you are taught in accordance with the **experience of Christians** form the Bible – Book of *Acts*.
 14. You are receiving continuation training.

- In the army you do continuation training and **“In Post Training”** - Once you have receive your training you are to train those who come after you.
 - In God`s Army you are trained to be a better **“Disciple”** - You are instructed to train other to become Christians.
 - *Mat 28:19-20 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*
 - *2 Tim 4:2 - Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*
15. Lookout for your brothers and sisters.
 - In the Army you are required to look out for your **Military brothers and sisters**.
 - In God`s Army you are required to look out for you **Christian brothers and sisters** – the *“one another commands”*.

So, as you can see there are a lot of similarities between being an SANDF member and being part of God`s Army. By applying the principals you got taught in the SANDF to your life as a Soldier in God`s Army you would actually be able to become a better Christian. I salute you my brothers and sisters in the SANDF and those serving in God`s Army!

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Guide on the older medals of the SANDF

On 27 April 2003 a new set of honours was introduced for Bravery, meritorious service and long service in the SANDF. The aim of this column is to educate the newer members about the older and obsolete medals of the SANDF's honour system.



Pro Patria Medal, was a military decoration for bravery that was instituted by the Republic of South Africa in 1974 and was discontinued in 1994.

This medal was intended as a campaign medal for border service.

Award criteria: The medal could be awarded to serving members of all ranks of the South African Defence Force. The conditions for award stipulated that the recipient had to have:

- been involved in combat or a skirmish or combat situation or an incident caused by enemy activities, or
- participated in a specific operation acknowledged by the Minister of Defence, or
- served for a continuous period of 55 days or non-continuous for 90 days in an operational area as designated by the Minister of Defence.

Awards:

Unclear: Estimates put awards at over 500 000 awards.

Source list:

Wikipedia
SA Medal Site
o0o

South African Battles

– The battle of Sidi Rezegh

TOTENSONNTAG

The Sunday of the Dead
The Battle of Sidi Rezegh
23 November 1941

Last Sunday in November

Text and images taken from 'The Sidi Rezegh Battles 1941' by J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton and L.C.F. Turner, published by Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1957

The entry in General Freyberg's Diary under the date 23 November begins, 'a beautiful day and a full one', and one observer who had been with Eighth Army remembered 'a bright, sunny morning, and [how] the white racing clouds made moving islands of shadow on the desert surface'. [1] In the neighbourhood of Sidi Rezegh, however, the clouds got the better of the sun and the Preliminary Narrative recalls that the 23rd was 'ushered in by a cold wind which cut through even the warmest clothing', and the weather became 'showery, with much low cloud throughout the day'.

But in spite of showers and the bitter desert wind which whipped up the loose sand and stung the raw skin of exposed hands and faces, contemporary accounts on either side have little to say about the weather.

In 1941, 23 November was the last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year, called officially in England the 'Sunday next before Advent' and known to the more light-hearted occupants of the pews as 'Stir-up Sunday'. [2] In Germany it was Totensonntag, 'Sunday of the Dead', a kind of Lutheran All Souls' Day, and the battle of 23 November became known in Panzergruppe by this forbidding name.

On the third escarpment

The British formations on the third escarpment settled down more or less where they found themselves at nightfall on 22 November, 3rd Transvaal Scottish made some attempt to dig in on their new positions, and

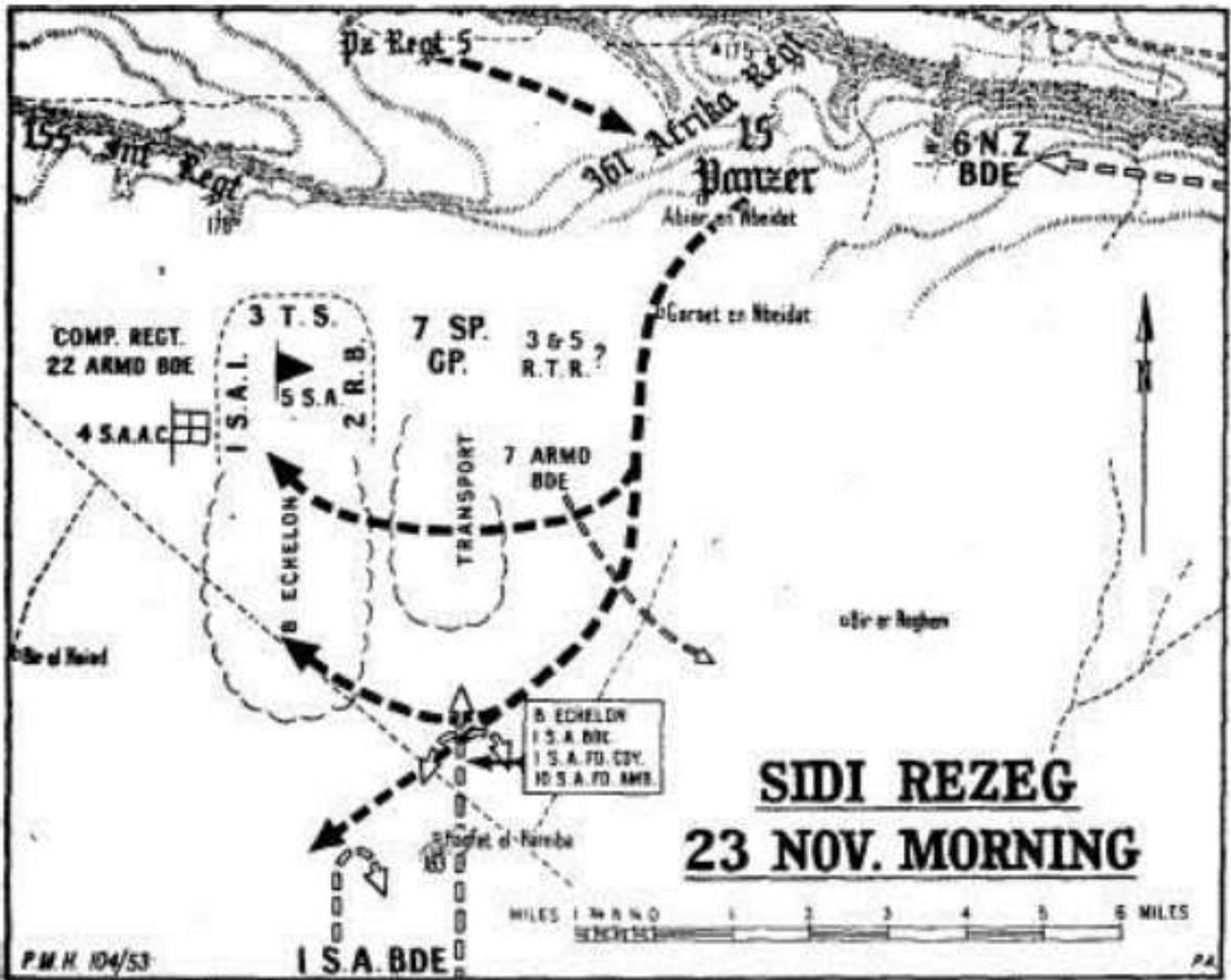
succoured their wounded on the battlefield with blankets and hot food, but for the rest the exhausted members of 7th Armoured Division had done little or nothing to adjust themselves to the new situation before morning came.

Command and control were at a low ebb, and the diverse formations and units seem to have had little idea of what was to be required of them. 4th S.A. Armoured Cars say of their own role during the early morning of 23 November that, 'The fog of battle was, however, dense, and in consequence the idea of a definitely prescribed line of observation largely lost its significance.

There was also a certain amount of overlapping with other Regiments.' The history of the 9th Hussars says: 'Squadrons, and even individual Troops, no longer faced either north, south, east or west: they faced all four, turning to wherever the nearest enemy appeared, and they fought under the orders (or more often in anticipation of them) of any British formation which they found in their vicinity.' [3]

And yet, given the necessary communications and control, the situation of 7th Armoured Division when day broke on 23 November was by no means desperate. In the centre of the divisional position lay 5th S.A. Brigade, from which only one battalion had been engaged, and which was well prepared to play its part in operations during the coming day. The Brigade had leaguered as it halted for the attack on Point 178, in the order of its march through the desert. 3rd Transvaal Scottish still faced north on the position to which they had retired after sunset: and Regiment Botha were on the right, looking east, and 1st S.A. Irish on the left, looking west. The B Echelon, a mass of thin-skinned vehicles dispersed a nominal hundred yards apart, trailed out into the desert behind. The evidence shows that the Brigade itself occupied a square of nearly 2 miles width, but it is difficult to say how far the transport spread southward across the desert. All witnesses agree that the area covered by its vehicles seemed enormous.

A mile to the west of the Brigade—the left as it faced the escarpment—lay the composite regiment of some thirty tanks



which represented the fighting strength of 22nd Armoured Brigade. On the east lay Support Group, which had borne the weight of the German attack on the airfield, with its own B Echelon also stretching out to the south. The Headquarters of Support Group were 'established on the eastern edge of 5 S.A. Inf Bde Leaguer', with 4th Royal Horse Artillery and 60th Field Regiment. General Gott had ordered up the greater part of the Second Battalion Scots Guards to reinforce them, and Brigadier Davy states that 'Captain Longworth, with a mixed squadron [of 7th Armoured Brigade] was with the Support Group', but he can have had no more than a handful of tanks under command. [4]

4th Armoured Brigade had suffered less than the other formations of 7th Armoured Division during the last two days, and General Gott intended that Brigadier Gatehouse should cover

the eastern flank of the divisional position, but the surprise attack of 15th Panzer at nightfall on the 22nd neutralized Brigade Headquarters and dissolved the 8th Hussars. Throughout the next day the Brigade as such did not exist, and the principal element in General Gott's armoured strength was unable to play its part. 3rd RTR became confused during the successful charge across the landing-ground at the close of 22 November, though casualties were not heavy, and only five tanks rallied in the night leaguer south of the landing-ground. Isolated groups of the Regiment spent next morning trying to discover where they were and what had become of Brigade and their own Regimental Headquarters. The latter moved at first light to Hareifet en Nbeidat and were ordered at 0745 to join their Brigade at Hagfet ez Zghemat el Garbia, away to the south. 5th RTR, the other surviving regiment of the Brigade,

had spent the night in the neighbourhood of Bir er Reghem.

7th Armoured Brigade, now reduced to some ten tanks and a few crocks belonging to 2nd RTR, lay about 2 miles south of 7th Support Group, guarding the 700 prisoners taken on 21 November. They were under orders 'to rally to the south and protect 7 Arm Div's communications', and were now told to make for Bir er Reghem el Garbi.

General Gott was trying to re-form his armour south-east of 5th S.A. Brigade and at the same time to implement his undertaking to Brigadier Armstrong. According to the latter, the General promised to support 5th S.A. Brigade with the whole of 7th Armoured Division, and told him that 'he would put the 22nd Armoured Brigade on my left flank, the 7th Armoured Brigade on

my right flank, and the 4th Armoured Brigade which, he said, had been badly knocked about and was very weak, in rear'. Apart from an understandable confusion on Brigadier Armstrong's part of the roles proposed for 4th and 7th Armoured Brigades, this represents very fairly the dispositions taken up by 7th Armoured Division, and though General Gott was undoubtedly right in deciding that the armour was no longer capable of an offensive operation, it retained a great deal of potential strength. There were still over a hundred tanks available, and 1st S.A. Brigade was due on the third escarpment at dawn. 6th New Zealand Brigade with a squadron of infantry tanks was expected to arrive in the neighbourhood of Point 175 not long after, and within a day or two the British preponderance at Sidi Rezegh should be fully restored. All that was needed in the meantime was that the considerable forces available should be directed and handled as a single whole.

At El Adem and Gasr el Arid

During the night of 22/23 November, the German forces remained on the ground they had seized during the day. The tanks of 21st Panzer Division, which had suffered heavily in their attack of the previous afternoon, leaguered near the airfield of Sidi Rezegh, with Group Knabe along the Sidi Rezegh escarpment from which they had driven the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

15th Panzer, after overrunning the Headquarters of 4th Armoured Brigade and the 8th Hussars, and beating off the counterattack of 5 RTR, settled down somewhere near Abiar en Nbeidat. Infantry Regiment 155 (Group Mickl) remained on the line of the third escarpment west of Point 178, and Regiment 361 on Point 175. The Italian XXI Corps remained in the lines of investment round Tobruk, and claimed to have halted attempts of British armour to break out of the Fortress, while Corps Gambara, which reported the repulse of an attack by 1st S.A. Division during the 22nd, maintained Ariete Division at Bir el Gubi.

