

The Shamrock
SA Irish Regiment
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The Shamrock



The official newsletter of the SA Irish Regiment

Remembrance month



Lest We Forget

By Lt Col. John McCrae (1892-1918),

IN FLANDERS FIELDS
In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That marked our places, and in the sky
... The larks, still bravely singing, fly.

Scarce heard amid the guns below
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved,
And now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.

From the Editor

From: The Editor



Thank you once again to all our loyal readers for contributions and making this newsletter a success over the past year. Remember: Contributions towards "The Shamrock" can also be emailed to irish.regiment@gmail.com

On behalf of the Officer Commanding SA Irish Regiment and the editorial staff, I wish everyone a very blessed Christmas and a very prosperous 2017.

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

Another year is almost at an end. With the hard work and dedication from all of the members of the SA Irish Regiment, the unit has completed another successful year.

As we review the year that has passed, I am pleased to say that through our hard work, we have outshined many other Regiments.

We can all be very proud of our accomplishments this year, but we must also ready ourselves for the challenges of the year ahead. Let's not be complacent, since there are some tough challenges ahead. With defence budget cuts looming we will be expected to deliver more, with much less resources.

On behalf of myself as Officer Commanding and my command staff, I want to wish all the members of the Regiment and their families a very peaceful and blessed Christmas time.

All members not on duty must enjoy their well-deserved rest in order to be ready for the challenges that lie ahead in the new year. - Faugh a Ballagh

Faugh a Ballagh!

By: Lt Col. W.W. Kinghorn.

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Regimental Events

By: The Editor

Please contact your company commander for more details on Regimental events. More dates will be published as they become available.

11 February - Unit shooting exercise.

20 May - Unit shooting exercise.

8 July - Unit shooting exercise.

16 September - Unit shooting exercise.

26 August - Barberton sunset parade.

11 November - Freedom Regiments Parade.

12 November - JHB Remembrance Parade - JHB Cenotaph.

19 November - Sidi Rezegh Commemoration Parade .

1 December - Regimental Birthday.

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Did you know?

By: The editor (Source Wikipedia)

Irish Guardsman Edward Colquhoun Charlton VC was awarded the Victoria Cross on the recommendation of his German opponents.

Charlton was a guardsman in the 2nd Battalion, Irish Guards, Guards Armoured Division, British Army during the Second World War. On 21 April 1945 Guardsman Charlton was a co-driver of one tank of a troop that was supporting an infantry platoon. They occupied the village of Wistedt, Germany, which the German army then attempted to re-take. The numerically superior German forces consisted largely of officer cadets under the command of experienced instructor officers, supported by two or three self-propelled guns.

Three of the four Irish Guards tanks were badly hit, while Charlton's had been disabled by a complete electrical failure before the attack began. Charlton had been ordered to dismount the turret

0.30 Browning machine gun and support the infantry.

The Irish Guards were in danger of being overrun by the Germans. Charlton, on his own authority, took the machine gun and advanced in full view of the attacking Germans, firing the weapon from his hip as he did so and inflicting heavy German casualties. The lead German company was halted and this allowed the rest of the Guards a respite in which to reorganise and retire. He continued his bold attack, even when he was wounded in his left arm. Charlton placed the machine-gun on a fence where he launched a further attack before his left arm was hit again by further enemy fire becoming shattered and useless. Charlton, now with just one usable arm, carried on his attack until a further wound and loss of blood resulted in the Guardsman collapsing. His courageous and selfless disregard for his own safety allowed the rest of the Irish Guards troop and infantry to escape. He later died of the wounds in enemy hands.

Charlton was awarded the posthumous VC, it was the last Victoria Cross of the European theatre of World War 2, and the last, so far, awarded to a member of the Irish Guards. Unusually, much of the citation was based on German accounts of the fight, as most of his later actions were not witnessed by any of the Guards officers or surviving non-commissioned officers. His Victoria Cross is displayed at The Guards Regimental Headquarters (Irish Guards RHQ), Wellington Barracks, London, England.

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 Provisional 2017 Calendar of Events:

1 April: Vaal Highland Gathering : Bob Worrall Adjudicating

29 April: South Coast Highland Gathering (Championship)

13 May: Jeppe Gathering (Regional)

- 27 May:** De La Salle Gathering (Regional)
- 10 June:** Cornwall Hill Gathering (Regional)
- 17 June:** Pretoria Boys Gathering (Championship)
- 15 July:** St Benedict’s Gathering (Regional Final)
- 29 July:** Benoni Gathering (SA Champs & Championship Final)
- 11 November:** Freedom of the City of Johannesburg parade.
- 12 November:** Remembrance day parade - Johannesburg
- 19 November:** Sidi Rezegh Parade - SAIR HQ
Faugh a Ballagh!

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News from the Regiment

Written by the Editor

The Officer Commanding of the SA Irish Regiment congratulates the following members of the Regiment on their promotions:

- WO2. C. Saayman
- Sgt. H. Mfazi
- Sgt. G.M. Van Der Berg
- Cpl. A.J. Van Den Heever
- L/Cpl. L.M. Matthee
- L/Cpl. T.R. Mofokeng
- L/Cpl. D.A. Prince
- L/Cpl. I.B. Sithole

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News from the Regiment

Written by the Editor

On 20 November 2016, the soldiers of the Regiment commemorated the 75th anniversary of the battle of Sidi Rezegh.

The Regiment annually holds its Sidi Rezegh parade on the Sunday closest to the 23rd of November to commemorate the battle in 1941 where, together with other units of the South African 5th Brigade was virtually annihilated by the 15th Panzer Division of Rommel’s Afrika Korps.

During this fierce battle, with their “die hard” attitude, the infantrymen of the

SA Irish also helped to man the guns of the Transvaal Horse artillery, to engage German tanks at point blank range and over open sights. Although their position was overrun, they inflicted so many casualties on the Germans that the Germans referred to the battle at “Tottensontag” (Sunday of the dead).

Due to renovations at the Regimental HQ, the parade was held on the fields of 46 SA Brigade.

