

## The Shamrock

SA Irish Regiment

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# The Shamrock



The official newsletter of the SA Irish Regiment

## Armed Forces Day!



## From the Editor

*From: The Editor*

We remind all our members to take note of event dates and for specific training dates, you will be contacted by your relevant company commander. When in doubt, please contact the regimental HQ for more detail.

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**

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 year is now well underway with many challenges already met and others still to be mastered. As I have previously stated, this will not be an easy year, with an especially tight budget.

My staff and I have tackled this challenge with zeal and we have formulated our "battle plans" to attain the most success with the recourses available.

As usual we hope for the best, but we continue to plan for the worst, so that our future successes are assured.

We can all be very proud of our accomplishments so far, but we must also ready ourselves for more challenges ahead. As always, I expect nothing but the best from my Regiment.

**Faugh a Ballagh!**

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

- 18 February** - Unit shooting exercise.
- 17 March** - Saint Patrick's Day
- 13 May** - Unit shooting exercise.
- 15 July** - Unit shooting exercise.
- 23 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)*

Group Captain Adolph Gysbert Malan DSO & Bar, DFC & Bar (24 March 1910 - 17 September 1963), better known as Sailor Malan, was a South African fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force (RAF), who led No. 74 Squadron RAF during the height of the Battle of Britain. Under his leadership No. 74 Squadron became one of the RAF's best units. Malan scored 27 kills, seven shared destroyed, three probably destroyed and 16 damaged.

During the Battle of Britain he formulated his 10 rules for air combat, which was adopted by many allied fighter pilots.

- 1.Wait until you see the whites of his eyes. Fire short bursts of one to two seconds only when your sights are definitely "ON".
- 2.Whilst shooting think of nothing else, brace the whole of your body: have both hands on the stick: concentrate on your ring sight.
- 3.Always keep a sharp lookout. "Keep your finger out".
- 4.Height gives you the initiative.
- 5.Always turn and face the attack.
- 6.Make your decisions promptly. It is better to act quickly even though your tactics are not the best.

- 7.Never fly straight and level for more than 30 seconds in the combat area.
- 8.When diving to attack always leave a proportion of your formation above to act as a top guard.
- 9.INITIATIVE, AGGRESSION, AIR DISCIPLINE, and TEAMWORK are words that MEAN something in Air Fighting.
- 10.Go in quickly - Punch hard - Get out!

Malan survived the war to become involved in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

In the 1969 war film Battle of Britain, the Robert Shaw character 'Squadron Leader Skipper' was explicitly based on Malan, as recounted by director Guy Hamilton in the documentary 'A Film for the 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 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

**SANDF** – President lays wreath, presents medals during wet Armed Forces Day.

*Written by Guy Martin*

President and Commander-in-Chief Jacob Zuma on Tuesday laid a wreath to honour those who died in the sinking of the SS Mendi 100 years ago and presented medals during Armed Forces Day activities in Durban that included a 300-vehicle parade and capability demonstration.



Zuma kicked off the fifth annual Armed Forces Day in a wet Durban by unveiling an SS Mendi plaque and laying a wreath at the Durban Maritime Museum. He was accompanied by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, Chief of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) General Solly Shoke, Chief of Staff of the SANDF, Lieutenant-General Vusi Masedo, Chief of the Army, Lieutenant-General Lindile Yam and other Chiefs of Services.

Zuma then moved to Moses Mabhida Stadium for a flypast, parade, medal presentation ceremony and speech. Several medals were awarded to doctors who helped look after former President Nelson Mandela while long service medals were given to senior members of the SANDF, including a 40 years' service medal to the Chief of the SANDF, General Solly Shoke.

In spite of wet weather that continued throughout the day, hundreds of members from all four arms of the

SANDF paraded past their Commander-in-Chief, who thanked them for answering the call to service. "On behalf of the entire South African population, that your work is highly appreciated," he said.

"Armed Forces Day...provides an opportunity to promote better understanding of the SANDF and its role in the consolidation and defence of our democracy and our people. Our soldiers get out of the barracks and showcase to the people they are serving and protecting.

Zuma said Armed Forces Day also provides an opportunity for youth to learn about careers in the defence force and recruit young people through the Military Skills Development System. Over the past three years the SANDF has recruited over eleven thousand young people. The SANDF has also trained six thousand

students who are part of the National Rural Youth Service Corps on behalf of the Rural Development and Land Reform.

"A similar programme with the Department of Social Development has also been supported by the SANDF through training. The SANDF, in partnership with the Province of the North West has launched a youth agriculture pilot project in the areas where the Defence Force has its foot print," Zuma told assembled guests and SANDF members.

He acknowledged the SANDF's contribution in times of disasters, such as the fires that recently engulfed the Western Cape. "As we speak, the South African National Defence Force has been involved in Disaster Management in the wake of Cyclone Dineo. An Oryx Helicopter is on standby at Air Forces Base Hoedspruit to cover both Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces with some operational members deployed at the Provincial Joints Centre in Mpumalanga."