The initiative in Cyrenaica, after the fumbling of the first four days, had

passed to General Rommel and, once he had grasped the situation, his alert mind and restless energy went rapidly to work. His Daily Report for 22 November stated that 207 British tanks had already been destroyed and that Corps Gambara reported the destruction of fifty-five more, and concluded that 'the enemy has thus lost more than a third of his armour'. At 2230 hours he issued a final order confirming the intention he had expressed during the afternoon:

"On 23 November, Panzergruppe will force a decision in the area southeast of Tobruk, by means of a concentric attack by D.A.K. and parts of Corps Gambara. With this object, Corps Gambara will advance from El Gubi at 0800 hours with elements of Panzer Division Ariete in the direction of Gambut. At 0700 hours on 23 November, D.A.K., effectively concentrating its forces, will advance in the general direction of El Gubi—with main effort on the left wing, encircle the enemy and destroy them. Recognition signal for German and Italian troops: two white Very lights. Troops must be reminded that Ariete Division is using a number of captured enemy vehicles."

'In other words, Rommel proposed to catch 7th Armoured Division between a frontal assault made by the Afrikakorps southward, and an attack delivered by Ariete against its rear. General Gambara was not under Rommel's command, and some vigorous negotiation was needed to secure his consent to the use of Ariete, but this was achieved, and the Italian official history states that Rommel's orders were issued 'after an exchange of opinions with the Commander of the Motorized Corps'. [5]

There was a break in communications between Panzergruppe and Afrikakorps after mid-afternoon of the 22nd and Rommel's orders did not reach Cruewell until 0430 hours next morning. In the meantime the latter took his own decision, on the basis of a summary received from Panzergruppe at 1550 on the previous day. But whereas Rommel intended the main blow to be delivered southward, by the whole of Afrikakorps, Cruewell proposed to take

advantage of the admirable situation on the flank of General Gott's division which 15th Panzer had reached by nightfall. His own orders, issued at 0015 hours, gave the holding role to the infantry component of 21st Panzer, supported by Group Mickl and the Africa Regiment. Meanwhile all the available armour would be concentrated, by pushing south with 15th Panzer Division, supported by Panzer Regiment 5 from 21st Panzer, to cut General Gott's communications and make a junction with Ariete. The whole force would then turn north to strike into the rear of 7th Armoured Division, and overwhelm it. Cruewell ordered the armour to be ready to move off at 0700, and warned them that he would issue the final orders for the day's battle at 0645, from 15th Panzer's headquarters at Point 175.

Kriebel points out, in support of this plan, that 'Ariete Division was not considered strong enough to carry out an attack from the south on its own account, or even merely to hold an enemy who had been driven south'. In broad outline, therefore, there is much to be said for Cruewell's proposals, and the ragged array of 7th Armoured Division, looking vaguely northward for the next move of its opponents, was in no small danger. Cruewell, however, was splitting his forces, sending half his infantry and artillery, and all his tanks, on a detached mission to the south, and his chances of success depended upon the achievement of a surprise attack before Gott could co-ordinate and reorientate the potential strength of his division. Against any but broken and dispirited troops the manoeuvre could not fail to be extremely costly.

Advance of the Afrikakorps

The Commander and tactical headquarters of Afrikakorps left Bir el Giaser at 0545 and, less than half an hour later, the Corps Headquarters with all their personnel and command machinery were overrun by Brigadier Barrowclough and his 6th New Zealand Brigade. It is not clear whether, when Cruewell left Bir el Giaser, he was in possession of the full text of Rommel's orders, requiring the main attack to be made from north to south, with the whole strength of the Corps. The War

Diary suggests that he was, and it merely grumbles at the time wasted between 2230 and 0430 hours—i.e. between the issue and the reception of the orders—a delay which it attributes to the message being much too long and dealing with a host of details which were of no importance whatever to Afrikakorps'. General Bayerlein, writing presumably from memory, states that 'D.A.K. received a long wireless message for the deciphering of which General Cruewell had not time to wait. He had to act on his own initiative.' The question is not of vast importance—whatever the cause, Rommel's intentions were not in fact carried out—but it is perhaps significant that, throughout the day, Cruewell showed a marked reluctance to depart from his prearranged plans.

Arrived at Point 175 at 0630, Cruewell made final arrangements for the advance. According to Kriebel, 'There was a heavy morning mist at daybreak on 23 November, the day which was to see the fiercest battle of the entire campaign and which will remain imprinted unforgettably in the memory of all Afrikakorps warriors as the "Bloody Sunday of the Dead"'. The mist rose at 0700, but Panzer Regiment 5 was late in coming up from its night leaguer near the landing-ground, and at 0730 15th Panzer moved off alone, with Panzer Regiment 8 leading and 15th Rifle Brigade-containing the infantry component of the Division—echeloned behind to the right. According to 15th Panzer's War Diary, 'the artillery, as usual, would have one Batterie between the two waves of tanks, and the rest behind the Panzer Regiment'. Cruewell himself, with Bayerlein and a sketchy operations staff, travelled with the first wave.

The German advance was first observed by Lieut. van Niekerk of 4th S.A. Armoured Cars, who reported the assembly of 100 tanks about 2 miles south of Abiar en Nbeidat, and their advance due south, but the 'higher authority' [6] to whom he made his report 'evinced a strong disinclination to accept it, and appeared to be convinced either that the alleged column did not exist at all, or if it did exist, that it was friendly'. The judgement of the rmoured cars was corroborated by heavy shell-

fire from the tanks which, after travelling 5 or 6 miles, wheeled due west. According to the account of 15th Panzer, what happened was that, after 'fast progress over flat firm going', the tanks ran into 'vast supply columns' interspersed with guns and tanks which were 'completely surprised and fled wildly to the south and south-west'. Kriebel says (he must certainly have been present), 'Panzer Regiment 8 in the van turned west on its own initiative, and proceeded with the destruction of the enemy vehicles which were in extraordinary depth'. The German strategic advance to link up with Ariete had turned into a major offensive operation, and the panzers were now cutting through the rear of 7th Armoured Support Group's transport to plunge into the depths of the B Echelon which trailed behind 5th S.A. Brigade.

Almost at the same moment, 7th Armoured Brigade, which 'consisted only of ten tanks of the 7th Hussars, a few crocks of the 2nd RTR and three of Brigade Headquarters', was under orders 'to move to [Bir] er Reghem el Gharbi, 15 miles to the south, taking the prisoners and to remain in reserve'. They had just begun the southward march when '4th South African Armoured Car Regiment reported a strong enemy column including a large number of tanks moving south-west a mile away. Captain de Beer, adjutant of the Armoured Car Regiment, said afterwards that he had been very anxious as he knew the report would sound improbable. Fortunately the prisoners, whose overcrowded lorries could barely crawl along, were clear by about 2 miles. They were all Germans and it would have been a pity to lose them.' [7] The British tanks got across for the loss of one cruiser, then halted, and engaged the German column from the flank.

Chaos comes to the echelons:

Meanwhile the 9th Hussars noted the confusion in the Support Group Echelon, where 'the

collection of heavy trucks, unwieldy workshop lorries and suchlike began to stream out from the leaguer under heavy fire, and in the course of it many became mixed with the scattering rear echelons of the South Africans'. Brigadier Jock Campbell acted with prompt energy and initiative and with the Brigade Commander's assent collected half a dozen tanks of the 7th Hussars which had been cut off by the westerly movement of the German armour. These he had grouped with part of the Support Group in the lee of positions held by the South Africans, when the wave of German tanks which had hit [9th Hussars] swept round them from behind. In an instant the desert was flooded with scores of unarmoured vehicles from the South African supply echelons fleeing with the tanks hot on their heels. Complete chaos and disaster were very close at hand, when Jock Campbell for the second time in that battle performed one of his prodigious feats. [8]

The Hussars go on:

Sitting on top of his A.G.V., waving alternate red and blue flags—made from his scarves—for 'Stop' and 'Go', as one officer describes it, he started to rally every vehicle he could find to turn and face the German tanks. He had 23 people in the A.C.V., all urging the driver to go like hell, while Jock kept shouting down that he was not to go faster than 8 mph and to stop when he was told to. To one Troop of guns he gave the classic order: 'Expect no orders. Stick to me. I shall advance soon!'

The German advance struck deep into the soft 'under-belly' of 7th Armoured Division, which was as unprepared for the attack as incapable of resistance. In 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade a single troop of 18-pounder anti-tank guns mounted guard over the vast mass of vehicles which stretched southwards across the desert. [9] The rumour of the approach of the panzers caused 'tremendous confusion' in the B Echelon before ever

they arrived, and transport scattered in all directions. Many vehicles fled into the desert, others crowded for protection round Brigade Headquarters away to the north.

'At approximately 0800 hours', as R.Q.M.S. Floquet of 2nd Regiment Botha subsequently reported, the 'B' Echelon was attacked on all sides by enemy tanks and light artillery. I was trying to deepen my shell slit when suddenly I heard V.M.G. and Bren fire opening up furiously. A few seconds later a shower of bullets sang over our heads and shells fired from light artillery started bursting on the western and eastern flank every rime I put my head out of my shell slit I saw red tracer bullets and armour-piercing bullets thudding into the ground all round me. We all fired furiously back whenever a tank could be discerned on the horizon, but the utter futility of small arms fire against such heavy armoured opposition convinced me that the only way was to try and escape in a truck. My driver and I made a bold dash and we scrambled into the truck. Due west appeared to be the only way out and as we dashed off in that direction shells burst within ten and fifteen yards on our sides and in front.

In the course of their drive into the 5th Brigade Echelon the German tanks overran 10th Platoon of the divisional machine-gun battalion, Regiment President Steyn, who were taken prisoner while trying hopelessly to hold up the attack with their small-arms. They regained their liberty, however, when the Germans withdrew. British tanks and guns likewise appeared in the Echelon and a staff-sergeant with the Echelon of the Regiment Botha described how British artillery kept rushing from one side of our lines to the other. Pandemonium appeared to have broken loose. We all fired with our rifles and a tommy-gun on German tanks which we saw not far distant. The firing was passing continually over our heads. One British tank ran right over the shell slit in which our driver was crouching, next to the truck, covering him with earth. A British anti-tank gun took up its position right next to us, firing over our heads. The ground shook with the reverberations of the heavy firing and the falling of shells all around

us and we saw German tanks on all sides.

One of the groups of British tanks engaged was a detachment of 3rd RTR under Major 'Bob' Crisp, [10] and an observer with 4th South African Armoured Cars said afterwards, 'I shall never forget how they came out of the 5th Brigade Echelon and at a certain distance went into line abreast and charged down upon the German Juggernaut'.

Completely surprised though the British were, they yet put up a resistance which impressed their opponents. 'Again and again', says the War Diary of 15th Panzer, 'strong enemy battle groups with tanks, antitank guns and artillery came out of the desert and tried to take the Division in flank to divert it from its objective.' Major Fenski, commander of the first battalion of Panzer Regiment 8, was killed, and in another clash a Batterie of Artillery Regiment 33 was 'overrun by a sudden charge of English tanks and forced to surrender', an incident which tallies exactly with the record of one of Major Crisp's exploits.

Crisp belonged to 3rd RTR from 4th Armoured Brigade, and early that morning he was trying to find his regiment when he stumbled across a leaguer of South Africans (probably 1st S.A. Brigade). After a friendly welcome and entertainment he covered the short intervening distance to reach 5th S.A. Brigade just as the German attack came in. Here he noticed that a force of hostile tanks and lorries had been beaten off, leaving four field-guns (a German Battens) in the open, firing over the heads of their own column and apparently into the 1st Brigade leaguer. 'It seemed to me a monstrous bit of cheek', said Crisp, 'and got my back up', and he ordered his driver to charge the mile or so of desert that lay between, knowing well enough that if he were detected the guns would make short work of him.

The Germans spotted him when he was 300 yards off and before long he could see their panic and their alarmed faces. He watched the nearest gun swing round and a puff of black smoke flash from its muzzle. 'I could afford to laugh at this', he related, 'and believe I

actually did, as the gun was pointing skyward at a range of about 6000 yards, and there was I not 100 yards away. I knew I had them.' [11] Crisp overran the guns and ordered the personnel to march back to 5th Brigade as prisoners, but could not wait to see the end. The Diary of 15th Panzer maintains, however, that the Batterie was recaptured and afterwards brought into action again.

The reaction of the tanks and artillery, fragmentary and uncoordinated, was forceful enough to change the course of the action. General Neumann-Silkow was convinced that the advantage must be pursued to the uttermost, and ordered up 15th Rifle Brigade 'to mop up the vehicles captured by our tanks and collect prisoners'. He was certain that the advance to Bir el Gubi must be abandoned and the day's operations be redesigned to deal with the conditions which had now been revealed. But Cruewell was impressed by the vigour of the counter-attacks which had come in against him, partial and unpremeditated as they were, and was loath to abandon his plans. 'The decision', says his War Diary,

"had to be taken whether to carry on the attack against 1 S.A. Division, or to wait until the junction with Ariete had been effected, and then continue the attack with the combined armoured strength of the two divisions against the enemy's rear. An immediate continuation of the attack seemed most inviting, but the Corps Commander was of the opinion that a swing right round to the north-west would make it possible to attack the enemy from a still more favourable angle and that the enemy was so superior in numbers that the assistance of Ariete was essential. The Corps Commander accordingly ordered the continuance of the advance towards Bir el Gubi."