The Regiment was proud to host several military dignitaries from the office of the Chief of Defence Reserves and Infantry Formation as well as the Ambassador from the Republic of Ireland, Mr. Liam MacGabhan, as the personal guest of our Officer Commanding.

It was a special honor to have the Commander Brand from the office of the German military attaché present at the parade to show that during the month of remembrance, former foes can meet to honour the bravery of all soldiers killed in battle.

Editorial Note: Please flip to the last page of this newsletter to read the speech made by our Officer Commanding.

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News from the SANDF – Defence Minister applauds women for their achievements in the military.

Written by defenceWeb

As Women’s Month drew to a close in August, Defence and Military Veterans Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula pointed out women have achieved much in the short democratic history of South Africa to date.

“Twenty-two years later, women hold their own and have risen through the ranks of the defence establishment, occupying different roles and responsibilities, from core functions such as aircraft pilots; artillery; combat navy; navigators; medical professionals including specialists; medical practitioners; pharmacists and ancillary health; engineers; anti-aircraft; divers; mechanics, various technical musteringings

and commanders of various units, to mention but a few,” she said in her capacity as Minister and member of the ANC national executive committee.

“Women are also deployed in peace support operations across the continent where the SANDF is deployed, representing the defence establishment as defence attaches in various countries and also as senior officers, with no less than six women at the rank of major general serving side by side with their male counterparts.

“They also serve in many other areas of responsibility in senior and middle management and at the coalface. The SANDF is a home for all patriotic men and women, with every profession one can think of.”

Mapisa-Nqakula maintains “more can and is being done to ensure continued affirmation of women, particularly those from the ranks of the liberation movement who cut their teeth in the trenches of the struggle, especially the armed struggle in the hardships of our military camps and in the underground structures. This applies to those still in South Africa’s armed forces and those who have demobilised or retired”.

According to the most recent Department of Defence annual report, “the representation of women in the DOD continues to be addressed in departmental policies and manifests in the following: Recruitment at entry level to be increased to 50%; Representation of women to be increased at all levels of command; The number of women Defence attachés to be increased; Gender and leadership seminars to be conducted across the gender divide; Gender perspectives and dynamics to be incorporated with all military development courses.”

The Department of Defence has seen an increase in the number of female employees, with this increasing from 22 504 in the 2013/14 financial year to 22 687 the following year. Female representation remained constant at 29%, compared to 2013/14, the Department said. Of the total number of 2 633 new appointments effected during 2014/15, 1 145 or 43.4% were female.

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Of the 2 047 people recruited into the Military Skills Development System (MSDS) in the 2014/15 financial year, 803 or 39% were women.

As of March 2015 the DoD had 78 011 personnel, including 40 215 in the Army, 10 443 in the Air Force, 7 575 in the Navy, 8 145 in the Military Health Service and 3 094 in the Logistic Division.

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News from the

SANDF – Reserves make their mark in international military skills competition.

Written by defenceWeb

The part-timers of the Reserve Force made the entire South African military family proud with their achievements during the annual international military skills competition held in Spain earlier this month (August).

One of the team members, Corporal Hlope, achieved a score of 174 out of a possible 180 in the shooting competition using a Heckler & Koch G-36.

In the land and water obstacles part of the competition the SANDF Reserve Force teams finished first and second, the first time South African teams have finished as the top two in any part of the competition. Swimming saw the South Africa finish first and third and they also finished well in the gruelling military march event.

The competition only recognises teams and competitors finishing first with no medals awarded for second and third placings but feedback from those at the event was that South Africa soldiers are now “definitely making a mark in this international competition”.

During the awards ceremony South Africa team one was met with a standing ovation en route to collecting their award while the South African jury member was honoured with a plaque for his “contribution and military ethos during the execution of his duties”.

“South Africa and specifically the SANDF was weighed and not found wanting,” was how one of the team members summed up the competition.

Defence Forces Reserves who went to Spain were Major Labuschagne (3 Para Bn), Sergeant Daniel (SA Irish Regiment), Corporal Hlope (Umvoti Mounted Rifles), Cpl Tshikare (2 Signal Regiment), Tpr Neethling (Regiment Mooi River), Rfn Mdlalose (3 Para Bn) and Rfn Smit (3 Para Bn). Captain Ditshego (SAAF) was team manager and Captain Le Roux (3 Para Bn) was instructor with Lieutenant Colonel Van der Westhuijzen the Officer in Command.

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News from the

SANDF – SAAF demonstrates that it trains to fight.

Written by Dean Wingring

The South African Air Force (SAAF) hosted its annual Air Capability Demonstration (ACD) at the Roodewal Weapons Range in Makhado, Limpopo Province, on 13 September 2016.

The ACD is designed as a training exercise for two of the Department of Defence’s flagship courses: the Security and Defence Studies Programme (SDSP) and the SANDF’s Joint Senior Command and Staff Course (SCSC).

The members of these course are able to see air power at the strategic and operational levels of war and to showcase how air power is applied.

Moreover, the ACD provides the SAAF with an opportunity to display its collaboration and inter-operability capabilities with other South African National Defence Force (SANDF) arms of service, such as the South African Military Health Service and the Special Forces.

Addressing the assembled guests, Major General Gerald Malinga, Deputy Chief of the Air Force, noted the government’s focus on Peace, Security and Stability on the African continent, with the SANDF increasingly undertaking functions aimed at addressing conflict and instability on the African continent.

“This means that the SANDF has to provide forces and personnel to fulfil the full spectrum of support for these tasks,” he said.

Malinga paid tribute to the bravery of the deployed soldiers and airmen who are “consistently performing their duties internally and externally with honour.”

Situated seven flying minutes from AFB Makhado, the Roodewal Weapons Range is situated within a nature reserve and is considered to be a



strategic asset of the SAAF.

The ACD is a snapshot to allow the course students an insight into and obtain exposure and an appreciation and analysis of how airpower is applied.

What followed was an hour of continuous noise, smoke and explosions.

The carefully scripted sunset scenario followed that of previous years, with the opening scene comprising a Hawk performing a low-level tactical reconnaissance mission, accompanied by a Gripen fighter which released flares.