Zuma said South Africa's soldiers work tirelessly to defend the borders of the republic, by supporting the Maritime Security Strategy along the Eastern Seaboard, in the Mozambican channel in order to counter piracy and curbing crime along landward borders.

"The SANDF also plays a key role in our foreign policy, anchored on the promotion of peace and security in the continent in order to create conducive conditions for economic development. The African Union has taken a decision that we must silence the guns in Africa by the year 2020. South Africa plays its role in the fulfilment of this goal. We have deployed more than three thousand members of the SANDF in the interest of contributing to peace and stability. We acknowledge the hard work of our troops in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"We will continue with our involvement in our mediation efforts, peacekeeping operations, and peace-making initiatives in Lesotho, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Somalia and Libya."

The President expressed condolences to the families of the three naval officers and three staff members of the Department of Public Works who lost their lives in a gas leak at the Durban naval base on Friday. He acknowledged the loss of soldiers in the DRC, Central African Republic and Sudan and saluted the men who lost their lives when the SS Mendi sank.

"This Armed Forces Day has a special meaning in our country, because we are marking the centenary of the sinking of the SS Mendi troopship," Zuma said, in which 616 South Africans, mostly from the 5th Battalion of the SA Native Labour Corps, died. He said black people had volunteered to join the First World War to fight fascism and also to get better treatment back home, but "unfortunately their sacrifice did not earn them any respect from the rulers of the time. They were not allowed to carry weapons and were to be utilised as labourers rather than as fighting soldiers. They were also never decorated or awarded any medals at the end of the war."

“The sinking of the Mendi is the tragedy second only in scale to the tragedy at Deville Wood in France the year before in 1916, when 776 men of the South African Battalion died holding the wood over six days. We travelled to France last year to pay tribute to those who fell in Deville Wood and to ensure that black soldiers are honoured and recognised in the South African monument to the war in that country, on an equal footing with the white soldiers. The new monument in France honours all our soldiers, black and white.”

In recognition of the SS Mendi tragedy, amongst the National Orders, the highest honours to be bestowed by South Africa, is the Order of Mendi for Bravery.

On Monday, Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Jeff Radebe, was in the United Kingdom to pay tribute to the Mendi victims. He was joined by Princess Anne, her husband Vice-Admiral Sir Timothy Lawrence and the Chief of the South African Navy Vice-Admiral Mosiwa Hlongwane. A memorial service took place at Southampton's Hollybrook Cemetery.

Meanwhile, the frigate SAS Amatola was at the site of the Mendi wreck in the English Channel yesterday to commemorate the tragedy, with descendants of those who died laying wreaths from the vessel. The Royal Navy's destroyer HMS Dragon circled around the wreck after sailing with the Amatola from Portsmouth. Hlongwane opened the proceedings by reciting the Reverend Isaac Hlongwane Dyobha's instruction to dance the death drill as the Mendi sank.

The frigate SAS Mendi would have ideally sailed to the United Kingdom, but she is undergoing refit in Simon's Town.

“Today we take the opportunity to thank the descendants of these men who gave their lives for a country that did not even regard them as citizens,” Hlongwane said, also mentioning the loss of 16 sailors on 18 February 1982 when the SAS President Kruger rammed the SAS Tafelberg.

Back in Durban, Zuma's speech was followed by a mechanised parade involving 300 vehicles showcasing almost the entire wheeled and tracked inventory of the SANDF, from bridge layers to main battle tanks. Several thousand people came out to witness the parade in spite of constant rain and drizzle.

A capability demonstration was held at Blue Lagoon beach in the afternoon, but the rain forced the cancellation of all fixed wing flying, except for a lone PC-7 from the Silver Falcons aerobatic team, which performed for the crowds before the capability demonstration got underway with helicopters, boats and soldiers.

An anti-piracy exercise took place offshore involving the frigate SAS Spioenkop, several small boats and Oryx helicopters, which dropped soldiers onto the vessel and airlifted them off again. Oryx helicopters were also used to drop soldiers onto the top of a nearby building and an A109 was used to extract wounded from the building's rooftop.

On the beach, Rooivalk helicopters simulated an attack to clear the beach for soldiers who were landed by Oryx helicopters and by small boats, who then attacked the 'enemy' with mortars and small arms. The capability demonstration was concluded by a mass flypast of over a dozen helicopters, including BK 117s, Oryx, Rooivalks and A109s.

The previous day the SANDF held a night shooting display at Blue Lagoon, which lit up the sky with tracers and flares. In clear weather on 18 February, SANDF forces took part in capability demonstrations at New Beach and the Gooderson Beach Hotel in Durban, which saw Gripens and Hawks take part.

Elsewhere to commemorate the SS Mendi tragedy, the South African Naval Museum in Simon's Town displayed a series of historic photographs and documents, dating back a hundred years, to commemorate the event. Port Elizabeth on 21 February opened an exhibition titled Remembering the SS

Mendi at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, which will run until May this year. The city's municipality, together with the SANDF, will host a commemorative ceremony at the SS Mendi memorial.