At 0940 Cruewell issued an order to the divisional headquarters below the third escarpment, '21 Pz Div will advance SW to destroy the enemy south of Rezegh, who has already been badly hit'. On the face of it the instruction seems to imply an advance under the divisional command, which still retained the infantry and most of the artillery under control, but Cruewell

may possibly have intended no more than a hastener to Panzer Regiment 5, which had not yet arrived above the third escarpment had missed the attack on the echelons. No serious attack was made on the South African position from the north.

And so the Afrikakorps, having given due notice to the enemy of the gravity of the situation in his rear, withdrew to allow him to improvise what measures he could for his protection. With some difficulty the German panzers extricated themselves and withdrew to the south-west. No attempt had been made to use the infantry to hold the captured ground and, as soon as the panzers had gone, the very considerable remains of the B Echelons shook their ruffled feathers and settled down once more. They do seem, however, to have been rather more concentrated than before and to have reduced the area they occupied.

The German thrust had penetrated deep into the 5th Brigade position and some of their tanks found themselves cut off. Three drove northward, past Brigade Headquarters, with a khaki-clad figure standing in a turret and waving greetings with what looked like a black beret. Men of 2nd Regiment Botha, somewhat startled when the panzers appeared behind them, but reassured and rejoiced by the sight of 'captured' enemy vehicles passing through their lines, acknowledged the gesture and waved cheerfully back. The tanks emerged through the north-east sector of the Brigade perimeter, but were fired on by 4th Royal Horse Artillery in Support Group, and two were knocked out.

Two other panzers emerged on the west, through the South African Irish, and were fired on by a Bofors gun, but without effect. The Report of Panzer Regiment 8 records that 'The Commander, Lieut-Colonel Cramer, penetrated far behind the enemy's lines in his command truck, accompanied only by his escort tank, and found himself in the midst of the enemy gun positions. Despite several hits on his tank by shells and anti-tank fire, he pushed his way through to I Battalion, bringing valuable information.'

1 South African Brigade on 23 November 1st

S.A. Infantry Brigade, whose pause the previous evening had been intended to avoid any brush with the enemy, found that the early morning had inspired him to exceptional activity.

Those units, including 1st S.A. Field Company, 10th Field Ambulance, and the rest of the B Echelon, [12] which missed the order to halt, jogged on during the night at their own pace until first light, when they halted to rest, find out where they were, and have breakfast. By this time they were spread over a wide area: the leading lorries were close to 5th S.A. Brigade, and about to cross the direct route between Abiar en Nbeidat and Bir el Gubi. The War Diary of the Field Company records laconically that they found themselves within a mile of 'a heavy tank battle' and that, 'on advice received from an anti-tank gunner, the company retired 10 miles due south'. The B Echelon, according to the Transvaal Scottish account, had settled down comfortably in the desert when suddenly shells began to burst among the QM vehicles. An officer with shaving lather still on his face ran through the lines shouting, 'Get going. Get to hell out of here—go south.' Men in all stages of undress leapt into their vehicles. Wheels spun up the dust as the Brigade Echelon turned south. Shells burst among the vehicles and followed the erratic target for miles. [13]

Much the same experience befell 10th Field Ambulance, which found itself in the midst of the Germans and was taken prisoner. Not long after, the Divisional Commander was also endangered by the advance of the Afrikakorps. General Nome had ordered 5th S.A. Brigade to revert to divisional command, and he intended that General Brink should relieve General Gott by taking over the command of all the infantry in the Sidi Rezegh area. With this in mind he arranged to meet Brink at Point 183, just south of Hagfet el Hareiba, and the latter says in his Report:

I reached Pt 183 at approximately 0830 hrs, and hearing gunfire to my right front I left my car to climb on to a slight

escarpment [sic] in order to get a view of what was happening. As soon as I reached the high ground an officer who proved to be an officer of 10 SA Fd Amb attached to 1 SA Inf Bde dashed up, and in an excited state told me that his amb had got mixed up with a big lot of enemy tks and had been badly shot up. Looking about me I saw a lot of MT about 2000 yds to my left front. This I took to be the Southern flank of 5 Inf Bde. There was firing to my right front and shortly afterwards I noticed what appeared to be from 60 to 80 tks moving in mass formation from East to West across my front. The MO said they were enemy tks. Smoke and dust obstructed my view but shortly afterwards Arty fire broke out and the tks opened fire, firing, it appeared to me, in all directions. I noticed a lot of MT following the tks. As I now came under fire, I left my posn to contact Comd 1 Inf Bde and warn him. I first encountered Lt-Col Senescall, OG DEOR, on the left flank of the Bde and instructed him to bring all Fd and A/Tk arty under his Comd fwd to meet a tk attack. About 20 minutes later I contacted Brig Pienaar, Comd 1 Inf Bde, and instructed him in similar terms, advising him what orders I had given OG DEOR. I also ordered him to patrol actively with a view to contacting 5 Inf Bde and 7 Armd Div. 1 SA Inf Bde immediately made the necessary dispositions to engage the enemy, and arty fire was opened on the coin. Three enemy tks were completely destroyed by our arty and the enemy motorised inf took heavy punishment.

The Brigade Narrative records that, 'During the morning, GOC 1 SA Div joined the Bde HQ and instructed Bde to form a defensive perimeter and ward off any enemy attacks until the situation cleared up in front'. According to the Transvaal Scottish, Brigadier Pienaar's dispositions included a withdrawal from the danger area. Their history states that the head of their column 'ran into heavy shellfire' and 'the Battalion pulled back three miles and dug defensive positions'. [14] Brigade Battle Headquarters remained 2 or 3 miles east of Hagfet en Nadura while the artillery engaged enemy forces in the north. General Brink returned to his

rendezvous at 0930, hardly expecting, however, to meet the Corps commander, and his armoured car escort came under fire as soon as they crossed the skyline. 'My LO', says General Brink, who was in the leading car reported that there was still a mass of MT between us and 5 Inf Bde and he thought he could distinguish some 20 to 30 tks in the rear of the MT. A fierce battle was now developing on our front i.e. South of Sidi Rezegh, and appeared to be swinging past the Southern flank of 5 Inf Bde. It was impossible to say if the Bde was involved in the battle.

As there appeared to be no prospect at the moment of contacting Maj Gen Gott, GOC 7 Armd Div, or Brig Armstrong personally, I decided to re-join Brig Pienaar at his HQ when he related the loss of his Fd Amb. (A good portion of this Fd Amb was recovered later.)

Brig Pienaar also reported that a strong force of enemy lorried inf backed by tks was still in posn on his front. [15] I again instructed him not to attack but to patrol actively while making dispositions to meet a tk attack.

My Adv Div HQ had halted at 433375 [between 7 and 8 miles south of Hagfet.el Hareiba] and I was completely out of touch at this stage. The situation was obscure and confusing.

However obscure and confusing the situation itself may have been, General Brink's precise account gives an admirably clear impression of what actually happened. In it can be traced the position of the amorphous mass of the transport of 5th Brigade, the advance of Panzer Regiment 8, with 15th Rifle Brigade following behind in their lorries, the penetration of the 5th S.A. Brigade's B Echelon by hostile tanks, and the gradual progress of the battle from east to west. General Brink was only 8½ miles from Point 178, and a little over a mile from the outlying elements of the 5th Brigade B Echelon, and the historian has every reason to be grateful for the presence of so discerning an observer.

The midday lull: Afrikakorps

After disengaging from its thrust into the administrative area of 5th South African Brigade, Panzer Regiment 8 spent some time in reorganization and replenishment before resuming the advance towards Bir el Gubi at 1130 hours. According to the War Diary of 21st Panzer, 15th Panzer pushed about 20 km. west from Sidi Muftah, which is probably rather an over-estimate. On the way the Regiment ran into 'an impassable swamp', from which, they say, they could extricate themselves only with difficulty. Meanwhile Panzer Regiment 5 (from 21st Panzer) came up at last, too late for the thrust against the South Africans. [16] They were somewhat annoyed to find themselves placed on the left, instead of the right, of their junior formation, but took up a position facing south from Sidi Muftah, and engaged 'several thrusts from the east by enemy armour'. One of these, probably delivered by elements of Support Group re-forming in the neighbourhood, also got itself bogged down in the rain-sodden desert and some vehicles were abandoned. A liaison officer of General Brink's staff, who was hunting for the rendezvous with General Norrie near Hagfet el Hareiba, came across a troop of British guns firing methodically into a mass of hostile transport to the north.

At 1235 Afrikakorps made contact with 'about two-thirds' of Ariete [17] 12 km. north-east of Bir el Gubi, and General Cruewell proceeded to make his dispositions for a decisive attack on the invaders. 'The intention', according to the D.A.K. War Diary, 'was to push the enemy south of Sidi Rezegh back to the north on to 21 Pz Div's defence line, [18] and then to join forces with Pz Div and destroy him. Attack to begin 1400 hours.' Ariete was assigned to the post on the left of 15th Panzer Division. The general intention was that the three armoured formations, with Panzer Regiment 8 in the middle, Panzer Regiment 5 on the right and Ariete on the left, should sweep down in one long line, with the units of 15th Rifle Brigade a few hundred yards behind, to overwhelm 7th Armoured Division.

The Report of Panzer Regiment 8 states that

"At 1430 hrs the reinforced Panzer Regiment assembled in the Sidi Muftah area, [19] facing north, disposed as follows: On the left Panzer Regiment 8 with 120 tanks, on the right Panzer Regiment 5 (under command) with 40 tanks. The first wave of Panzer Regiment 8 consisted of 1/8 Pz Regt with Regt H.Q. and 3/33 A.A. behind, the second wave of 11/8 Pz Regt. Pz Regt 5 was disposed in the same way. According to divisional orders the Rifle Regiment 115 was to follow close behind 11/8 in vehicles. The tanks were to act as a support force and enable the infantry to break into the enemy positions."

The plan for the attack provided that Regiment 115 should follow behind Panzer Regiment 8, and Regiment 200 behind Panzer Regiment 5.

One Batterie from Artillery Regiment 33 and a company from Anti-Tank Regiment 33 were attached to each of the infantry regiments, and a heavy anti-aircraft Batterie (88s) would travel with Regiment 200. 'The attack will be carried out at all speed,' the commander of 15th Rifle Brigade told his unit commanders, 'using all our armoured strength. The infantry brigade will remain in transport as long as possible and will not debus until it comes under heavy infantry fire. Drive right into the enemy if possible. Push through to the escarpment east of Sidi Rezegh. Co-operate closely with the tanks.'

Colonel Kriebel repeats the statement that these dispositions were made on the orders of 15th Panzer Division and comments that 'Panzer Regiment 5 (with 40 tanks) was placed on the right, where the enemy strength had suffered during the fighting of the morning, and Panzer Regiment 8 (110 [sic] tanks) on the left where the strongest resistance was expected'. Of the rather unconventional proposal, that 'the rifle regiments should follow close on the heels of the panzer regiments and break into the enemy position, still seated in their vehicles', he explains, 'The Division determined on this risky measure because the time required for an infantry attack through the deep enemy positions was certainly lacking'.

Ariete was 'invited' to take part in the attack on the left flank, but Kriebel says, 'It would appear that no detailed co-ordination regarding objectives, boundary lines, mutual artillery support and signal service was arranged'. If this is true—and Colonel Kriebel certainly ought to know—it argues an absence of central control, explained but perhaps not altogether excused, by the fact that Cruewell had only a very small tactical headquarters and left the conduct of the attack to 15th Panzer. In any case, the Italians, who had learned in more than one clash during the last few days what would happen when their M 13s charged a British formation, were entitled to view the proposed action with misgiving.

Rommel played no part in the coming attack, which in fact constituted a major departure from his own instructions. Kriebel states that in accordance with his usual custom the German Commander-in-Chief left his new Battle Headquarters at El Adem early that morning, intending to join the Afrikakorps. He did not arrive at Corps Headquarters, and did not intervene in the operations of either of the panzer divisions. 'It is probable', Kriebel surmises, 'that on his way to D.A.K. he arrived at the Africa Regiment south of Bir Scieuarat at a moment of crisis and, as was his custom, took a personal hand in the defence. Thus it appears that Panzergruppe was informed of the events of the day very late, and even then insufficiently.' There is no trace in official documents of Rommel's movements during that day, but it is indeed extremely likely that on his way to Point 175 he received news of the overrunning of Afrikakorps Headquarters at Bir el Giaser, and hurried to deal with what might have become a very grave threat to his flank. In any case the battle of the Sunday of the Dead was directed entirely by Afrikakorps.