Two Hawks then performed a Close Air Combat mission, firing at ground targets with their 30mm Aden cannon, followed by a pop-up manoeuvre and the firing of flares. Thereafter, two Oryx demonstrated the use of Bambi buckets.

Following a 2v1 Gripen/Hawk air-to-air encounter, an Agusta A109 LUH dropped of command post members, with a Rooivalk providing airborne cover.

As a helicopter had been ‘shot down’, an Oryx performed a Combat Search and Rescue mission by dropping off a protection team and medics, winching up the stretcher.

More Oryx brought in troops and supplies to counter the enemy threat, whilst an 81mm mortar team deployed and provided cover fire.

Two Hawks once again strafed the target area and a Rooivalk fired 70 mm rockets. By this time, ground troops were actively engaging the enemy, firing guns, motors and even RPG-7s.

An A109 hoisted a patient, followed by an Oryx hoisting another patient. More Oryx and A109s then extracted the mortar crews whilst two Rooivalks simultaneously fired 70mm rockets.

Then it was the turn of two Hawks to drop four Mk81 bombs each. Not to be outdone, four Gripens then did the same thing, followed by a Hawk releasing flares.

As a finale, three Hawks flew a formation flypast, followed by seven Gripens. It should be noted that all seven Gripens were flown by regular 2 Squadron pilots. Thereafter, an eight-ship helicopter formation overflew the crowd, with a Rooivalk and Oryx releasing flares.

The final flypast was by a Cessna Caravan equipped with the Argos 410-Z airborne observation system. They had been flying high overhead the entire demonstration, transmitting a live camera feed to a large electronic screen set up in front of the assembled crowd.

Although the ACD used to be presented twice a year, it is now an annual event to coincide with the yearlong SDSP and SCSC courses.

Planning an ACD is a two month long exercise, but planning for this particular ACD has been ongoing since January this year to ensure a safe event. The ACD is also an expensive undertaking. A single Mk81 general-purpose bomb costs in excess of R30 000 each, whilst a Rooivalk 70mm rocket costs more than R13 000 each.

The budget for the ACD is contained within the Force Preparation budget, which includes weapons and other operational camps within the training budget.

Thus, the SAAF tries to extract the maximum benefit from the ACD. In the latest iteration, young Hawk pilots underwent their final competency tests and as a result, will now be regarded as “fully fledged fighter pilots.”

It is not just the aircrew that benefits, but the training and experience gained by ground and support crews are also of tremendous value.

The only downside was the non-appearance of the C-130 Hercules. This was due to a combination of high-winds, forcing the cancellation of the paratroop jump, and the need to use the few airworthy aircraft elsewhere.

The SAAF put on a good show, demonstrating that they train to fight and as seen in the DRC where the Oryx and Rooivalk are deployed in support of the UN mission, they often fight as they train.

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News from the SANDF – More platforms needed to patrol and protect South African maritime resources.

Written by Kim Helfrich

The time-honoured military adage of not being able to control what one cannot patrol has taken on added importance in the South African context since last year’s announcement by the President of the initiative to boost the blue economy as one part of Operation Phakisa, a multi-pronged government programme to fast track economic activity and growth.

An integral part of the blue economy Jacob Zuma unveiled in KwaZulu-Natal was maritime security with the SA Navy being the obvious agency to lead



in conjunction with other players including the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

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(DAFF), the SA Police Service, SA Revenue Service (SARS) and provincial conservation and environmental protection departments.

At a national level the Navy is short-handed when it comes to platforms to patrol the 2.4 million kilometres that comprises South Africa’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ). In addition to ensuring high levels of maritime security for the resources in this massive chunk of sea – called by many the country’s 10th province – South Africa is also responsible for search and rescue and hydrographic operations in this body of water.

According to an undated SA Navy publication: “South Africa declared an EEZ out to 200 nautical miles seaward from the coastal baselines of both South Africa and its possessions in the Southern Ocean, Marion and Prince Edward Islands — situated some 2 000 kilometres to the south-east. The Maritime Zones Act also covers the internal waters (waters to landward of the baselines), territorial waters (12 nautical miles), the contiguous and maritime zones (24 nautical miles), the EEZ and the continental shelf. All these zones fall within South Africa’s jurisdiction for monitoring, control and enforcement of state authority. This comprises a total of some 2.4 million square kilometres of assets”.

At present the maritime arm of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) can call on its four Valour Class frigates, three Heroine Class submarines and three offshore patrol vessels (revamped Warrior Class strikecraft), to patrol these waters. Similarly the SA Air Force (SAAF) is also limited in its maritime capability. This relies entirely in AFB Ysterplaat-based 35 Squadron in the revamped C-47TPs, some of which are 70 years old. The air force operates four Super Lynx maritime helicopters which are deployed aboard the frigates, providing aerial observation and surveillance to boost shipboard systems.

So the observation by Institute for Security Studies (ISS) conflict management and peacebuilding researcher Timothy Walker that “patrolling will be vital to both deter

and interdict maritime criminals” points to more platforms for deployment in the EEZ.

“The waters around South Africa can be some of the worst in the world, but seeing them as our ‘10th province’, as many now do, compels us to patrol them nonetheless and take our responsibilities for search and rescue and hydrography with greater seriousness and urgency too. South Africa needs new vessels and aerial surveillance assets, but even with the project increase under Project Biro, its capability will be insufficient to constantly and thoroughly safeguard its maritime domain against maritime crimes such as illegal fishing,” he said.

Tender submissions are currently being evaluated by Armscor for Project Biro which will see the Navy obtain six new platforms consisting of three inshore and three offshore patrol vessels to boost seaborne patrol capability.

Walker maintains it is important, in the overall context of both Operation Phakisa and the African maritime strategy into the future, for South Africa to co-operate and co-ordinate its actions with “neighbours in the region to provide common security through pooling capacity and sharing information”. He would also like to see further exploration of the coast guard/constabulary role as far as it concerns long term outcomes for continental maritime security.