On 26 February the Gunners Association Western Province will host a ceremony at the University of Cape Town in honour of the 616 South African men who died on the SS Mendi. The Mendi Memorial on UCT campus was named a National Heritage Site on 30 December 2016.

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News from the SANDF – Concern over cuts in Reserve Force man days.

Written by Kim Helfrich

South Africa's top Reserve Force soldier has warned "significant cuts" in man days for the country's part-time soldiers could impact negatively on the national border protection tasking Operation Corona.

Major General Roy Andersen, Chief Defence Reserves, was speaking after the Defence Reserves Division implementation guidelines for planning and budgeting work session in Durban ahead of Armed Forces Day.

He told the session: "The impact of significant cuts in man days available for Reserve call-ups while maintaining a high commitment to Op Corona deployments on the borders has to be a focus".

Reserve Force units currently make up the majority of the 14 companies deployed on border protection and are seen an integral component to the success of the one force projection and employment ethos the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) adheres to.

Other Reserve Force specific functions that came up for discussion during the two day work session included an initial design of a new Reserve Service system and assisting Reserve Force soldiers to obtain work with employers "sympathetic" to military and especially part-time service.

The session also, according to Andersen, looked at “supporting the SA Army in communicating and implementing the proposed changes to certain unit names”.

The change of names for Reserve Force units was proposed by Lieutenant General Vusi Masondo when he was SA Army Chief. It was seen as part of nation building and improving morale and esprit de corps among Reserve Force soldiers. A number of roadshows and presentations were done to units across the country but to date no announcement has been made of any unit name changes.

The planning session also discussed the role of the Reserves in the rural development plan which Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula last year said she wants to see work done on.

At present the involvement of the SANDF and especially the Reserve Force is centred on North West in partnership with the provincial government and is centred on agriculture and linked to infrastructure development. It is seen as an indicator of the SANDF’s potential to support development through peacetime activities.

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**News from the SANDF – Another step taken in reactivation of SAAF Reserve squadrons.**

*Written by defenceWeb*

Efforts to reactivate and resuscitate the role of squadrons in the Air Force Reserve Service (AFRS) gained impetus during a special Air Force Reserve Force Squadron workshop.

The meeting noted the AFRS is an “invaluable extension and acts as a force multiplier for the capabilities of the SA Air Force (SAAF)” according to the Reserve Force Volunteer. The meeting at the SAAF College in Thaba Tshwane comes almost two years after SAAF Chief, Lieutenant General Zakes Msimang, told the Reserve Force publication he was “addressing the multiple and unforeseen challenges”

that, at that time, had seen the SAAF Reserve which once numbered nine squadrons, grounded.

“I am confident the Reserve squadrons will soon take to the air again,” he stated, adding the airborne service of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) was doing “everything possible, within its limited resources, to achieve the Ministerial priority of rejuvenating the Reserves”.

In addition to the workshop, the SAAF Reserve rejuvenation has also seen the appointment of Colonel George Ramaremsa as Acting Director: Air Force Reserves, last year.

In June 2002 he was called up by the SAAF Reserves and served in the Air Force Reserves as national co-ordinator for the SAAF’s Siyandiza aviation awareness programme. Ten years later he was appointed Senior Staff Officer Air Force Reserves and in March last year he was named acting director. In this position he serves as a bridge between the defence force and the community as well as managing the SAAF Reserve, according to the Reserve Force Volunteer.

Ramaremsa is also a member of the Air Force Reserve Council, the Air Force Budget Control Committee and the Defence Reserve Board.

The SAAF College workshop noted the extra air capabilities provided by the AFRS enable the SAAF to execute its mandate more effectively, efficiently and economically.

Msimang told the workshop the Air Force Reserves were important and played “a significant role” supporting the SA Police Service particularly in times of crisis and distress.

He also said the current under-funding of the airborne arm of the SANDF has led to a loss of capabilities, capacity and increased maintenance backlogs “placing constraints on SAAF development and transformation goals”.

Issues discussed during the workshop included the importance of career planning, pilot remuneration,

transformation and AFRS becoming an integral part of the SAAF.

“The meeting also resolved to start AFRS operational camps for ground and air training and get squadrons operational again. Squadrons will be reactivated once all shortfalls have been addressed,” according to the Reserve Force Volunteer.

The SAAF Reserve which two years ago marked its 50th anniversary at one stage boasted nine squadrons at air force bases Bloemspruit (two), Durban, Hoedspruit, Makhado, Port Elizabeth, Waterkloof (two) and Ysterplaat.

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**News from the SANDF – Reserve Force to be updated and revitalised.**

*Written by defenceWeb*

The Reserves are, according to SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Chief, General Solly Shoke, “a vital component” of the South African military and to ensure the part-timers remain an integral part of the one force concept there is a need for modification and updating.

“The current Reserve Force system has stood us in good stead and delivered good results but is in need of modification and updating to meet current budget constraints and future requirements,” he writes in the summer edition of the Reserve Force Volunteer.