The midday lull: 5 S.A. Infantry Brigade

For most of 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade the Sunday morning passed uneventfully. The whole leaguer was

subject to a harassing shell-fire, most of which came from the heavy artillery of Group Boettcher on the slopes of Belhamed, though some members of the Brigade wondered privately whether over-enthusiasm on the part of their fellow brigade away to the south might not have something to do with it. Men in the artillery and infantry had some steady digging to take their minds off the disadvantages of their situation, but the rocky soil put any serious entrenching out of the question. 3rd Transvaal Scottish claimed to be 'fairly well dug in', in spite of 'the extremely rocky nature of the ground', but a company commander of the Regiment Botha on their right remembers that 'the men tried to dig in but the desert was too rocky. Only one mortar was properly dug in, the other only a foot or two, while the slit trenches were a matter of inches.' The digging-in of field-guns was no more successful, and most of the 2-pounder anti-tank guns remained on their portees.

After the excitements of the early morning the B Echelon settled down, rather more relieved at the disappearance of the panzers than the situation altogether justified. In spite of their losses, they still formed what the Germans described as 'an enormous concentration of vehicles', and 'towards midday', says the report of 4th S.A. Reserve Motor Transport Company, 'orders were received for B Echelon to close up on Bde H.Q. and spread out on the right flank'. The Scots Guards say that 'the entire B Echelon of 5 S.A. Bde was inside the perimeter of defence', but this means little more than that they were not actually detached from their parent formation, and that some artillery positions lay along the southern front.

The defence of the unprotected south face attracted the attention of General Gott, who had spent the night within the 5th Brigade leaguer and now advised Brigadier Armstrong on the problem of strengthening the position. He ordered the Scots Guards [20] to come under command of 5th Brigade, and sited D Battery of 3rd Royal Horse Artillery with its twelve 2-pounders, also from Support Group, in the B Echelon area to meet any further attack from the

south. The composite regiment of 22nd Armoured Brigade, with two batteries of 25-pounders from 2nd Royal Horse Artillery, 'took up a hull-down position near the south-west corner of 5 S.A. Bde Gp leaguer'. [21] At the same time General Gott withdrew the headquarters and the remainder of the infantry of 7th Support Group from the flank of 5th Brigade, but left 4th Royal Horse Artillery to cover that side of the position.

The commander of 3rd S.A. Field Regiment, Lt.-Col. I. B. Whyte, stated in his report, 'About 1130 hours I was told by Gen Gott that 16 guns of 4 R.H.A. would cover our north-eastern flank from which a tank attack was expected. I contacted their O.C. Lt Col Gurrrie and laid a wire to him.' With this additional support on the flank of the Brigade, Whyte was able to strengthen the southern front, and he describes how he 'moved 7 Fd Bty from our eastern flank to our southern flank and re-sited the A/Tk Troops to give A/Tk rotection between the 25-pr btys'. The report of Major Greenwood, one of 'Whyte's battery commanders, describes how E Troop of 9th S.A. Field Battery was moved from the northern flank of S.A. Irish to meet an attack from the south-west and a troop (probably of six guns) from 60th Field Regiment R.A. was brought in to take its place. At the same time most of the guns of 3rd S.A. Anti-Tank Battery were moved to protect the Brigade against an attack from the south. I Troop, which had been with 3rd Transvaal Scottish, was placed on the western flank of the B Echelon, and three guns of K Troop were brought from the sector of and Regiment Botha and disposed on the B Echelon's south-eastern flank. Two guns of J Troop (with the S.A. Irish) were sited to fire from a position between the B Echelon and the Irish. [22]

The South African anti-tank guns remained on their portees, and General Gott afterwards remarked, 'Many of our portee anti-tank guns were set alight by enemy fire before the tanks got within range, and that was a contributory cause to the Germans' success. The lesson is to have the guns off the truck and dug-in.' [23] Apart, however, from the feasibility of digging in at all, it should

be remembered that the situation was extremely fluid. The intentions of the enemy were unknown, and General Gott himself warned the South Africans to be prepared for an attack from the north—whence Rommel had, in fact, intended the main thrust to come. Cruewell's elaborate outflanking movement might turn out to be a mere feint, and the way in which the tanks disengaged during the morning, when all was going well, might be taken as confirmation. That very afternoon, moreover, L Troop of 33rd New Zealand Anti-Tank Battery engaged the Germans from their portees on the flank of the South African Brigade.

After the move to their new positions, the gunners observed a good deal of enemy movement to the south and south-west. Lieutenant Allen, the Gun Position Officer of E Troop of 9th S.A. Field Battery, described how thirty tanks moving off to the south-west were engaged over open sights. They halted about 4000 yards away and we continued to harass them and other targets with observed fire on and off for a couple of hours. I saw only one tank definitely out of action. The tanks then moved out of sight. [24] Things remained fairly quiet after that, except for some desultory and not very accurate counter-battery shelling from a northerly direction.

Some time later, about 1130 hours. Major Harris of 7th S.A. Field Battery saw 'an enemy column moving from east to west some 6000 yards South of the Bde'. The column was reported to consist of fifty-two tanks followed by anything between 100 and 500 lorries and was given some 100 rounds of gunfire. [25] Enemy artillery replied, and the armoured cars which acted as observation posts for the South African guns were driven in. Major Harris states:

I reported this fact to R.H.Q., giving details of the enemy column (i.e. direction of movement and approx. locality). I was then ordered to hold my fire as reinforcements, including South Africans, were expected from the South. Enemy shelling continued spasmodically. Shortly after this I observed a column coming towards me from the South. I went out in my Arm

Gar and established that it comprised a Battalion of the Royal Scots Guards [i.e. 2nd Scots Guards]. As apparently still further reinforcements were expected I was told to continue holding my fire. A portion of the Royal [sic] Scots Guards which I estimated to be a company, remained on my positions and started to dig in.

According to the War Diary of 2nd Scots Guards, the Left-flanking Company was ordered to support 3rd Transvaal Scottish, and their Right-flanking Company 'to hold reserve positions'. They must have arrived about 1400 hours, since General Gott had already left Brigade Headquarters, after giving orders that they should come under Armstrong's command. The Guards were left much to their own devices and some of them settled down in the area of the South African Irish, in front of the guns of 9th Field Battery, and had to be persuaded to move away.

After the battle there was a general feeling among survivors of 5th Brigade that insufficient attention had been paid to the concentration of the Afrikakorps on the south-west, and too little done to interfere with its replenishment and refuelling.

Critics expressed the belief that any artillery officers in the Brigade, who displayed initiative and wished to fire on the masses of transport within range, were summarily checked by Brigade Headquarters. Furthermore the armoured cars which investigated these concentrations away in the desert had solid reason to judge them 'unfriendly', yet they found Brigade Headquarters apathetic. Both 4th S.A. Armoured Cars and No. 1 Company of 3rd S.A. Reconnaissance Battalion complained that the liaison officers whom they sent in to report were treated at Brigade Headquarters with an indifference which amounted to contempt. 4th S.A. Armoured Cars (which were not under command of the Brigade) sent a liaison officer to report the beginning of the charge of the German tanks, but the officer in question complained that senior officers at Brigade told him they were too busy to listen to his news, and that he must make his report to a sergeant clerk.

On the other hand, the dispositions which General Gott ordered, and his own letter to General Theron, show that he at least was aware of the danger and took what precautions he could with the artillery at his disposal. It is true also that General Brink had signalled 'Ons is na by en ons kom',²⁶ and in consequence 1st S.A. Brigade was expected to arrive at any moment from the south—though it had in fact turned back a matter of 3 miles on its tracks. Further, it was no time for extravagant use of ammunition. 5th S.A. Brigade was now cut off from communication with the south and no one knew when fresh supplies would be available. According to Major Hull, second-in-command of 3rd S.A. Field Regiment, the Regiment then had 150 rounds per gun—by no means an excessive supply. 200 rounds were lent to 4th Royal Horse Artillery, who were 'very short', and some other ammunition was given to 60th Field Regiment, and there was every reason why indiscriminate artillery fire should be discouraged. [26]

Whether Brigade Headquarters could have displayed more initiative within the instructions given by General Gott, or might perhaps have taken a more definite line themselves, and certainly whether they might not have handled liaison officers more tactfully, are matters of opinion rather than of historical fact. It may be accepted, without any reflection on Brigade, that the armoured cars were aware of the situation on the south-western front, the artillery observers were active, and the gun position officers ready to play their part. At the same time there were good reasons for believing that a large body of reinforcements was coming up from the south, and also for husbanding the ammunition of the guns. Apart from the threatened front of the Brigade, however, unit commanders knew little of what was going on, and the German assault took most people by surprise, but there is evidence that steps had been taken, within the limited resources available, to meet it.

Towards midday. Brigade Headquarters had a welcome reminder that they were not alone in the struggle. Brigadier

Barrowclough had arrived at Bir Sciuearat after his night march and, while preparing to assault Point 175, sent off his 26th Battalion to make contact with the South Africans. The Battalion reached its allotted area, south-west of Hareifet en Nbeidat and a mile or two east of 5th S.A. Brigade, at 1225 and, 'After mid-day', says their history,

The CO [Lt.-Col. J. R. Page] left to establish contact with the South Africans. When he reached their headquarters he was informed that a tank-supported attack was expected at any time. Reconnaissance had shown that the enemy was organising a large striking force behind the southern escarpment. [27] The supporting arms with the brigade were not strong enough to break up this concentration. Long-range guns had already started several fires in the South African sector and the tempo of enemy shelling was steadily increasing. Somewhat perturbed by this news Lt Col Page returned to his headquarters. [28] Beside his bad news, however, he was able to bring back some anti-tank ammunition.

About midday the German guns to the north—the heavy guns of Group Boettcher on Belhamed and those of 21st Panzer Division nearer at hand—began a steady bombardment of the 5th Brigade position. The Transvaal Scottish say:

“The enemy shells were directed against our own arty, which were on either side and just forward of Battalion H.Q. The enemy Arty O.P. must have been very well sighted, as their fire was particularly deadly on any vehicle which dared approach anywhere near the front line. This made the bringing forward of ammunition extremely difficult. Just after 1400 hours, when communications forward had broken down, Major Rosser went forward, leaving Capt Ruddock and Major Berry at B.H.Q. Major Rosser found that in spite of the heavy barrage very few casualties had occurred in our lines and the men were in good spirits and calmly awaiting an expected infantry attack.”

The heavy bombardment certainly seemed to presage an attack from the

north, and Brigade Headquarters sent up the Reserve Company of the Regiment President Steyn to cover the northern face, and ordered both the Regiment Botha and the South African Irish to detach a company apiece to prepare a second line of defence about 1,000 yards in rear of the Scottish front line. Two anti-tank guns from I Troop were moved back from the B Echelon to support the Transvaal Scottish.

About 1400 hours General Gott left the South African perimeter. Before he went he warned Brigade Headquarters of the danger from the southwest, and the Brigade Report says that 'Comd 7 Armd Div assured the Bde Comd that with the guns available on that sector our tanks would be able to take care of the enemy'. General Gott had also told Colonel Page that he should site the guns with 26th New Zealand Battalion to cover the north, south, and east faces of their position: on the west, 4th Royal Horse Artillery—who were deployed on a line running between the South African Brigade and the New Zealanders—would be able to give them protection. The General drove first to the headquarters of C Squadron of 4th S.A. Armoured Gars, which lay north-east of the Brigade, and used them as his personal escort for the rest of the day. Here he stayed for some time while matters worked up to a crisis, sitting 'right up on his turret', quite unmoved by the 'overs' and ricochets from the battles to south and east, and the harassing fire from the north, and rallying the squadron commander [29] for 'ducking' more than once as he walked across from his armoured car to report. Colonel Larmuth remembers that 'Gott repeatedly would ask about enemy guns and tank positions and spoke endlessly at times into his mike'.

While he was at Larmuth's eadquarters, news came through from the South African armoured cars south of the 5th Brigade that the German column had 'formed up almost in line abreast and facing north', and Lannuth says:

I asked Gott about this and he said he knew all about it. He said the enemy force there would be tackled 'later on' if it wasn't too late. He said distinctly to

me that 'Your South African Brigade seems stuck down with gum—they won't move and they won't turn their artillery round and they are not dug in—I am sorry for them'. This rather shocked me and Gott said that he could not get them to move round and it was too late to dig. He said he couldn't understand them at all. [30]

South of Sidi Muftah

Even after the losses of the first three days of the campaign, 7th Armoured Division and 1st S.A. Division should together have been strong enough to contain the Afrikakorps. But 7th Armoured Division was still not concentrated and the forces ranged south of Point 178 were only a fraction of General Gott's command. Substantial bodies of guns, tanks, and infantry lay to the southward, and the German forces thrusting round 5th S.A. Brigade watched them with not unjustified anxiety. In the middle of the morning 15th Panzer Division detached one battalion of its panzer regiment to deal with menacing tanks and harassing artillery, and when Panzer Regiment 5 came belatedly up to Bir es Sreuil it engaged a force estimated at sixteen tanks with armoured cars, a 'Batterie', and supply vehicles, away to the south. Panzer Regiment 5 claims to have driven these off to the south-west, giving the major credit for the success to the Batterie of 88s, and thereafter they faced south and east and 'engaged enemy tanks moving from south to east and north-east at long range'.