On the negative side at present he feels the Southern African Development Community (SADC) maritime strategy could provide some pointers “but it remains confidential”.

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News from the SANDF – Denel unveils Africa Truck – successor to the SAMIL.

Written by Jonathan Katzellenbogen

Denel has unveiled the prototype of its “Africa Truck”, which is likely to emerge as its offering to replace the South African National Defence Force’s (SANDF) aging fleet of Samil military trucks.

The Africa Truck demonstrator model unveiled on 14 September at Africa Aerospace and Defence was designed in SA and is almost entirely based on SA technology. At the unveiling yesterday, Denel Vehicle Systems officials said the Africa Truck would have the advantage of being designed as a military vehicle rather than as a commercial vehicle, which is then developed for military purposes.

Given the present funding constraints on the SANDF, a Samil replacement when it comes is likely to be very gradual. To increase its order books for such a project, Denel will have to try



and sell the vehicle to African countries. A large number of brass from African countries were present at the unveiling by Chief of the SANDF, General Solly Shoke and Acting Denel Group CEO Zwelakhe Ntshepe.

While some of the vehicles in the Samil fleet are 40 years old, there is, as yet, no tender that has been announced for a new military logistic vehicle. The build of the prototype in a speedy ten weeks is in response to SA's Military Command Council asking Armscor, Denel, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research to come up with ideas for a logistic vehicle.

The design of the demonstrator model, which will be adapted to customer needs, is based on the SA made RG-31 mine protected infantry mobility vehicle, which saw service in Afghanistan and Iraq with the US and other forces. The Africa Truck has a Stanag Level 2 protection, affording protection against armour piercing ammunition and a high degree of mine protection.

On the Denel stand at Waterkloof yesterday, the demonstrator was a 6X6 version with a gross vehicle mass of 28 tons. As it is designed to be constructed on a modular bases it will be able to be reconfigured to a variety of customer requirements for different loads and weapons for protection.

The prototype carries an ISO container with an office, and a general purpose machine gun has been mounted on the roof of the driver's cab. The cargo load of the Africa Truck can be adapted to transport supplies, troops, act as a field hospital, or an office. Denel said it is able to manufacture the vehicle in a number of configurations, including 4X4 and 8X8 versions.

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News from the SANDF – No SANDF retrenchments on the horizon.

Written by Kim Helfrich

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) will not be retrenching in the foreseeable future.

That's the word from Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula who said the force would "not be giving up any warm bodies" on the eve of this year's Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) exhibition.

Current force level is around the eighty-nine thousand mark across all four arms of service – air force, army, military health service and navy - and includes civilian personnel.

She also hinted at the possibility of another continental peace support deployment but did not say whether it would be under the auspices of the AU or UN.

Mapisa-Nqakula told a pre-AAD briefing implementation of the Defence Review was on track and this "definitely" included the human resource component.

"I can assure members there will be no loss of warm bodies in the SANDF and at the same time the human component of the Defence Review is aware of the need to attract skilled youth."

Part of this, she said, was to be seen in the Youth Development programme at AAD.

"This will expose our young people to engineering and technology, entrepreneurial skills, youth development and career opportunities."

Secretary for Defence Dr Sam Gulube on Tuesday at the Armscor AAD Conference said that the Department of Defence has been instructed by Treasury to reduce its budget by R5 billion over the next three years, with a key focus on human resources. "Treasury said reduce the wage bill by

R5 billion," he said, but did not mention any personnel cuts.

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News from the SANDF – Military Veterans Department acknowledges shortcomings, points out achievements.

Written by defenceWeb

After being rapped over the knuckles in early September by Parliament's Select Committee on Security and Justice, the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) has acknowledged areas of concern, particularly as far as housing is concerned, and pointed out areas where it has made advances.

Following a visit to South Africa's northern provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga, committee chairman Kgoshi Setlamorago Thobejane said the DMV "only managed to build a disappointing 41 houses against a target of three thousand it intended to build in the 2015/16 financial year".

The DMV, headed by Deputy Defence and Military Veterans Minister Kebby Maphatsoe, said this week it was continuing its commitment to improving the quality of life of military veterans by "pursuing various strategies relating to housing provisioning".

"In the past the DMV focussed on building new houses for the homeless. This approach has been broadened to include offering financial assistance to military veterans whose properties are in danger of being repossessed by the banks.

"To date 130 new houses have been built while 33 properties have been rescued. Other interventions being considered include the provision of repairs to dilapidated properties. New partnerships are also being considered to accelerate housing provision and complement the current housing arrangement between the DMV and the Department of Human Settlements (headed by former Defence and Military Veterans Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu)."

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As far as helping military veterans is concerned, the DMV said the roll-out of its social relief distress (SRD) programme has been successful.

“To date 1 863 military veterans receive a monthly stipend of R1 200 to help offset the devastating effects of poverty.

“The Department is also successfully funding education of 5 758 military veterans and their dependents with over R35 million already spent. Since the inception of education funding, 20 graduates have been produced.”

The DMV reports more than fifteen thousand military veterans have access to healthcare through the SA Military Health Service (SAMHS). Healthcare provided varies from the most basic and primary through to specialised services.

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News from the SANDF – Warsaw Flights Committee remembers SAAF’s costliest operation.

Written by Chris Szabo

The South African Air Force (SAAF), Polish community organisations, international military attaches and veterans groups paid tribute to the SAAF airmen who were lost in its most costly operation, the Warsaw Airlift, aimed at assisting the Polish Home Army in their struggle for independence in 1944.

The annual memorial service, held at the James and Ethel Grey Park in Johannesburg, has the world’s oldest memorial to the Katyn Massacre, in which 22 000 Polish prisoners-of-war were shot by the Soviet NKVD secret police. It is a stark monument, shaped like a cross but also a tombstone.

Present was Bryan Jones, the last survivor of the men who flew to Warsaw.

Chairman of the Warsaw Flights Commemoration Committee Andrzej Romanowicz opened the ceremony and after a minute of silence to remember those who had passed away, mentioned that 2016 was a year of friendship

between Poland and Hungary and welcomed the Hungarians who were taking part for the first time.