Exactly what the Reserves are going to look like and operate as is, according to Chief of Defence Reserves, Major General Roy Andersen, “a work in progress”.

A work session has been scheduled for the third week of February where he sees “thoughts being progressed” on the issue.

An indication of the importance of the Reserve Force to the overall mandate of protecting South Africa’s territory and sovereignty comes from the ongoing border protection tasking, Operation Corona.

## The Shamrock

At times last year more than half of the 15 companies deployed on border protection were Reserve Force Units showing 2016 was, in Andersen's words "an active year for the Reserves". This has been acknowledged by Shoke who singles out the "particular role" the Reserves are filling in augmenting the Regulars on South Africa's borders.

All told around fifteen thousand Reserve Force members in various musterings were called up for duty during 2016.

Last November Andersen gave a Defence Force Service Commission conference in Pretoria some insights from a business community point of view, as well as that of a soldier.

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.

The deterrence value of the SANDF in its entirety is one means of mitigating risks in Africa, where government's foreign policy has committed the military to peace support missions.

For the deterrence factor to work, credible combat forces, rapid force generation, trained reserves, strong doctrine, quality training, technology and good morale are essential. The current – and probable future - budget restraints will increasingly place these capabilities under threat, Andersen said quoting extensively from the Defence Review.

He told the conference consequences of the ever-diminishing defence budget made matters "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 will 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 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," Andersen said.

At the other end of the scale Shoke wants to see both the Regulars and Reserves being "fit, young and ready" as well as being properly disciplined across all ranks.

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**News from the SANDF – Hlatshwayo is new Joint Ops Chief .**

*Written by defenceWeb*

Major General Barney Hlatshwayo has been named Chief: Joint Operations Division of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF).

He is currently deployed to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where he is senior liaison with the

government and there is currently no indication of when he will return to South Africa to take up the senior Joint Operations position. According to the SANDF Appointments Bulletin he assumed the position on January 1.

It is currently filled, in an acting capacity, by Rear Admiral Derek Christian. He moved into the post when the former Chief, Lieutenant General Duma Mdutyana, died last year. Christian will retire from active service at the end of March.

Among others, Hlatshwayo has been Chief Operations Director for the SANDF and has also been active in exploring avenues where simulation training can be profitably employed in the national defence force.

The SANDF Corporate Communications Directorate indicated it will make available a CV of the new Joint Ops Chief.

In the only other lieutenant general appointment to be made by SANDF Chief, General Solly Shoke, Major General JS Mbuli is promoted to the three star rank and will become SANDF Logistics Chief on July 1 this year. He takes over the position from Lieutenant General Morris Moadira who is retiring.

Other appointments at Joint Operations include Lieutenant Colonel BF Vilakazi to colonel as SSO land (doctrinal development); Lieutenant Colonel KR Arons to colonel as Officer Commanding Joint Tactical HQ; Colonel BL Eckersley as SSO Strategic Planning; Colonel X Gcam-Gcam as SSO Conventional Operations; Colonel B Mkula as SSO Training; Colonel R Potgieter as SSO Air (Ops Capabilities); Colonel SL Sangweni as OC KZN Tactical HQ; Lieutenant Colonel CS Mabotja to colonel as OC Free State Tactical HQ; Lieutenant Colonel BJ Mabaso to colonel as SSO Peace Support Operations UN; Lieutenant Colonel MN Ntshingila to colonel as SSO Deployment; Lieutenant Colonel NP Arendse to Colonel as SSO Logistics and Lieutenant Colonel EM Laubscher to Colonel as SSO Air (doctrinal development).

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## News from the SANDF – Still no official word on new naval platforms.

*Written by defenceWeb*

Indications are the three revamped SA Navy strikecraft now doing duty as offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) are going to be in service for at least another four to five years.

They are due to be replaced by three new OPVs with the maritime service of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) also due to receive a similar number of inshore patrol vessels (IPVs) in terms of Project Biro. Tender submissions for both have been received by Armscor which is keeping its cards close to the chest on the new platforms, expected to be major players in the maritime component of Operation Phakisa.

Late last year Armscor said in response to a defenceWeb enquiry it was “busy with a multisource tender” for Project Biro and Project Hotel, a new hydrographic vessel to replace the ageing SAS Protea.

The South African shipbuilding industry, earmarked as one of Operation Phakisa’s bigger beneficiaries, as well as representatives of foreign shipbuilders in South Africa, feel a decision has been made on the successful tenderer for the OPVs and IPVs.

This was reinforced by a retired admiral who told defenceWeb the Durban-based company, SA Shipyards (SAS), would be named as the senior contractor for the OPV’s with the Cape Town operation of Dutch-headquartered Damen getting the nod for the IPVs. Neither company had made any announcement at the time of publication.

The SA Navy is currently using three converted strikecraft as OPVs. In addition to patrol duties in South African waters the platforms are also deployed in the Mozambique Channel as the major deterrent in the South African Development Community

(SADC) counter-piracy tasking, Operation Copper.