German reports did not commonly underrate the opposition, and it is possible that somewhat anxious reports of the threat presented by these forces helped to discourage Cruewell from following up his first success against the transport echelons of 5th S.A. Brigade.

But the forces in the south which disturbed the Afrikakorps were not themselves concentrated, and even after a good deal of regrouping still formed three unrelated clusters of odds and ends. These were 1st S.A. Brigade Group, whose front was somewhere just east of Hagfet en Nadura, the remnants of Support Group under Brigadier

Campbell, which were concentrating between Bir el Chelb and Bir er Reghem, and the balance, perhaps two-thirds in all, of 4th Armoured Brigade, which Brigadier Davy's tactful phrase describes as 'not fully under control'. Of the units of 4th Armoured Brigade, most of 3rd RTR spent the night south of the airfield and moved at 0530 to Hareifet en Nbeidat in order to cover the eastern flank of the South Africans. At 0745 they were directed to join Brigade Headquarters near Hagfet ez Zghemat el Garbia some 5 miles to the south, and clashed unexpectedly with the forward movement of General Cruewell's armour on the way. According to the Brigade War Diary, the greater part of the Regiment was collected by the Brigadier during the morning and 'instructed to help in the defence of the [Support Group] leaguer and [was] busily employed during the whole day. They had a great opportunity for individual action and undoubtedly caused many casualties to the enemy.' [31] Major Crisp and his group are typical of the part played by 3rd RTR in harassing the Afrikakorps.

5th RTR moved south from their night leaguer and joined their artillery consorts, part of and Royal Horse Artillery, near Sidi Mohammed el Abied, about 4 miles south-east of Bir er Reghem. At about 1000 hours the commander of the Regiment reported to Brigadier Gatehouse, who was trying to round up the remnants of 8th Hussars in the north near Point 175, that the South African Brigade was being heavily attacked to the northwest, and suggested that he should move to their assistance. The War Diary says that he was warned 'to wait where we were owing to the threat from the south', and later that 'the bn was ordered to the assistance of the South Africans on three occasions, and on each occasion the order was cancelled'. During the afternoon, according to the Brigade War Diary, 'the Bde Comdr set out with a tank of 3 RTR and reached them about 1630 hrs. 4 tanks of 8H commanded by Major P. Sandbach were also found. Brigade leaguered in this area.' 5th RTR were actually on their way towards 5th Brigade at the time, and had travelled some 2 miles, but went no farther. In effect, therefore, only one of the two remaining regiments of 4th Armoured

Brigade played any part in the operations of the Sunday of the Dead, and that only in a series of gallant but unrelated individual actions. The Report of Panzer Regiment 5 shows that these activities, although something of a nuisance, did not prevent the Afrikakorps from carrying out its intention for 23 November.

Much more concern was caused to the Germans by the miscellaneous group of tanks, armoured cars, and guns, which had been collected so dramatically by Brigadier Campbell during the morning. After the Germans withdrew from the B Echelon and went on to make their junction with Ariete, Brigadier Campbell was ordered to remove what was left of 7th Support Group from its place beside 5th S.A. Brigade and reform farther south. Round the nucleus formed by the Headquarters of Support Group, what someone called 'the predatory instincts' of the Brigadier had collected a quantity of the flotsam and jetsam of the battle-field, including most of the surviving tanks of 7th Armoured Brigade. The force congregated a little to the south-west of Bir er Reghem, where many of its vehicles promptly became embedded in yet another bog. They were struggling to get free when the group was attacked by a reconnaissance unit of Ariete Division, feeling northwards for contact with the Afrikakorps. 'A dozen light tanks appeared from the blue', says Brigadier Davy, 'and drove straight at the regiment. It was a very gallant but fruitless attack, as every one of them was knocked out.' The M 13s in the background retired when they were engaged by the 25-pounders. [32] Soon afterwards Brigadier Campbell was joined by the Headquarters of 22nd Armoured Brigade, and the whole group refuelled preparatory to moving north to intervene in the enemy attack on 5th Brigade.

The mere presence of Brigadier Campbell's group in their rear, with the fire of his guns, caused uneasiness to the Afrikakorps as they developed their attack on 5th S.A. Brigade, but the British tanks were powerless to intervene. There was no means of communication with Armstrong's Headquarters, whose wave-length and call-sign were unknown, and any

advance on their part would have brought them under the Brigade's defensive fire. But the very presence of the group was alarming, and the fire of its guns caused the Germans a good deal of inconvenience. About 1630 hours. Brigadier Davy arrived with the Headquarters of 7th Armoured Brigade, to which he had added F Troop of 21st S.A. Field Battery, borrowed from Brigadier Pienaar, and 'a few resuscitated tanks of the and RTR'. Brigadier Davy has written, 'I was halted about 2 miles north of Pienaar's brigade, and did not see the battle, but when I heard noises at about 1430 I decided to go up to see how the remains of 7H were getting on supporting the Support Group. I also decided to winkle some guns out of Dan Pienaar if I could. It took some time to do this, and I was surprised and honoured when I got them! When we got up to 7H, who were in line covering the Support Group (tactically incorrect of course), I told the troop to get into action, and the troop commander and O.C. 7H and myself decided that the mass of vehicles we saw moving east was South African. So the troop did not in fact open fire at all.'

Away to the south-west of Brigadier Campbell's group lay 1st S.A. Infantry Brigade. After the first sight of the enemy advance near Hagfet el Hareiba, the Brigade had fallen back some 2½ miles: observation officers were sent out in front, 'and artillery fire was opened on the enemy column'. The War Diary of 7th S.A. Field Regiment says, 'Batteries engaged enemy columns. Shooting proceeded right through the day.' 27/28th Medium Battery R.A. was also in action and 'ammunition expenditure had been heavy', but the other battery of 7th Medium Regiment—25/26th—which General Brink sent up during the morning, did not fire. The Brigade Narrative claims 'the complete destruction of 4 enemy tanks and heavy punishment to his motorized infantry'. One German column collided with 1st Transvaal Scottish, whose history has a graphic account of how the enemy infantrymen leaped from the vehicles and took cover, while three tanks charged the South African position. Of these, one is said to have fallen into a mortar pit and surrendered, another to have been

knocked out by an anti-tank gun, while the third, 'laden with clinging Germans, ran as far as B Company H.Q. before it was stopped by cooks and clerks'. The report of Colonel de Wet du Toit, artillery commander of 1st S.A. Division, states that two tanks—a Panzer III and a Panzer IV—were knocked out by O Troop of 4th Anti-Tank Battery and two members of the crews were killed: 'The crews were taken prisoner by TS.'

Lieutenant N. S. Stranger, of 1st Transvaal Scottish, was given an immediate award of the Military Cross for the capture of a German tank which he is said to have 'chased in an 8 cwt lorry, brandishing a "sticky bomb" '.

After his second visit to 1st S.A. Brigade, General Brink got back to his Headquarters, 2 miles east of Point 181, at 1215. Here he found a signal, timed 1105, from 5th Brigade: 'Tk battle appears to have taken place around us all day. B Ech involved enemy tks but attack repulsed. Our posn same as reported yesterday.' To this General Brink replied: 'Ons is naby en ons kom. Ander mense kom ook van ander kant. Hou vas. Ons is.' [33]

General Brink went on almost at once to General Norrie's Advanced Headquarters, where he arrived at 1315 hours and explained the situation. The Corps Commander told him that a major tank battle was in progress and ordered him to link up with 5th S.A. Brigade, but General Brink on his side 'told him that in the absence of a Bn Gp of 1 Inf Bde at Bir el Gubi and with no tps in Div reserve I did not feel strong enough to do this. Lt-Gen Norrie immediately gave orders for the Bn Gp (1 R.N.G.) at Bir el Gubi to rejoin 1 Inf Bde.' It was not until dusk, however, that the detachment reappeared, and its absence during the critical period of 23 November seriously limited the capacity of 1st S.A. Brigade to intervene. At this stage, General Norrie's Headquarters were somewhat to the east of 1st S.A. Brigade, and during the morning enemy columns had been seen at intervals, passing from east to west just north of their position. A German staff car actually passed within 150 yards of the Headquarters and was

chased and shot up by one of the protective armoured cars.

Back again at his own Advanced Headquarters, General Brink was handed a further signal from 5th Brigade, timed 1335: Situation now clearer. Enemy columns which were South of us moving West attacked our own tks. Thought prisoners escaped during hostile attack B Echelon but still checking. Btys accounted for several tks. Still checking. Number of casualties to-day still unknown. Our rugby friends [New Zealanders] contacted our right flank. Essential Dan 1st S.A. Inf Bde reports posn avoid attack by our own Btys. Hope send off casualties and arrange collect amn, rations and water as soon as Armd C patrol reports clear.

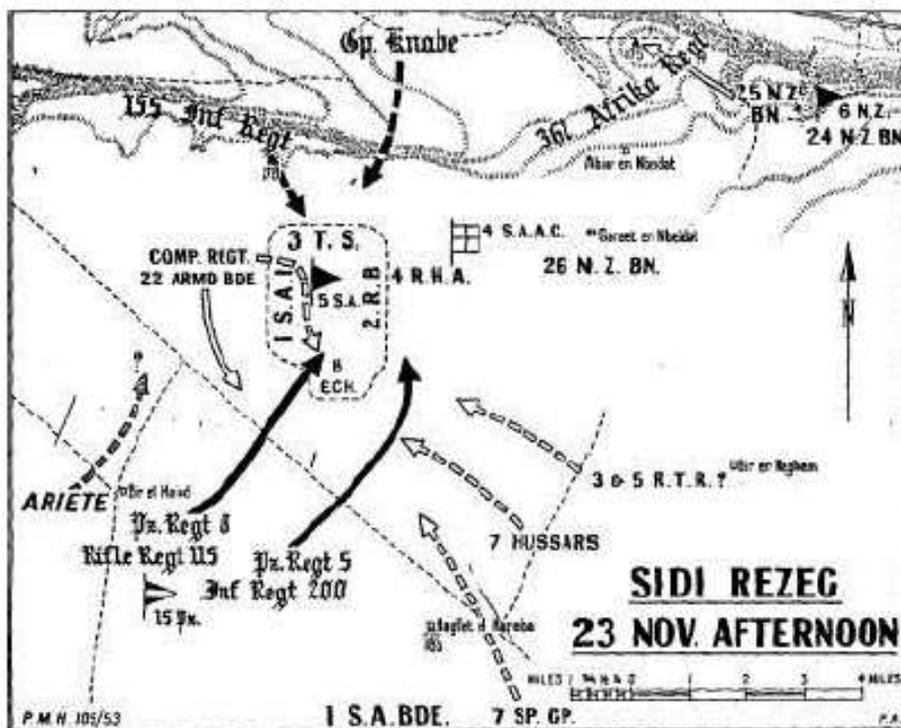
At 1525 General Brink, who had just had a message by radio-telephone from 30th Corps, sent an emergency operations signal to both 1st and 5th Brigades: '85 enemy tks 430389 [a mile and a half north-west of Hagfet el Hareiba]. 300 MT 15 tks 423390 [a mile south-west of Bir el Haiad]. Apparently stationary at present. Sqn our own Armd Cs being sent NW 1 Inf Bde to observe until dark.' This signal was immediately picked up and correctly transcribed by the ever-watchful German intercept service.

General Brink was once more on his way to 1st Brigade Headquarters when he met Brigadier Pienaar, who explained 'what his dispositions were, and said that there was still, as far as he could judge, the same enemy force between his Bde and 5 Inf Bde. He thought his right flank was weak and was relieved to learn that the R.N.G. Gp had been ordered to rejoin him.' The sands were, however, running out. The enemy tanks did not remain 'apparently stationary' much longer, nor did the armoured cars have to observe until dark.

At 1555 Advanced Headquarters of the South African Division were passing a signal to the Brigade Major of 5th S.A. Brigade when the latter suddenly interjected, 'Wait!' It was the Brigade's last word.

The charge of the Afrikakorps

From midday onwards the forces of the Afrikakorps to the south and west of 5th Brigade proceeded to reorganize along a line which stretched southeastward from Bir el Haiad. Meanwhile German infantry in the north, together with 'a few odd tanks', made some movement against the Transvaal Scottish but were kept off by the guns of 8th Field Battery. There was talk,



later, of a 'feint' attack from the north, intended to distract the attention of the Brigade from the real assault which was coming from their rear, but the German documents contain no record of any proposed feint, and it was not until 1530, after the main body had been sent off, that Cruewell bethought himself of von Ravenstein's infantry and ordered him to attack. If anything, the 'demonstration' from the north was a serious movement, called off perhaps, because Brigadier Barrowclough's success against Point 175 seemed to put in jeopardy the whole of the rear areas of the Afrikakorps.