Hungary was a member of the Axis, but it was not at war with Poland, so Hungarian troops refused to take part in crushing the uprising, saving thousands of Polish and Jewish lives.

Pastor Robin Petersen, who led the ecumenical service, listed the toll of the Uprising: 13 000 Jewish victims of the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943; 16 000 members of the Polish Home Army killed during the Warsaw Uprising and more than 200 000 civilians in the city who died, most executed by the Nazis. In a humane gesture, he pointed out that some 8 000 young German army conscripts also paid the ultimate price in this conflict.

Allied air forces, including the Royal Air Force (RAF), the Free Polish Air Force and eventually, the US Army Air Force, tried to assist the desperate Poles.

The SAAF’s 2 Wing, comprising 31 and 34 Heavy Bomber Squadrons, were based in Foggia in south-eastern Italy and had been bombing targets in northern Italy, the Mediterranean and Central Europe. Using B-24 Liberator aircraft, they had to make the 11-to-12-hour night flights covering 3 500 kilometres for the round trip to Warsaw.

This was because the Soviets did not allow them to land in areas occupied by their troops. Soviet leader Josef Stalin did not want a democratic government in Warsaw, referring to the Polish government-in-exile in Britain in a letter to Churchill as “a handful of evildoers”. Not surprisingly, assistance to the Allied effort was not forthcoming.

Once the planes had crossed the Adriatic Sea, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia, braving local and German anti-aircraft fire and German night fighters, they had to climb over the Carpathian Mountains to reach Warsaw, then descend to a height of 500 feet and lower their speed to about 140 knots to drop the supply canisters, making them easy targets for German anti-aircraft guns.

Not surprisingly, losses were high. The British and Commonwealth forces launched some 191 sorties to Warsaw and lost 31 heavy bombers. The SAAF sent 41 sorties and lost 11 Liberators.

The South African variant of the Liberator had a crew of eight, unlike its US counterpart, with 10 crew members. Statistics show that the SAAF bombers were the most successful in delivering their aid to the resistance.

Polish Ambassador to South Africa Anna Raduchowska-Brochwicz said the Katyn monument is symbolic for all Poles. This occasion confirmed a very strong and deep friendship between the Polish and South African people.

The traditional fly-past, carried out at low altitude in remembrance of the flights, was traditionally done by a C-130BZ of 28 Squadron, but on this occasion a lone Harvard did the honours.

An interesting and little-known aspect of Polish-South African relations was revealed when keynote speaker Philip Weyers of the SAAF Association and Andrzej Romanowicz told the tragic story of 1.7 million Polish men, women and children who were deported to concentration camps in Siberia by the Soviets in 1939 and 1940 after their joint invasion of Poland with Nazi Germany.

Later, when Germany invaded the USSR, in terms of the Sikorski-Majski Agreement of 1941, these unfortunates would be sent as refugees to places including Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, India, Mexico, British East Africa, Northern Rhodesia and South Africa. Tragically, due to conditions in the cattle trucks and the Gulag camps, 700 000 had died by this time.

Five hundred Polish children were brought to Oudtshoorn by Prime Minister Jan Smuts. Mr Romanowicz, who had the opportunity of knowing a number of these children, shared a light-hearted anecdote: “They were coming from Siberia where there was almost nothing to eat, and they were not fat. So when they arrived in Oudtshoorn, they followed what they had been doing in

Siberia. In other words, during the night they would go to steal all kinds of groceries and apples etcetera. Till eventually a delegation of South African farmers arrived and said: ‘How much do you children want? We will bring it. Don’t risk your lives climbing those fences!’”

The Warsaw Flights Memorial remembers a nearly-forgotten episode of South African skill and bravery and it is to be hoped that this sad but uplifting memorial service will receive more support from the SANDF and the public.

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News from the SANDF – Revamped SAA Airbus A340-600 to become new presidential aircraft?

Written by defenceWeb

President Jacob Zuma’s flight to New York aboard an SAA jet is proof positive South Africa does not need to buy another VVIP aircraft, opposition Freedom Front Plus party defence spokesman Pieter Groenewald maintains.

Just three days after a Presidency statement indicated both the country’s first citizen and his deputy, Cyril Ramaphosa, would prefer to fly in SA Air Force (SAAF) aircraft, Zuma boarded a South African Airways (SAA) jet bound for New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly.

This prompted Groenewald to point out that the country did not need to buy another presidential jet.

“The fact he flew commercially draws a line through all the arguments of safety, reliability and availability that are used to justify a separate presidential jet.

“It is clear Zuma can in future make use of commercial flights that are cheaper for the taxpayer.

“The use of commercial flights is in no way threatening to his safety and is more reliable, given the apparent problems Inkwazi (the Presidential

Boeing 737 bizjet) has,” Groenewald said.

The “problems” with Inkwazi are currently the subject of the board of enquiry chaired by retired SAAF general Cedric Masters and its recommendations will apparently be taken into account when a decision is made – in about 18 months – on acquisition of another VVIP aircraft.

defenceWeb has been reliably informed Inkwazi’s availability stands at 98% with other aviation sector sources saying it is nearer to 100% because the aircraft logs nowhere near the flying hours of similar jets in civil aviation.

In the interim there are plans to lease an aircraft or look at the “SAA option” because, according to Defence and Military Veterans Minister, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, chartering is too expensive.

Ahead of last week’s Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) exhibition at AFB Waterkloof, she said contact had been made with the embattled national airline, SAA, with a view to possibly taking over one of its under-utilised long-haul aircraft. This could be refurbished in a VVIP configuration.

At the weekend, the Afrikaans weekly Rapport said negotiations were already underway between the airline, Armscor and Airbus, manufacturer of the A340-600 jet apparently identified as being suitable for conversion into a long range VVIP transport.

The aircraft was previously in service on the Johannesburg/Beijing route which SAA has scrapped because it was adding to the massive losses the national carrier is reporting. In 2014/15 SAA reported a R4.7 billion loss and for the 2015/16 financial year it reported a further R1.8 billion loss in statements tabled in the National Assembly and not yet signed off by the Auditor General .