In addition to shipbuilding and maintenance, the maritime part of Operation Phakisa sees added impetus being given to sustainable utilisation of ocean resources including fish, minerals, gas and oil. Protection of these resources will be the task of the SA Navy, one which military analyst Helmoed Heitman believes will not be possible in a few years.

“Deferring Biro will see the Navy run out of ships to meet its commitments – or rather those government makes for it – particularly if African west coast operations are added,” he said.

As part of its deployment to the site of the sinking of the troopship SS Mendi in the English Channel 100 years ago the Valour Class frigate SAS Amatola (F145) will conduct a border patrol of the South African west coast under the auspices of Operation Corona en route. There are also indications she will take part in anti-piracy operations off the continent’s west coast on her return voyage to Simon’s town. Amatola is due to depart Simon’s town later this month and is set to return to her home port on April 19 following a three month foreign deployment.

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## News from the SANDF – New Joint Ops Chief brings 40 plus years of military experience to the post.

*Written by defenceWeb*

The new man heading up the Joint Operations Division of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), Lieutenant General Barney Hlatshwayo, has more than 40 years military experience.

He is currently completing a tour of duty in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to add to his CV which already boasts a number of diplomatic taskings. These include participating in and assisting with peace agreements between armed political parties in Burundi and being the chief military advisor for the facilitation of the Burundi peace process. On this deployment he worked closely with

then Deputy President Jacob Zuma and former Defence Minister, Charles Nqakula.

His time as Director: Force Preparation And Training in the SA Army saw him involved in the planning and execution of joint military exercises including Airborne Africa, Ndlovu, Blue Hungwe, Tanzanite, Blue Angel, De Gama, Med Flag and Rainbow Track.

Hlatshwayo joined the Azanian Peoples’ Liberation Army (Apla) in 1976 serving as liaison officer, military attaché, officer commanding, Director: Operations and chief of staff in Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Positions he has held in the SANDF include SSO Integration; SSO Doctrine (Director: Training); Deputy Chief Director: Army Force Structure; Director: Mobilisation and Demobilisation; GOC: Joint Operations HQ; Chief Director: Operations and Chief Director: Operations Development.

He is currently finishing his term as GOC of Team Bulisa in the DRC assisting that country’s defence force in the compilation of policy and strategy.

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## News from the SANDF – Cape helicopter squadron rises to the fire challenge.

*Written by defenceWeb*

January was a challenging month for the South African Air Force’s (SAAF’s) Cape-based 22 Squadron as they have been called in to battle numerous mountain fires.

The first week of 2016 saw fires raging around Somerset West and Grabouw, causing damage of over R50 million with seven houses and other dwellings gutted. On 6 January, winds swept fires closer to the historic Lourensford Estate wine farm.

Working on Fire were battling the blaze with three Huey helicopters, a spotter plane and an Air Tractor water bomber. About 300 firefighters, assisted by backups from the Eastern Cape and Free State, were also assisting.

That afternoon 22 Squadron and two Oryx helicopters were called in to assist. Supported by a fuel bowser, they were immediately deployed and continued flying through the weekend.

From 9 January they moved across to Paarl and on 8 January, the Navy called for the Oryx to save SANDF property in the Simons' Town area in support of the Working on Fire helicopters. Through the next week the Navy and City fought the fires, assisted by helicopters from the SAAF and Working on Fire.

By 18 January, the SAAF was back in Paarl for the next few days.

Each Oryx is equipped with a 2.5 ton Bambi Bucket, which is only filled to 80% capacity (2,000 litres). Speaking to defenceWeb during a lull in firefighting activities, Lt Col Kyle Jonker (Acting Officer Commanding, 22 Squadron) said from 6 to 19 January, the squadron had flown 93.6 hours, dropping 1,389 buckets of water amounting to a "mind-boggling" 2 778 000 litres.

To cater for the increased flying tempo, the squadron instituted a two-shift, 24 hour maintenance cycle: when two Oryx arrived back from Paarl on 18 January, both went straight into servicing. "What would ordinarily have taken a few days, our ground crew did overnight," Jonker said. "The ground crews are working far harder than the aircrew are."

Despite having an Oryx crew deployed to the United Nations mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the squadron has sufficient pilots on hand. However, two additional maritime-equipped helicopters (one from TFDC neat Bredasdorp and another via 17 Squadron in Pretoria) have been brought in to boost aircraft availability. An extra Flight Engineer has also been deployed to the squadron to assist.

Mountain fires in the Cape are not something new and the squadron started preparations last December. Pilots trained in the picturesque Franschoek area, making sure all their Bambi buckets were serviceable.

Although Cape Town has contracted Working on Fire, the City's Disaster Risk Management Centre contacts the Air Force Command Post when additional resources are required.

Jonker said each fire is different and they operate in a very dynamic environment. Generally, a LZ (Landing Zone) is identified and a fuel bowser is sent from AFB Ysterplaat to provide fuel on site. Each helicopter will deploy with two Bambi Buckets. The aircraft lands at the LZ, the buckets are fitted (often with rotors turning) and then head straight out to fight the fire. Each crew operate a six hour shift, which includes refuelling and other breaks.