Away to the south, 15th Panzer complained that their redeployment was hampered by hostile artillery fire, which could not be evaded owing to the marshy character of the area in which they lay. Colonel Kriebel remarks that the assembly was hampered by 'heavy fire from over 100 enemy guns which could not be kept down by our weak artillery', and though his estimate is much exaggerated it serves as a useful corrective to the complaint of many South African survivors that the enemy had been allowed to concentrate with no interference whatever. The twenty-four field-guns and four of the mediums with 1st S.A. Brigade were certainly firing on the Germans from the south, and, in all probability, G Battery of 2nd Royal Horse Artillery with the composite regiment of 22nd Armoured Brigade was also in action on the north. In 5th Brigade, however, Lieut.-Colonel Whyte of 3rd S.A. Field Regiment was chary of firing since he knew that 1st S.A. Brigade was close at hand and on its way up to support them, and 'owing to the mirage positive identification was impossible'. [34] Nevertheless, a certain amount of fire was brought down on specific targets. At 1445, when the hostile character of the concentration to the south-west was becoming clear, E Troop of 9th S.A. Field Battery was engaging what seemed to be 'about 150 [tanks] with a number of big vehicles'.

On the other hand 15th Panzer did not lack the power to retaliate, and its artillery did in fact engage the 5th

Brigade. 'At about 1400 hours,' reported Captain Cowley, commander of E Troop, 'counter-battery fire was brought to bear on the troop position—we were not firing at the time—but the fire was not very accurate, although we had to keep our heads down.' At the same time harassing fire, which came in part from the heavy batteries to the north, fell steadily throughout the Brigade perimeter, setting vehicles alight and creating a mounting sense of tension. Some time after 1500 hours Regimental Headquarters of 4th S.A. Armoured Cars, which lay just outside the south-west corner of the Brigade perimeter, came under the fire of 'eight 105 mm. howitzers firing off a tractor and drawn by Mercedes gun-towers [i.e.tractors]'. Considerable movement could now be observed in the enemy concentration: lines of tanks and infantry had been formed and were beginning to advance, and 4th Armoured Car Headquarters moved to the opposite side of the Brigade. It was no time for a flank move across the threatened front, and they took a short cut through the Brigade position, but regimental dignity was considerably ruffled when 'an M.P. actually rode up on a motor-cycle in formal "traffic cop" fashion and signalled that they should go slower through the camp area'.

After the long noon-tide delay, the German attack seemed to develop suddenly. By 1500 hours Cruewell had got his long lines of tanks and vehicles marshalled in something like the parade-ground style he had intended, and he gave the order to advance. Once the Afrikakorps had set out on its charge, the less time spent in dallying the better, and they moved swiftly. 'At about 1515', says Captain Cowley, 'approx 200 enemy vehicles headed by tanks made an attack from the south-west, and the troop on my orders immediately engaged them over open sights.' The Gun Position Officer, Lieut. K. B. Allen, says, A large body of transport came over the horizon to the South moving from right to left diagonally towards us. We opened fire over open sights as soon as we distinguished them as enemy vehicles. The transport column was followed by a force of at least 70 tanks which cut in towards us making for the centre of the Irish position. Our guns engaged

them continuously, swinging more and more to the left until they were outflanked by the tanks. The tanks kept up A.P. and M.G. fire all the time.

Behind the charging panzers came the infantry, tightly packed in thin-skinned vehicles and forming an admirable target: they suffered severely. Kriebel says:.

Heavy fighting broke out at once. A terrific fire front of well over 100 guns concentrated on the two attacking panzer regiments and the two rifle regiments following close behind in their vehicles. A concentration of anti-tank weapons unusual in this theatre of war, and cleverly hidden among enemy vehicles which had been knocked out during the morning, inflicted heavy losses on the two rifle regiments. The flanking fire was particularly irksome which came from the left [i.e. the area of the S.A. Irish], the sector of Panzer Division Ariete, which had not yet embarked on the attack.

Panzer Regiment 8 reported that as they advanced, covered by the fire of their Artillery Regiment 33, the hostile shell-fire which had hampered their assembly 'increased to a terrific extent'. Lieut.-Colonel Cramer, the regimental commander, drove straight into the enemy before him: 'he personally led the regiment forward, and at every sign of faltering spurred it on by brief exhortations over the air', and by 1530 the first battalion under Captain Kuemmel had broken into the South African position. Behind the tanks came Rifle Regiment 115 which increased its speed under 'the terrific shell and tank fire'. As they came in sight over the rise 'the first aimed fire was opened on the regiment, which suffered casualties to men and vehicles. Lieut.-Colonel Zintel, unperturbed, led the regiment standing upright in his vehicle.' The second battalion of the regiment had come up level with the first, 200 metres from the enemy's lines, when heavy machine-gun and anti-tank fire fell on them from the left flank, and the regimental commander, who had intended to cover the last few paces in his transport, was compelled to debus. 'One of the first to be killed was Lieut.-Colonel Zintel, who was hit by machine-gun fire

at the head of the regiment barely 100 metres from the foremost enemy positions. The enemy defensive fire reopened in front. Soon most of the officers and NCOs of the regiment were killed or wounded.'

The War Diary of 15th Panzer Division takes up the tale and describes how Major von Grolman (I/115) led the armoured company forward to relieve the regiment. He also was killed. The regiment was brought to a standstill. Almost all its vehicles were immobilized and it was under heavy defensive fire. The divisional commander came forward to the front line of Rifle Regiment 115 and ordered the adjutant, Lieut Struckmann, to rally the regiment and continue the attack.

In the confusion the original plan, which had envisaged the infantry following in the path of the tanks, had gone astray, and Rifle Regiment 115 actually found itself charging on the flank of the panzers instead of coming in behind them. At 1600 hours, says the Division, 'After a short reorganization the Panzer Regiment advanced again and pushed deeper into the enemy lines. II/8 turned away to the north-west to relieve the infantry regiment and beat off a counter-attack on the left by 20 tanks.'

On the left wing was disposed the force, amounting to two-thirds of Ariete Division, under General di Nisio, but little information is available concerning its activities.[35] The Diary of the Afrikakorps remarks that 'it was further noticeable that Ariete was hanging back' and at 1600 hours records 'The Corps Commander urged Ariete to increase the speed of its advance, as almost all the defensive fire of 80-100 guns [36] and numerous anti-tank guns was falling on 15th Panzer Division'. The 3rd Batterie of Anti-Aircraft Regiment 33—88s—went in on the left of the first wave of tanks of Panzer Regiment 8, with Ariete on its own left flank. 'Our tanks advanced too quickly', it reported, 'and there were scattered enemy infantry posts everywhere, and therefore the machine-gun and rifle fire was too heavy for the Batterie to keep contact with our tanks. Ariete, however, advanced very slowly, so that the gap

between the two divisions grew wider and wider.' What had happened was that the fire of the defending artillery—though only a fifth of the strength which the Germans reckoned—had disorganized the whole left flank of the German attack and some units came to a standstill. The divisional commander himself had to take a hand to get the advance moving.

It was at this moment that Lieut.-Colonel Garr, commanding the composite regiment of 22nd Armoured Brigade, on the extreme right of the British position, decided to intervene. 'Suddenly', reported Anti-Tank Unit 33, 'the enemy opened fire from the left flank, where Ariete should have been, at first with artillery and then with tanks and Bren carriers.' The second Batterie of the unit was brought up to deal with the British tanks, and a platoon of the anti-tank troops belonging to the infantry regiment, significantly described as unable 'to go forward because of the heavy fire and waiting among the supply vehicles of Rifle Regiment 115, was brought up to engage the advancing enemy tanks'. The 'dangerous gap which threatened to open behind the infantry regiment' caused the German commanders considerable alarm, and the anti-tank and anti-aircraft artillery which habitually covered the flanks of the panzer regiment [37] were hurried up and thrown in against the British tanks. They claim, 'A violent action took place in which 5 enemy tanks were destroyed. The enemy was forced to abandon his intention of pushing through the gap and retire north. Ariete Division then closed up.'

On the other side, the 22nd Armoured Brigade War Diary describes how, as the German tanks came in sight from the west, 'we were heavily shelled our left flank and the right corner of the S.A. Brigade leaguer being the worst sufferers'. As the enemy tanks approached,

The Sqn under Major Walker, 4 Sharpshooters, went in, out again, then in. The plan was to withdraw to the NE leaving our original position open for the South African gunners to have a good shot at the enemy tanks left front. Owing to the steady advance of the

enemy and the continued shelling from his rear, we were never able to break off action with the enemy tanks.

As the panzers pressed on, the tanks of 22nd Armoured Brigade rallied, the composite Sqn 4 Sharpshooters under Major Walker engaged them on the left while Lt Col Garr rushed to the right flank, rallied the Sqn 2 RGH and led them in a glorious charge broadside across the enemy advance, every tank firing its hardest. All the time, C Bty 4 RHA and the SA Arty were firing hard into the enemy's right flank.

On the right wing Panzer Regiments—reduced to forty tanks after the battle of the landing-ground on the previous day—together with Infantry Regiment 200, were making what was virtually an independent assault. The Panzer Regiment's Report states that their orders were to advance 'toward Point 179 (east of Rugbet en Nbeidat)' and their line of march would have taken them past the eastern flank of 5th S.A. Brigade. [38] The Report continues, however, 'After moving a few kilometres NNE, No. 1 Battalion came under heavy shell-fire. The direction of the advance was altered. Shortly after that, enemy tanks appeared from the right, and heavy fighting developed.' The panzers then swung left, towards the north-west, into the mass of transport belonging to 5th S.A. Infantry Brigade. [39]

On the right of the German line the attack encountered much the same hazards as on the left. Here too the orderly progression of tanks and infantry, with their supporting artillery, which Cruewell had envisaged, gave place to confusion. Infantry Regiment 200, which had been facing south towards 1st S.A. Brigade and the Support Group, complained that they had been given a bare twenty minutes to turn their transport about and face north, and that during the move the motor-cycle battalion told off to lead the attack became badly bogged down in the wet sand. The field Batterie also went astray and does not seem to have come up into line at all. By the time the Regiment was ready, 'there was a considerable gap between them and the tanks ahead'.

Here too, the advance came under heavy artillery fire from the north-west: [40] 'Some of the leading troops of 15th Motor-Cycle Battalion drew back and threatened to halt the advance. The immediate intervention of the regimental commander prevented this, and after a short interruption the advance was resumed.' The commander of 15th Rifle Brigade appeared with news that the infantry on the left wing could make little headway and ordered Regiment 200 to swing to the east where resistance seemed to be less. [41] The westward wheel of Panzer Regiment 5 had deprived the infantry on the right wing of their spearhead of tanks, and the increasing shell and anti-tank fire from north and north-west, and machine-gun and heavy mortar fire from ahead, caused the motor-cycle battalion to falter and fall back. Machine-Gun Battalion 2 was brought up from the rear, but also floundered in the wet sand and, in face of heavy fire, debussed early. Night was falling before they pushed through and, according to their claim, captured 'two batteries and a large number of prisoners' without either tank or artillery support. By that time, however, resistance within the perimeter was at an end.

All this while, the Germans complained, their right flank was menaced by tanks and armoured cars, which were held off by the 88s and the antitank Batterie. One 88 mm. was lost in the course of the action.

Penetration and destruction

To the approaching Germans, the South African Brigade had been the embodiment of active and deadly resistance: to those within the perimeter the advance of the Afrikakorps seemed inevitable, inexorable, and undeviating. As the line of German tanks and troop-carriers topped the rise to the south and bore down upon the B Echelon, the mass of defenceless vehicles took to flight once more, spreading alarm and chaos as they went. Some say that they 'began streaming to the south-west': [42] the Scots Guards assert that 'this transport with some armoured cars began moving east as soon as the attack began'. The eastward movement seems the more likely, and the hasty departure of the transport units is

understandable enough, but the spectacle of a mass of bolting transport cannot have been good for younger members of the Brigade facing their first serious battle, while the resulting confusion hampered the attempts of the artillery to deal with the German armour. Some units retained a sort of cohesion even in flight, and the reports of 4th S.A. Reserve Motor Transport Company and 5th S.A. Brigade Workshops describe how they escaped through the eastern face of the perimeter and across the New Zealand position, before turning to join 1st S.A. Brigade away to the south.

The diagonal approach of the Germans crashed into the 5th Brigade position at its south-west corner, and 7th S.A. Field Battery sited on the south of the B Echelon, and E Troop of 9th S.A. Field Battery, which lay south of the Irish, were soon firing over open sights. The array of antitank guns along the southern face of the position—British and South African—also joined in, and a company of the Scots Guards in this area, together with B Company of and Regiment Botha, met the German infantry with a furious fusillade of mortar, machine-gun and rifle fire.