According to Rapport, Mapisa-Nqakula has given no indication of what will happen to the 15-year-old Inkwazi while Armscor chief executive Kevin Wakeford told the paper R300 million had been budgeted for the acquisition

with R100 million earmarked for the 18 month lease of an aircraft, which apparently has to be available and ready to fly on November 1.

When Armscor issued a tender for acquisition of another VVIP aircraft last November the Minister indicated she wanted it delivered to AFB Waterkloof and ready for use by March 31. None of the tenderers was deemed successful and a second tender – for the lease of a VVIP aircraft – suffered the same fate.

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News from the SANDF – SANDF Women’s Day parade in Bloemfontein .

Written by defenceWeb

The bus crash that claimed the lives of 11 SA National Defence Force (SANDF) female personnel on August 19 was commemorated on 30 September, as part of a belated annual defence force Women’s Day parade.

Originally scheduled to be held at Thaba Tshwane on August 31 with the Department of Defence’s Logistic Support Formation hosting it, the parade was postponed after the bus crash near the Golden Gate Highlands National Park in Free State. Those killed were all from the SANDF mobilisation centre at De Brug outside Bloemfontein and were en route to a Women’s Day event in the national park when the crash happened.

Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula will be at the Tempe Stadium in Bloemfontein to pay her respects to those killed in the August bus crash and also pay tribute to all fallen women soldiers her office said in a statement.

“The 2016 Women’s Day parade will not only celebrate the bravery and dedication of women serving in the SANDF. It will also be a special tribute to female soldiers who have died in the line of duty.

“We will always salute their bravery and in expressing sincere condolences and support to their families invitations have been extended to family members of those killed in the bus accident,” the

Minister’s statement said adding “all soldiers who died while in service should never be forgotten”.

The Tempe parade was an all-women parade in a battalion in review formation.

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News from the SANDF – Cubans helping SANDF to reach milestone one of the Defence Review.

Written by defenceWeb

Technical staff from the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces have given impetus to the maintenance and repair of South African military equipment, in particular operational vehicles, according to SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Chief, General Solly Shoke.

A total of 235 operational vehicles were repaired in the 2015/16 financial year with another 286 undergoing repairs, he writes in the Department of Defence and Military Veterans (DoDMV) annual report for the year ending March 31, 2016, released this week.

Another 850 vehicles have been prepared for what Shoke termed “preservation” with a further 524 de-activated to be used as spares.

“Skills transfer and practical training is an ancillary benefit of this cost-saving exercise which saw 258 SANDF apprentices and 48 ‘reserve trade workers’ taking part.”

Known as Operation Thusano, the involvement of Cuban mechanics is one of the outcomes of a defence co-operation agreement signed between the island nation and South Africa in August 2014. The first outcome was South African students being sent to Cuba for specialist training and the second the arrival in January last year of what the SANDF’s Logistics Division calls “94 Cuban specialists/collaborates” to work with local technical support services soldiers on vehicle maintenance and refurbishing.

According to the Logistics Division, there are 57 Cubans working on maintenance, repair, preservation and de-activation of military vehicles while at the same time they are carrying out training. Eighteen engineers are responsible for maintenance, repair and preservations of combat and transport aircraft as well as helicopters and the remainder are involved in various aspects of SA Military Health Service (SAMHS) operations.

As far as assisting the airborne arm of the SANDF is concerned the Cubans have, again according to the Logistics Division, been responsible for the maintenance and repair of 99 bombs, done eight weeks of inspection and seven post-flight inspections of transport aircraft.

“They have submitted 49 recommendations for improved maintenance and preservation systems of the SA Air Force,” Logistics Division reports on the DoDMW website.

The involvement of Cuban military personnel with the SANDF is part of assisting the Department to address milestone one of the Defence Review (stopping the loss of capacity and capability in the SANDF).

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News from the SANDF – Department of Defence spending 55% of its budget on personnel.

Written by defenceWeb

For the Landward Defence component of the SA National Defence Force, 70% of its budget went to salaries last year. This compares to 47% for the Air Defence Component, 57% for the Maritime Defence component and 74% for Military Health Support.

The Department of Defence (DoD) aims to reduce the compensation of employees to 53% of the budget in the next couple of years as part of government’s cost-cutting measures. This is according to the Department of Defence Strategic Plan 2015-2020 and

Annual Performance Plan 2016 presentation, which was delivered to the Parliamentary Defence Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military veterans on 4 May.

The Department of Defence said that the budget allocation for the compensation of its roughly 80 500 employees is R26.8 billion in FY2016/17, R26.5 billion in FY2017/18 and R27.2 billion in FY2018/19. However, “as part of Cabinet’s decision to lower the national aggregate expenditure ceiling, the department’s compensation of employees’ budget has been reduced by R1.9 billion for FY2017/18 and R2.9 billion for FY2018/19, decreasing its share of the department’s total expenditure to 53.5 per cent by FY2018/19.”

This means a projected shortfall of R4 billion over the next three years for the Department of Defence personnel budget.

At the end of the 2015/16 financial year the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) had a total strength of 77 597, comprising uniform and civilian members, with the SA Army its single largest component numbering 40 215.

As far as the other three arms of service go the SA Air Force (SAAF) is a distant second with 10 443 people wearing the blue uniform or counted as civilian members.

The SA Military Health Service (SAMHS) is third in terms of personnel numbers at 8 145 and the SA Navy, with 7 575 members, brings the number of personnel in the arms of service to 66 378. This is 488 less than the planned number according to the Department of Defence annual report for 2015/16.

The 11 219 people not part of the four arms of service are in the support structures of the SANDF.

There are 23 of them listed in the latest annual report and they include military policy, strategy and planning (29); the Ministry of Defence (73); the Defence Inspectorate (125); the Defence Secretariat (43); Defence International Affairs (17); Defence Foreign Relations Division (148); the Defence Materiel

Division (83) and the Military Ombudsman (45).