"So when we arrive, most often the Working on Fire guys will be there already and we'll just slot in with them," Jonker explained.

There's generally a fixed wing spotter aircraft in the air, informing the pilots where the fire line is in cooperation with the Incident Commander on the ground.

Not only can the large Oryx carry a significantly larger water load than the Working on Fire Hueys, but the three aircrew (Aircraft Commander, co-pilot and Flight Engineer) also contributes to a significantly decreased work-load. Whilst the pilot flying will call the drop, it is the Flight Engineer who actually presses the button to release the water, call the heights when picking up water, provides an additional set of eyes.

Another difference between the civilian and SAAF operations is that the third crew member aboard the Oryx allows for a shorter stop for carrying the bucket, thus potentially allowing for greater accuracy.

"The civilian guys operate on their own, single pilot operation is incredibly taxing," Jonker said.

Once the six hour shift is completed, the helicopter returns and a crew change is undertaken. The fuel bowser crew remain on station for the entire day, often assisting the aircrew with other tasks.

Jonker said that 22 Squadron has many experienced crews with a good knowledge of working in mountains. Besides attending to mountain fires, the squadron provides their normal 24/7 standby service. Then they have to fit in their day-to-day currency and training. All this whilst 12 other members of the diversified squadron, those maintaining and flying the Super Lynx maritime helicopter, are embarked aboard the Navy frigate SAS Amatola which recently departed for a voyage to Europe.

"We fly the aircraft, but it is the ground crew that keeps it in the air," Jonker said. "They sit there long after the working day is finished, making sure everything is ready for the next day."

The pilots say that it is a "pleasure flying in the areas that have burnt and seeing all the houses that have survived. It does the heart good."

"The outreach from the community has been incredible," Jonker noted. "It's been fantastic, wherever we've landed, people come to the aircraft with sandwiches or cool drinks. It's nice to know, it's a good feeling."

Jonker also expressed his pleasure of working with his civilian fire-fighting colleagues on the ground, working in high temperatures whilst wearing thick protective clothing.

The Western Provincial Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning minister, Anton Bredell, praised the SAAF. "We are grateful to the SAAF and the Minister of Defence for their assistance. The Oryx helicopters are much larger and able to deliver a bigger payload compared to the helicopters we usually rely on. We know the SAAF assistance will make a huge difference," Bredell said in a statement.

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**News from the SANDF – Mtshatsheni is new SA Army Sergeant Major .**

*Written by defenceWeb*

Senior Chief Warrant Officer (SCWO) Ncedakele Elliot Mtshatsheni has become the seventh officer to be appointed to this post since the establishment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) following democracy.



Mtshatsheni is Eastern Cape born and bred having grown up in King William’s Town. He joined Umkhonto we Sizwe 27 years ago in Tanzania and, after training, was deployed variously as section commander, platoon commander, company sergeant major and course sergeant major for a junior leaders’ course.

He returned to South Africa in May 1994 and integrated in the then newly established SANDF as a sergeant. Assistant instructor’s course, bridging training and infantry corps training were followed by deployment to 6 SA Infantry Battalion in Grahamstown. In 1999 he was transferred to the Infantry School in Oudtshoorn and in 2002 he was promoted to Warrant Officer Class Two before moving to the SA Army Gymnasium in Heidelberg in 2005. When the warrant officer branch moved to the Army College in 2007 he was course leader for the WO development course at the Thaba Tshwane military learning facility.

May 2008 saw Mtshatsheni move to 46 SA Brigade as regimental sergeant major in the main HQ unit. Before leaving five years later he participated in, among others, exercises Seboka, Young Eagle and Ndlovu and was part of course support.

In September 2013 he was named SA Army Infantry Formation Sergeant Major and in 2016 he was appointed SA Army Discipline Sergeant Major at Army HQ. He was acting Army Sergeant Major from September last year until the post was finalised this year.

In addition to a number of military courses, including law en public service induction Mtshatsheni also successfully completed the US Army sergeant majors course at Fort Bliss in Texas.

Previous SA Army sergeant majors, since 1994, are Koos Moorcroft, EW Sykes, Joseph Tshabalala, Mthusi Kgaladi, Kallie Bredenkamp and Charles Laubscher.

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**News from the SANDF – Mcetywa new General Officer Commanding SAAF’s Air Command.**

*Written by defenceWeb*

Major General Octavia Mcetywa has taken over from Major General Wiseman Mbambo as General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the South African Air Force’s (SAAF’s) Air Command.



Mbambo formally handed over command during a change of command parade at Air Force Base Zwartkop on 1 February.

Mbambo was appointed General Officer Commanding Air Force Base (AFB) Waterkloof in 2004 before being appointed as Director: Air Force

Capability and Plans in 2009 and then GOC Air Force Command in 2013, when he was also promoted to the rank of Major General.