It was not long before the field-artillery began to run short of ammunition and the gunners called urgently for replenishment. 'Two messages', says Major Harris of 7th S.A. Field Battery, 'were received from my troop commanders asking for ammunition.' But the thrust of the panzers deep into the B Echelon had scattered the battery vehicles.

Captain Millar went back on receipt of the first message and I on the second. I had no idea at this stage that the enemy tanks had broken through the first intimation I had was when I ran into three tanks which put my armoured car out of action with two well-aimed shots. In the terrific movement of MT (both own and enemy) which was taking place around me, I was unable to spot any of my ammunition vehicles and can only presume that they had been removed by the drivers. All ammunition with the guns was fired at the enemy, including smoke.

The artillery commander with the South African Division reports that all this while the gun crews were under 'heavy rifle, mortar and MG fire: some guns received direct hits causing heavy casualties among the detachments'. As the ammunition on the gun positions gave out, the surviving pieces were put out of action, and what was left of their crews got away on the remaining transport.

The two 2-pounders of J Troop [43] of 3rd S.A. Anti-Tank Battery formed part of the force of twenty-one 2-pounder and two 18-pounder anti-tank guns which had been disposed in the south to protect the B Echelon, and here, perched up on their portees, they found themselves in the path of the attacking tanks. 'At 1530 hours', says their report, 'massed tanks moved towards the Section from the south-west in two columns: one column towards the B Echelon, the other towards the south corner of the Irish. The tanks were engaged when they came within range.' At that moment the two guns of I Troop arrived from the area of the Transvaal Scottish under T.S.M. du Plessis, [44] and the two troops opened fire on the approaching tanks. Almost at once a portee of J Troop was hit on the right front wheel and, after firing for what the gunners thought was something over ten minutes but was probably a good deal longer, fell back towards Brigade Headquarters, whither the enemy tanks had already penetrated. [45] After half an hour both guns of I Troop were out of action: one of the portees of J Troop had been hit and burst into flames: the other, hit once at the beginning of the engagement, had been struck twice again, but remained in action. Enemy tanks were all around, and after a time Sergeant-Major Barclay, the Troop Commander, withdrew his remaining gun to the Headquarter lines, where 'eight or ten' other 2-pounders, belonging to 3rd Royal Horse Artillery, had rallied, and put himself under the orders of their commander. Resistance had collapsed, 'a general withdrawal was then seen to be in progress', and the guns disengaged and withdrew towards the east. So long as ammunition held out, E Troop of 9th S.A. Field Battery engaged the panzers steadily as they passed across their front, following them with

their fire until they were themselves out-flanked. The panzers replied with continuous fire from their 50 mm. and machine-guns. Captain F. H. G. Cochran [46] continues the story:

The anti-tank guns on our left fell back, and eventually three of our guns were hit. I told Captain Cowley to pull out his troop, or what was left of them, and fall back on Captain Barren's troop [north of the Irish]. One of our three-tonners, half-full of ammunition, was burning on the position.

The Report of Panzer Regiment 8 would suggest that the German assault was kept well in hand and swept on in orderly precision. But by the end of the day the Regiment was badly confused: Panzer Regiment 5 claims to have absorbed fifteen of their tanks that evening, shepherding them to the Sidi Rezegh airfield: scattered tanks were seen going east by 26th New Zealand Battalion, and four tanks were observed at dusk on the extreme eastern flank of Brigadier Barrowclough's Brigade. Nevertheless, as the defending guns lapsed, one after another, into silence, the tanks pressed on, through the chaos of stampeding vehicles.

'This penetration', says Panzer Regiment 8, 'crippled the enemy. Wherever the tanks were, the enemy surrendered.' Again they say, At 1600 hrs the tanks were deep in the enemy positions. I/8 Panzer Regiment was attacking north through the enemy's rear defensive area. II/8 had swung slightly north-west to relieve pressure on the infantry, who were behind it, and to crush an attack on the division's left flank by about 20 enemy tanks.

The main body of Panzer Regiment 5 had fallen back in face of heavy defensive fire from the east and only a few tanks got through to Captain Kuemmel. This withdrawal, which was contrary to the orders of Lieut.-Colonel Cramer, threatened to cause the collapse of the whole attack. II/8 Panzer Regiment could not keep up with the speed of I/8, as it had to hold off the enemy tank attack and wait for the infantry to follow, and the enemy's defensive fire increased considerably once more. In spite of all, II/8 worked its way slowly to the north. The rate of

progress of the infantry was unbearably slow for the tanks, as the infantry in their soft-skinned vehicles were taking heavy casualties from shell fire, anti-aircraft fire, and anti-tank guns. Some of the infantry vehicles were set alight.

The extemporized group of 22nd Armoured Brigade, repulsed by the German anti-tank Batterie (1/33) in its thrust into the flank of Panzer Regiment 8, fell back, tacking in broad sweeps and firing on the panzers as it went. The Germans followed deliberately as the British cruisers continued to give ground before their superior strength, and the course of the battle took the fighting through the lines of the main dressing station of 11th S.A. Field Ambulance. These lay north of the B Echelon and some 400 yards south of the Brigade Headquarters, and the scene was described by Major Melzer, commander of the Field Ambulance, in his report:

I was able to see the entire battle. The rear line of British tanks kept on patrolling from north to south and south to north, commencing about 400 yards west of the M.D.S. As the battle developed they kept on their patrols, but were gradually being pushed back closer and closer to us. After a while they were about 300 yards away, then 200 yards, then 100 yards, keeping up their north and south movement the whole time. Eventually they reached us, and our tanks actually worked their way between the groups of casualties lying on the ground. The withdrawal continued, and the British tanks were now on the east side of the M.D.S. By this time the German tanks could be seen on the western horizon. At this stage of the battle, the M.D.S. was between the British and the German tanks with the British tanks withdrawing and the German coming nearer. These eventually reached us. My greatest concern was whether they would show the same consideration as the British did and not drive their tanks over the casualties. My fears, however, were quite unfounded, because the German tanks kept clear of the persons lying on the ground, and not one of the casualties or personnel was run over by a tank. Eventually the front line of the German tanks had the M.D.S. behind them, and they kept on the

advance until all their tanks had passed us. Soon after, the infantry and recovery vehicles and guns arrived and we were all taken prisoner. During the two hours which the battle lasted, the M.D.S. was in the line of machine-gun and shell fire the whole time, first from German guns, then German and British and finally British guns. In spite of this, casualties among the patients and personnel were remarkably few, only two men being wounded. At no time was there deliberate M.G. fire directed at any person at the M.D.S.

The course of the battle brought the panzers into the area occupied by Brigade Headquarters. News of the German assault had been reported to Brigade, and Brigadier Armstrong had sent Lieut. Nellmapius of the South African Engineers to ask 26th New Zealand Battalion for anti-tank support but, as the Brigade Intelligence Officer, Captain Tasker, wrote a few weeks later, The first intimation that Brigade Headquarters had of the nearness of the German tanks was when one officer, peering round the wheel of the control vehicle where he was crouched with the telephone, saw the tanks about 300 yards away. Slowly, like monstrous black beetles, they advanced, spouting fire and smoke. The knowledge came as a thunderbolt from the blue. Inconceivable. But there they were, collecting prisoners as they lumbered on. The tanks moved straight through Brigade Headquarters before splitting in two. The Brigade Head-quarters staff was captured at about 1615 hours.

Brigadier Armstrong left his armoured car as the tanks approached, and in his scarlet hat and gorget patches was picked up by a German tank, which then plunged on into the battle. The Brigade Major and the Brigade Intelligence Officer and the Signals Officer concealed themselves beneath the command vehicle, but were driven out when it caught alight above them from a stray tracer bullet and blazed merrily. They too were taken. The northward sweep of the panzers brought them into the area of the infantry battalions holding the perimeter. Organized resistance was at an end, and groups of infantrymen began to make off in their vehicles, but pockets continued to resist. The report

of the machine-gun battalion, Regiment President Steyn, describes how Private Swanepoel, whose company was in support of the Transvaal Scottish, fired 2,500 rounds at the approaching infantry and remarked grimly that there was no need to clear the empty cartridge cases away from his gun as the enemy machine-gun fire did that for him. At one time the German infantry wavered in the face of the defensive machine-gun fire and actually seemed to be falling back, but their tanks came up and thrust home the assault. The field and anti-tank artillery in the northern sector continued to resist, and Panzer Regiment 8 still complained of confused fighting and continued hostile fire. 'Very soon', says their Report,

II/8 was again alone in the middle of the enemy, whose fierce, determined resistance still persisted. The shell-fire continued to fall on the tanks without abatement. At this stage the regimental commander personally summoned his last reserves, the regimental engineers, in their troop carriers and what escort tanks were available, to join II/8 and attempt to decide the day without the infantry. This was an epic of courage and soldierly sacrifice. The tanks charged forward ruthlessly: the engineers followed close and dug out of their holes the crews of the field and anti-tank guns which had been overrun by the tanks.

The drive of the German tanks brought them into the rear of the Transvaal Scottish, who had been kept occupied during the afternoon by the demonstration' from the third escarpment ahead. The Scottish do not seem to have known of the Afrikakorps' assault from the south, though the exceptional amount of gunfire can hardly have escaped notice, and Major Berry of the artillery had been kept informed.

About 1630 Major Rosser, commanding the Battalion since the previous afternoon, was told 'that B Echelon and Brigade had gone'. He thereupon attempted to concentrate his men for a defensive stand in the north-east of the perimeter,' but the panzers soon followed up from the south and threw the whole Battalion into confusion, 'with vehicles blazing all around'. Major

Berry continued to fight his guns until 1730 when, 'supported by tanks from the north and north-east, enemy infantry started infiltrating into the gun positions. The guns were subjected to heavy machine-gun and mortar fire. All communications were cut.' At 1815 Major Berry gave the order to withdraw, but the battery was overrun and all the guns were lost.

On the left of the Scottish, the north-west of the Brigade position was held by the South African Irish and B Company of and Regiment Botha. These were by-passed by the German assault, which was also held off" in some measure by E Troop of 9th Field Battery. Some attempt was made to form a defensive position to the east, but a messenger to Brigade Headquarters found the place deserted and was told by an officer whom he found hiding in a slit trench that the whole staff were prisoners. Major C. McN. Cochran, [47] acting as commander of the Battalion since Lieut.-Colonel Dobbs had been wounded in the middle of the morning, conferred with Major Greenwood, commanding the five surviving guns of 9th Field Battery, and they decided to fall back into the Scottish area and attempt an escape to the east. In the northern area of the Brigade, however, they 'found things completely disorganized', and the infantry were scattered by tanks. Only isolated groups got away to the south. Major Greenwood's guns—the four 25-pounders of F Troop, with the single survivor of E Troop, became involved in 'a state of chaos, with vehicles rushing in all directions', but escaped nevertheless to the east. They were the only field-guns from 5th S.A. Brigade to evade capture. With them went some of the crews of five or six British tanks which had come in from the west at 1700 hours and parked near E Troop.

The eastern flank of 5th S.A. Brigade was covered in some measure by 4th Royal Horse Artillery and a number of guns from 60th Field Regiment R.A., spread out in the desert between the South Africans and the New Zealanders. It was largely in order to avoid these guns that Panzer Regiment 5 turned off its prescribed course and broke into the South African Brigade. The panzers moved up the eastern flank

of the Brigade position towards and Regiment Botha, which was supported at this stage by a single 2-pounder anti-tank gun. Lieut.-Colonel Mason ordered the Bofors anti-aircraft troop with his Battalion to prepare to hold off a ground attack and, 'At approximately 1530 hours', he says, I noticed an enemy tank column moving towards me in line ahead. It was evident they proposed to encircle my battalion and dispose of it piecemeal. I waited until the tanks were approximately 800 yards to my south-east and ordered the guns to open fire. 8 tanks were immediately put out of action, and the remainder veered off and made for the east-south-east.

This unexpectedly hot reception accounts for one of the delays recorded in the War Diary of Infantry Regiment 200, but the panzers regrouped and heavy fire was brought down on the Regiment Botha. Lieut.-Colonel Mason was seriously wounded at 1630 hours and removed to the dressing station, where he was later taken prisoner. Meanwhile a flood of vehicles poured into the Battalion's lines from the north and west, driven on by the penetration of Panzer Regiment 8 on the other side. 'By 1700 hours', says the Battalion Report, 'enemy tanks had broken through our lines on all fronts. The 3rd Transvaal Scottish and 1st S.A. Irish were by this time withdrawing through our lines, and control of men and vehicles was impossible. From then on until about 2000 hours [48] the Battalion withdrew south between enemy tanks.'