In number terms the eight largest areas of the SANDF and Department of Defence support structures are the Logistics Division (3 094); the Joint Operations Division (1 966); the Military Police Division (1 609); the Human Resources Division (1 455); Financial Management (832); Corporate Staff (460); Legal Services Division (390) and Foreign Relations (178).

The Defence Ministry had 73 people in its employ at the end of the 2015/16 financial year while there were 19 people in the office of SANDF Chief General Solly Shoke.

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News from the SANDF – Reserve Force Chief says South Africa must have a well-funded defence force.

Written by defenceWeb

The man at the helm of South Africa’s reserve force capability firmly believes it’s a necessity for the country to have a well-funded defence force.



“South Africa is at risk and needs a well-funded defence force. Delay will inevitably involve additional costs,” Major General Roy Andersen told the Defence Force Service Commission conference in Pretoria.

In support of his statement he gave delegates some insights from the business community as well as opinions

from South Africa’s top soldiers. He went on to explain some of his thinking around implementation of the Defence Review and the deterrence value of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF).

Business, he said, wanted to know why the country was spending R47 billion a year on defence when there are other priorities including education and healthcare.

“Frustration is often shown in conversations among SANDF leaders who ask ‘why is it not realised that by an ever decreasing SANDF budget, in real terms, and by spending less than two percent of GDP on defence, South Africa is running a real risk’.

“So where does the truth lie between these two, admittedly at times, superficial lines of thought?” he asked, pointing out, among others the chances of peace missions where South Africa is involved could turn into combat situations as happened in the Central African Republic in 2013.

Overall the Defence Review, according to Andersen, proposes five means of mitigating risks in Africa. These include the deterrence value of the national defence force and military intervention as a last resort.

“South Africa can ill afford to be unprepared for these risks but the question of whether the SANDF can continue to provide a credible deterrence capability has to be asked.”

Included in deterrence are credible combat forces, rapid force generation, trained

reserves, strong doctrine, quality training, technology and good morale. Current budget constraints, he said, are increasingly placing these capabilities under threat.

As far as the consequences of the defence budget, as it presently stands, are concerned Andersen maintains it is “gloomy”.

“The defence force is in a critical state of decline, characterised by: force imbalance between capabilities, block obsolescence and unaffordability of main operating systems; a disproportionate tooth-to-tail ratio; the inability to meet current standing defence commitments and a lack of critical mobility.

“Left unchecked and at present funding levels this decline will severely compromise defence capabilities.

“There must either be a greater budget allocation or significantly scaled down level of ambition.

“Even with an immediate intervention, it would take at least five years to arrest the decline and another five years to develop a limited and sustainable defence capability.

“The longer the neglect is perpetuated, the greater the effort, time and cost that would be necessary to arrest the decline and restore minimum capabilities required to safeguard South Africa’s borders, protect its trade routes, conduct peace missions and humanitarian interventions, safeguard South Africa and its people and defend and protect the country against external aggression,” he said.

In the short term he proposes the SANDF improve efficiencies and “ruthlessly” prioritise expenditure while maximising all revenue sources.

At the same time National Treasury should fund a personnel rejuvenation programme. This should include reskilling of exiting members and facilitation of new and younger intakes for the Regular and Reserve forces.

“This,” he said, “could be achieved by a modest injection of about R2.5 billion in year one with marginal increases in each of the next four years”.

In the medium term Andersen maintains the defence budget should incrementally shift up to two percent of GDP to facilitate implementation of the Defence Review.

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From the Chaplain

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

She gave birth to her first son
We have reached the end of the year and we are all looking back on what happened to us throughout the year. For some it has been a good year. A lot of positive and good things happened to them over the last 12 months. Some did not have good year....

Whatever the case might be for you personally... we are all looking forward to the month of December. More specifically the 25th of December. Why? Because this is the we celebrate the birth of our Saviour and Lord.... There are a few interesting fact about the birth of Jesus that I want us to have a look at...

- It is believed that the birth of Jesus was actually June 17 and not December 25th!
- Jesus was born between 7 B.C. and 2 B.C.
- To people who think saying "Xmas" is taking the "Christ" out of "Christmas," that just isn't so. In Greek, "X," or Chi, is the first letter of Christ's name. Christ is still in Xmas.
- After the wise men failed to report back to him about Jesus' birth, Harod "gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under." But because Bethlehem was such a small village, experts estimate the number of boys murdered by Harod's forces to be less than 20.
- Finding an ox or donkey in a modern-day Nativity scenes is easy; finding them in the story of Jesus' birth is impossible. In his book *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, Pope Benedict XVI confirms their absence from the manger scene: "In the gospels there is no mention of animals." People assume the presence of

animals due to the fact that Mary "placed him in a manger," or feeding trough.

These are just some of the interesting facts that can be found should you want to look at the birth of Jesus and some of the deductions that was made around it. That being said, let's look at what the Bible says. There are only two verses that refer to the birth of Christ Jesus. We read about it in *Luke 2:6 While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. 7 She gave birth to her fist son. She wrapped him up well and laid him in a box where cattle are fed. She put him there because the guest rooms was full.* And that is it. That is all that is written in the Bible about the birth of Jesus. Just these two verses. Nothing more... And yet, to many people and Christians alike, this is the "biggest thing" on the Christian and secular calendars! Now, I have to ask why? Why do we look forward to this day? Sure, it was the birth day of our Saviour, but surely, if we look at the amount of verses (two verses) spend describing it, it surely should indicate to us that this is not what the life of Jesus was (and is) all about!

Fortunately we get some indication in this regard when we look at a lot of other verses in the Bible.

Let's look at Matthew 1: 21 – "*She (Maria) will give birth to a son. You (Joseph) will name him Jesus. Give him this name because he will save his people from their sin*".

Boom! Right there, in the first book of the New Testament, in the 21st verse we already get the true reason for the birth of Jesus. He did not come to have His birth celebrated. He did not come to get gifts from the wise men! He did not come so that we can take the tradition of giving and receiving gifts and make it the most important day of the year...