During his handover speech, Mbambo said the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is being impacted by several realities, including sluggish economic growth, high unemployment and a consequent reduction in budgets. This comes at a time of conflict and insecurity in Africa, with millions displaced by conflict and hundreds of thousands dying due to peace and instability. South Africa, in line with African Union and United Nations membership, is committed to respond to crises on the continent. “The SANDF must be adequately resourced to fulfil its mandate,” he said. He called members of the Air Force ‘miracle workers’ for stretching limited budgets.

Noting the concern of shrinking resources, Mbambo said the dwindling budget allocation was something Government had to grapple with under the butter vs guns debate. Nevertheless, he said the SAAF has strived to maintain its speed, height and reach – the main characteristics of air power – in spite of dwindling resources, and has without a doubt displayed agility and adaptability both locally and on external deployments. He said SAAF operations in Burundi, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo show an Air Force that inspires confidence.

For example, the Western Cape in January praised the SAAF for its contribution of Oryx helicopters to fight veld fires there. Meanwhile, late last month SAAF Oryx and Rooivalk helicopters assisted rescuing the occupants of a crashed Mi-24 helicopter in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In spite of a limited budget, SAAF responsibilities are not expected to decrease accordingly. Mbambo noted that the Border Management Agency was approved in December 2016 by Government, which will entail South

African National Defence Force participation.

Mbambo takes up a new position as deputy chief of staff of the SANDF. He said during his time as GOC Air Command some of the highlights included the restructuring and transformation of the SAAF, and assisting members serving under tough economic circumstances.

Major General Mcetywa has been GOC Air Command effective 1 January 2017. He was promoted to Major General in 2015 and appointed Chief Director: Policy and Planning at SA Air Force headquarters. In 2014 he was appointed commander of AFB Waterkloof.

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**News from the SANDF** – No word yet on a new site for AFB Durban.

*Written by Kim Helfrich*

The SA Air Force (SAAF) Command Council has known for at least eight years that its only base in KwaZulu-Natal will have to be moved and to date has prepared a user requirement and created a multi-agency task team.

AFB Durban is still operating from the north side of what was Durban International Airport. The base is home to 15 Squadron, which flies Oryx and A109 helicopters, and 508 protection Squadron.

Being the only permanent rotary-wing squadron in the east coast province, 15 Squadron has a maritime and a mountain search and rescue capability and is also used by President Jacob Zuma for VIP transport between his Nkandla homestead and King Shaka International airport, which replaced Durban International Airport in May 2010.

15 Squadron has a C Flight, which operates out of AFB Port Elizabeth flying BK 117 helicopters.

Brigadier General Hilton Smith, who took over as SAAF Director: Corporate Staff Services at the beginning of this year, said the timeframe for moving

AFB Durban was dependent on the project plan for the dig-out port planned for the site of the former Durban International Airport.

“An AFB Durban relocation task team, consisting of personnel from the SAAF, Chief of Logistics, the Department of Transport, Transnet and the national Department of Public Works was established to address all issues concerning the relocation of the base.

“Several relocation options are currently under investigation,” he said but would not disclose specific sites.

The military aviation grapevine has it that two possible sites have been identified at King Shaka for use by the SAAF but until such time as funding is made available 15 and 408 squadrons will continue to operate out of the remains of Durban International, now largely a parking lot for new vehicles coming out of the adjacent Toyota manufacturing operation. All runways and taxiways at what was Durban International are clearly marked with large white Xs, indicating they are unusable.

Among suggestions put forward for the new KZN base are Durban’s Virginia Airport, also facing an uncertain future; Richards Bay and Umtata in Eastern Cape. With its major component a helicopter unit, some military watchers have suggested the base could be relocated to either 5 SA Infantry Battalion at Ladysmith or 121 SA Infantry Battalion at Mtubatuba.

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**News from the SANDF** – Memorial service marks centenary of the sinking of the Mendi.

*Written by Dean Wingrin*

A special ceremony was held in Cape Town on 26 February to honour the 616 South African men who died so tragically during the sinking of the troopship SS Mendi on 21 February 1917 when she was rammed and sunk in the English Channel during the First World War.

As the Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town (UCT), Professor Francis Petersen noted in his address: “We are on the spot where 616 spent their last night in South Africa before they sailed off to die in the English Channel, before they even had the chance to serve in the First World War as they had planned.”

Mendi had sailed from Cape Town on 16 January 1917, en route to La Havre in France, carrying the last contingent of the South African Native Labour Corps (SANLC), comprising 805 black privates, 23 white officers and non-commissioned officers and 33 crewmembers.

On the morning of 21 February 1917, having left Plymouth in the UK, the larger cargo ship SS Darro sailing from France and travelling at full speed and emitting no warning signals in the fog, rammed the Mendi. The Darro appeared out of the fog a mere 200 feet away, slicing the Mendi from keel top deck, resulting in the Mendi sinking in 20 minutes. No steps were taken by Darro to lower boats or rescue the survivors. She stood off and floated nearby while lifeboats from the Mendi’s escorting destroyer, HMS Brisk, rowed among the survivors, trying to rescue them. A total of 616 South Africans (607 black SANLC members and nine of their fellow white countrymen) and all 33 crewmembers drowned.