Panzer Regiment 5 made no further attempt to push along its original line of advance. 'Enemy tanks did not come on,' records the War Diary of 4th Royal Horse Artillery, 'but the position was then attacked by infantry [i.e. the motor-cycle battalion and machine-gun battalion of Infantry Regiment 200] and subjected to heavy M.G. and rifle fire.' The Royal Artillery then fell back, abandoning one troop of guns, whose vehicles had been put out of action, and took up a position for a time on the flank of the New Zealanders farther east.

Against the German tanks, the infantry had no real means of defence, least of all when the panzers had broken into

The Shamrock

their rear, and once the guns had been subdued resistance could not last long. All three battalions of the Brigade dissolved into disordered groups of which those that retained the most initiative secured a vehicle—any vehicle—and escaped to the south or east. The survivors of 2nd Scots Guards 'withdrew', according to their War Diary, 'in some confusion', but the last remnant of the 22nd Armoured Brigade broke out with a dash which was a worthy reminder of the spirit in which they had entered the battle five days before. 'The remains of the [composite] regiment', says their War Diary, were rallied on the S.W. corner of the S.A. leaguer and all charged through, rallying any tank that was met, against the German right flank, which appeared to be in disorder. All this time the main body of the S.A. Bde seemed to be getting away, only the gunners remained firing their last rounds the final charge on the left flank turned the attack and allowed the main part of the S.A. force to get away. The final rush through the camp and German tanks was thrilling: Lt. Col. Carr was at the head. Towards the end his tank was set on fire, but he and Major Kidston got on to other tanks and went on. Major Kidston's tank again became knocked out and he had to spend the night in the enemy lines, eventually creeping out next morning on-Lieut Melville's tank.

Major Melzer, taken prisoner when 11th Field Ambulance was overrun, watched a break-out which must have been that described in the War Diary of 22nd Armoured Brigade. The prisoners had been marched to a concentration area and at 1700 hours their captors were out of their vehicles, standing around in groups, chatting, when there was a sudden excitement: the Germans embussed hastily and the trucks moved away.

British tanks were coming at full speed towards us from the N.W. As they approached us, the men waved and cheered as it looked as if the British were making a counter-attack. It turned out, however, that they numbered only five and they appeared to be stragglers trying to break through. The Germans opened fire on them and made a direct hit on one tank which burst into flames. The crew of the tank jumped out of it

unharmd and boarded the one behind it which had stopped to pick them up. [49]

Meanwhile the German tanks pushed through and made contact with the infantry of 21st Panzer Division, on what some of them recorded as Point 175 and some as the Sidi Rezegh escarpment, but which was, pretty certainly, the 'third escarpment' of Point 178. The early winter's night descended rapidly, and all that was left of 5th S.A. Brigade on the field of battle consisted of little groups of bewildered and disconsolate prisoners who huddled together neglected, while German staff officers wrestled to discover what had happened, and dispatch riders bounced backwards and forwards among the wreckage, guided by frequent flares and the light of trucks of burning ammunition.



German tanks destroyed at Sidi Rezegh on 23 November

Bibliography

[1] Alexander Clifford: *Three Against Rommel*, p. 142.

[2] From the opening words of the *Collect of the Day*, 'Stir up, we beseech

Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people'

[3] Clarke: *The Eleventh at War*, p. 200.

[4] Davy: *op. cit.*, p. 167. Those with access to gridded maps may be interested to know that the Preliminary Narrative gives the location -of 5 S.A. Brigade as 428399 and of 22 Armoured Brigade as 426399.

[5] *Seconda Offensiva*, p. 55. Rommel, however, was also intriguing in Rome for the-permanent control which Mussolini granted next day.

[6] The vagueness of this term is puzzling—perhaps significant. It should be remembered, however, that 6 New Zealand Brigade was expected from this direction and the Germans were not, and any 'higher authority' had some justification in identifying the newcomers with the New Zealanders.

[7] Davy: p. 167.

[8] Clarke: *The Eleventh at War*, pp. 200-2. In fairness to Brigadier Armstrong it should be noted that General Brink remarked in a letter of 15 Nov. 1953: 'The disposition of Pienaar's MT at Taieb el Esem differed in no way from that of Armstrong's at Sidi Rezegh.'

[9] The remaining three troops of 3 S.A. Anti-Tank Battery, armed with a-pounders, were with the three infantry battalions—3 Transvaal Scottish, 2 Regiment Botha, and 1 S.A. Irish—as were the three batteries of 3 S.A. Field Regiment.

[10] A former South African Test cricketer and cannon-ball bowler.

[11] Louis Duffus: *Beyond the Laager*, p. 35. The range at which these guns were apparently firing throws some light upon the distance which separated the two South African brigades.

[12] In other words, the whole of the rear half of the Brigade formations as shown in the diagram circulated to units.

[13] *Saga of the Transvaal Scottish*, p. 340.

[14] *Saga of the Transvaal Scottish*, p. 340. The War Diary states that two other ranks were wounded.

[15] Panzer Regiment 8, most probably.

[16] Their arrival at 1100 hours was duly noted by 3 Recce Bn, which observed with praiseworthy accuracy throughout the day. (Report of Captain Torr-.)

[17] According to *Seconda Offensiva*, p. 55.

[18] 21 Panzer Division, less Panzer Regiment 5: in other words, the infantry and divisional artillery which remained in the north under General von Ravenstein.

[19] No firm deduction can be drawn from the use of the name Sidi Muftah in the German formation and unit records. The use of geographical terms in these documents is often extremely vague and sometimes inaccurate. Rifle Regiment 115 submits a spirited sketch-map showing its attack across an escarpment against an enemy on Point 175 (complete with contours) with a hostile counter-attack coming in from the direction of Zaafran. Panzer Regiment 8, on the other hand, shows an advance from Sidi Muftah, straight across the

escarpment, to overrun the 'South African Division' just south of the landing-ground. 15 Panzer's map shows a straight course northwards (with a shade of west) from a concentration area 6 miles (or 10 km.) NNE. of Bir el Gubi, which it left at 1500 hours for an advance straight to Sidi Rezegh. 3 Batterie of 33 A/A Regt. again, seems to think that 5 S.A. Brigade was 20 km. SE. of El Adem. Fortunately, various observers in 5 S.A. Infantry Brigade, in addition to those in 4 S.A. Armoured Car Regiment and No. 1 Company of 3 S.A. Reconnaissance Battalion, were all watching the German movements, with personal as well as professional interest, and were in a position to 'place' them fairly accurately. The Germans had no 'grid' system for pin-pointing positions, and in their documents 'Sidi Muftah' often means little more than vaguely 'south of 5 S.A. Brigade'.

[20] They were attached to 4 Armoured Brigade, and at this stage were somewhere to the south.

[21] Preliminary Narrative, p. 106.

[22] After this regrouping the perimeter of 5 S.A. Brigade was protected as follows:
Northern Sector (3 T.S.)

8 25-prs. of 8 S.A. Fd. Bty. Western Sector (1 S.A. Irish)

4 25-prs. of 9 S.A. Fd. Bty.

6 (perhaps 4) 25-prs. of 60 Fd. Regt. R.A.

2 2-prs. of J Tp. 3 S.A.A/Tk. Bty. Eastern Sector (2 Regt. Botha)

16 25-prs. of 4 R.H.A. (with perhaps some 25-prs. of 60 Fd. Regt. R.A.)—outside the perimeter.

1 2-pr. of K Tp. 3 S.A.A/Tk. Bty. Southern Sector (B Echelon)

8 25-prs. of 7 S.A. Fd. Bty.

4 25-prs. of 9 S.A. Fd. Bty.

2 18-prs. of LTp. 3 S.A.A/Tk. Bty.

(2 L Tp. guns had been knocked out in the attack that morning.)

12 2-prs. of D Bty. 3 R.H.A.

9 2-prs. of I, J and K Tps. 3 S.A.A/Tk. Bty.

(In addition, the Composite Regt. of 22 Armd. Bde, with C Battery 2 R.H.A.

in support, was lying to the south-west of 5 S.A. Bde.)

[23] In a letter to General Theron: 5 January 1942.

[24] Was this one of the battalions of Panzer Regiment 8 ?

[25] This was probably the arrival of Panzer Regiment 5.

[26] Battle Report: 5 S.A. Infantry Brigade.

[27] It was not an escarpment but a fold in the ground 2 miles south of the Brigade which concealed the German concentration.

[28] Norton: a6 Battalion, p. 87.

[29] Major (later Lt.-Col.) V. Larmuth.

[30] Quoted from Lt.-Col. V. Larmuth's letter of 1 May 1953. General Gott could hardly have expected 5 S.A. Brigade to pull out from its position in the line on 23 November, and it is possible that two separate grumbles have been telescoped—one of the slowness of 5 S.A. Brigade (and indeed of 1 S.A. Brigade) in arriving at the place where they were wanted, and another of inertia on the spot.

[31] One of General Gott's misfortunes was that it did not prove possible to co-ordinate the activities of 3 RTR in the same way as those of the composite regiment of 22 Armoured Brigade on the other side of the South African leaguer.

[32] The incident may be traced in *Seconda Offensiva Britannica*, p. 55, and Davy: p. 170.

[33] 'We are close at hand and are coming. Others are also coming from the other side. Hold on. We are.' The two-word phrase at the end of the

message is an elliptical sentence which was used as a sort of unofficial motto in Divisional Headquarters. The missing word (unprintable but 'understood') may be paraphrased as 'tough fellows'.

[34] Report of Capt. W. P. Millar, 7 S.A. Field Battery.

[35] The official Italian history (Seconda Offensiva Britannica, pp. 55-6) describes the junction of the force with the Afrikakorps, Cruewell's orders, and the fact that 'the enemy forces were being surrounded by a circle which became ever narrower', but has nothing to say about the further movements of Ariete.

[36] There were not more than 16 field-guns along the whole south and west of the Brigade, and another 8 with 22 Armoured Brigade.

[37] Reports of this action survive from Anti-Tank Unit 33 and the 3rd Battens of Anti-Aircraft Unit 33.

[38] The sketch-map attached to the Report makes it clear that Point 175 was intended —the change may be the error of a later copyist. The compass bearing on which they marched suggests that the Regiment must have been some distance west of Sidi Muftah when they set out.

[39] The German accounts of the eastern flank of the fighting have a good deal to say about tanks and artillery to the north and west and apparently rated their threat a good deal higher than their strength deserved. It is not easy to determine which units actually opposed the assault, but the following were in the area of the advance of Panzer Regiment 5. Directly ahead, to the north, lay the 25-pounders of 4 Royal Horse Artillery, with a battery of 60 Field Regiment R.A.: to the north-east were 26 New Zealand Infantry Battalion, with 30 N.Z. Field Battery and L Troop of 33 N.Z. Anti-Tank Battery: to the east lay the Headquarters of Support Group under Brigadier Campbell, with odd tanks and artillery, which were joined during the afternoon by the Headquarters of 7 and 22 Armoured Brigades (Brigadiers Davy and Scott-Cockburn) with a certain amount of artillery, including a

troop of a i S.A. Field Battery and a miscellaneous collection of tanks including, probably, 3 RTR. There was no field-artillery on the east flank of 5 S.A. Brigade, and 2 Regiment Botha had in their area only one a-pounder and a troop of Bofors anti-aircraft guns.

[40] Probably from 4 R.H.A. with some support from 30 N.Z. Fd. Bty.

[41] In effect, between 5 S.A. Brigade and 26 New Zealand Battalion.

[42] Report of Captain Torr of 3 S.A. Reconnaissance Battalion.

[43] J Troop had been responsible for the destruction of the six tanks which took part in Ariete's attack on 21 November, and for putting out of action one tank (which they afterwards destroyed) of those which attacked the B Echelon during the morning of the 23rd.

[44] These guns had already done a good deal of travelling during the day, and had been sent to the Scottish area only an hour or so before to deal with the threatened attack from the north.

[45] The War Diary of 15 Panzer describes how, between 1620 and 1655, 'The English SP/A/Tk guns appeared again from behind the trucks and caused heavy casualties to the Division, particularly the Pz Regt.'

[46] Subsequently Lieut.-Colonel and O.B.E.

[47] Later Lieut.-Colonel and D.S.O., M.C., not to be confused with the gunner officer of the same name.

[48] This time seems very late, but specifically refers to the last isolated pocket of resistance. Colonel Mason was recaptured, with the South African Field Ambulance, by the New Zealanders on 24 November.

[49] Lt.-Col. I. B. Whyte of 3 S.A. Field Regiment also records this incident. It seems most probable that these tanks were the half-dozen which had parked in the area of 9 Field Battery, and that the personnel whom officers of that battery describe as coming out on their

transport were spare crews or headquarters personnel.

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Combined freedom of the city of Barberton parade planned for 27 August 2016.



**South African Irish
Regiment**



**Witwatersrand
Rifles**



**Transvaal Scottish
Regiment**



Regiment Botha