No, He came for a different reason. And this was

already made clear from the start. From before His birth it was foretold and said that He will come and to save His people from sin. And that is the real reason Christ was born! To come and save us from sin.

So, when you and you family and loved one celebrates Christmas this year I would like you to see the "bigger picture". Don't look at the birth of Christ as a time to party and make marry... No, think about what it really means to us. It is a time to be happy and celebrate the birth of our Saviour but not for the joy of gifts, eating and drinking but for the task of having to come and deliver us from sin. With that I would like to convey my Season Greetings to each and every member of the South African Irish Regiment. May the joy and peace of the festive season be with you and your loved ones, but not only for the birth of our Saviour but also for the saving grace He came to fulfil as was foretold before His birth....

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Guide on the older medals of the SANDF

The General Service Medal is a military campaign medal which was instituted by the President of the Republic of South Africa in 1987. It could be awarded to members of the South



African Defence Force from 1 January 1983, for operational service inside South Africa in the prevention or suppression of terrorism or internal disorder, or the preservation of life, health or property, or the maintenance of essential services and law and order, or crime prevention.

of precedence has remained unchanged since then.

Source list: Wikipedia
SA Medal Site
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Regimental Photos

It continued to be awarded in the SANDF as an internal operations medal and in 2002, the Maluti Clasp was authorised for personnel who participated in Operations Boleas and Maluti in Lesotho..

2016 in pictures



Change of command. Jan 2016.

The medal could be retroactively be awarded from 1 January 1983, to serving members of all ranks of the South African Defence Force for operational service inside South Africa in the prevention or suppression of terrorism or internal disorder, or the preservation of life, health or property, or the maintenance of essential services and law and order, or crime prevention. In effect, it also served as a campaign medal for the State of Emergency operations against Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) from 1985 to 1990.

The seniority of the General Service Medal in the official order of precedence was revised three times after 1987, to accommodate the inclusion or institution of new decorations and medals, first upon the integration into the South African National Defence Force in 1994, again in April 1996, when decorations and medals were belatedly instituted for the two former non-statutory forces, the Azanian People's Liberation Army and Umkhonto we Sizwe, and finally upon the institution of a new set of honours on 27 April 2003.



Our Pipes and Drums Jan 2016.

It was discontinued on 27 April 2003 when a new honours system was introduced, but it's position on the order



Our guys on deployment.

Our OC in Barberton



On deployment accidents will happen





Our company soccer team.

Our Troops on parade Sidi Rezegh.



Barberton 2016





The Speech of our Officer Commanding at the Sidi Rezegh commemoration parade.

**Courtesy of Lt Col. W.W. Kinghorn
& Lt D.W. Chambers**

Honoured guests, Officers, Warrant Officers, NCO's and members of the Regiment and the Regimental Family; I wish to welcome you to the annual drumhead service in remembrance of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Sidi Rezegh. I would like to extend a special welcome to the German military representative here to day, Commander Kai Brand. At the battle we were foes; today we are comrades, remembering the valour and sacrifice of the soldiers of our nations on that day.

I would like to reference a speech given previously at this parade, but which encapsulates the reason we commemorate this day, a day of defeat, rather than another day when the SA Irish were victorious.

The last Sunday of November is the last Sunday of the Ecclesiastical year, called officially in England the 'Sunday next before Advent' In Germany it is known as Totensonntag, the 'Sunday of the Dead', a kind of Lutheran All Souls' Day, In 1941, the 23rd of November was the last Sunday of November; and the battle on that day became known in the Panzergruppe by this name as a result of the bloody fighting and the heavy casualties taken by the German forces so engaged at Sidi Rezegh.

I would just like to quote briefly from 'The Sidi Rezegh Battles 1941' by J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, which is regarded as a definitive history of the battle.

“General Freyberg of the New Zealand Division recorded in his diary under the date 23 November, 'a beautiful day and a full one', and so it was:- a day full of endeavour, courage and ultimately tragedy for the South African 5th Brigade

Heavy fighting had been underway around the airfield at Sidi Rezegh for most of the day, when at about 1515, approx 200 enemy vehicles headed by tanks made an attack from the south-west of the 5th SA Brigade's defences making for the centre of the SA Irish position. Transvaal Horse Artillery (THA) guns engaged them continuously over open sights, swinging more and more to the left until they were out-flanked by the tanks.

Behind the charging panzers came the German infantry, tightly packed in thin-skinned vehicles and forming an admirable target: they suffered severely. Heavy fighting broke immediately, with 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 vehicles which had been knocked out during the morning, inflicted heavy losses on the two German rifle regiments, aided by the sustained fire of the S.A. Irish.

Many German battalion and company commanders were killed leading their troops; a factor that initially stalled their attacks with the sudden loss of leaders. However, despite the deadly resistance of the SA Brigade, once the guns of the THA ran out of ammunition the inevitable could only occur.

German tanks penetrated the defensive lines of the Brigade, supported by their remaining infantry, and began to wear down the infantry fighting positions of the South African battalions.

Unprotected infantry are no match for armour, and despite ferocious resistance by the South African infantry, by dusk the battle was over, the 5th SA Brigade smashed and the South African Irish together with 3 Transvaal Scottish, 3 Regiment Botha and the THA were destroyed.”

Now, 75 years later, we celebrate this day as a day of commemoration; not only in remembrance of those men that day, but also of all of those who have served and those who have given their lives for their country whilst serving in

this Regiment. Indeed, this year, is the first year that we have no surviving participants of the battle present at this parade – the last of those men having answered the final call earlier this year. But we in the SA Irish will not forget

For the real reason we remember these men is the manner of their service and dedication to duty. Yes they fought for their country, but as any soldier will tell you; they fought first for their comrades, then for their Regiment, and then for their country. These men, fighting from their slit trenches knowing they could not win against armour set us an example that continues to this day in the Regiment. Our traditions are in fact not our hackles and shamrocks, but rather the fidelity of service and sacrifice which provides the ethos of our service today

With apologies to Bernard of Chartres, I would like to end with a quote: -“if I serve better, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants” These giants have set us an example of service to which this Regiment resolves to be true. I thank you.

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