Positioned in front of the Mendi Memorial, the ceremony and wreath laying was hosted by the Gunner’s Association Western Province, in conjunction with the Department of Military Veterans and UCT. Members of the Cape Town Highlanders provided the military parade and Guard of Honour, assisted by the SA Army Band.

Petersen noted that the event and memorial before the assembled guests was a reminder of everyone’s common heritage as South Africans and “of the values of courage, national pride, and putting the needs of society above one’s own needs, even sacrificing one’s life for a greater cause, as the men on the SS Mendi did 100 years ago.”

The presence of a memorial to a military troopship on UCT’s Lower

Campus may surprise some people as the men aboard the ship did not attend the university. In 1917 what is now the university sports field was the Rosebank Show Grounds, only becoming part of the university in 1928. The troops of the South African Native Labour Corps were billeted at the show grounds before they were shipped to France to aid the war effort. The site is now a National Heritage Site.

The memorial service was attended by descendants of those who both survived and perished in the tragedy at sea, as well as representatives of Belgium, France and Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Wreaths were also laid by various military units and organisations, including that of HMS Clyde, a Royal Navy Offshore Patrol Vessel undergoing maintenance in Simon’s Town Naval Base.

Renditions of the Last Post and Reveille by a trumpeter of the SA Army Band, together with the playing of a bagpipe by a Cape Town Highlander during the laying of wreaths, contributed to the sombre occasion.

The Mendi disaster was one of South Africa's worst tragedies of World War I, second perhaps only to the Battle of Delville Wood. The SS Mendi is honoured by the modern South African Navy, which renamed the Warrior-class strike craft SAS Frans Erasmus to SAS Isaac Dyobha in April 1997 in recognition of the Reverend who encouraged the dying men on the Mendi. The last of four Valour class frigates built for the SA Navy, SAS Mendi (F148), is named after the SS Mendi.

The official memorial service was held aboard the Valour-class frigate SAS Amatola, presently in Europe, on 21 February when she took relatives of the troops to lay wreaths at the position where the Mendi sank. She was accompanied by the Royal Navy vessel HMS Dragon. The wreaths laid at the wreck site were taken ashore, with one laid amongst the graves of the nine South African Soldiers buried in the Milton Cemetery and another laid at the memorial to all the Mendi soldiers in the Hollybrook Cemetery in Southampton.

A smaller service held in Durban during the Armed Forces Day parade. A small service was also due to be held in Port Elizabeth, but was cancelled at the last moment due to political/logistical issues.

UCT is honouring the men of the Mendi in two other ways: the Centre for African Studies has an exhibition of art relating to the Mendi tragedy. The Centre for African Studies will also host a conference on the SS Mendi from 28 to 30 March.

The SS Mendi memorial at UCT Lower Campus was commissioned by the Sunday Times for its centenary in 2006. Sculptor Madi Phala designed a partially submerged skeletal prow with floating military headgear inscribed with the numbers of soldiers, officers and crew who sailed on SS Mendi. The sculpture was substantially upgraded in 2013 by UCT, with a new platform and a Roll of Honour wall.

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## From the Chaplain

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

February is behind us. It is called the month of love. To prove our love to that special person we will go to great lengths and we will spare no cost! You will buy her flowers, chocolates and you might even go as far as taking your girlfriend out for an expensive meal at a restaurant! You might even have made your boyfriend or husband “breakfast in bed” .... All of this in an attempt to prove your love to that special person.

We also read about one of the great love stories from the pen of William Shakespeare. We all know the story of “Romeo and Juliet” and merely hearing the name of the play we conjure up romantic images of undying young love....

But there is another love story. One that is well known but does not involve romantic love. It is Agape love. This is the love that God has for each and every one of us. It is a perfect love. A love that is beyond anything and everything we have ever thought of or experienced.

We read about this love in John 3:16 New King James Version (NKJV)

V16: 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.

Just think about it for a moment! We are born sinners. It is in our nature. We sin.... God is a just God and demand sin to be punished. And therein lies the problem. If we had to be punished for our sins, we would have to be doomed to hell! Nothing we can ever do will be able to “make up” for our sins or even reduce our punishment. Our sins would be too great to overcome and we would forever be separated from God!

But God loved us so much that He could not let it be. God had a plan to save us from our sins. He had a plan for our sins to be punished and for us to be made just... for this purpose He sent His Son, His only Son, to die for our sins. God made it possible for us to be saved, just because he loved and still loves us! Now that is real love! That is love that cannot be matched! That is a perfect love...

So, when you look at that teddy bear that that special someone gave you for Valentin’s day, just think about the greatest act of love that was ever performed. Look up at the cross and think of the love that God the Father had for us! He sacrificed his only Son, to die for our sins... think about the love that Jesus had and still has for us. To go through all that pain and suffering, agony and humiliation, to die a criminal death on a cursed wooden cross, so that we can have the opportunity to mend our relationship with God. So, that we can be close to God and have a personal relationship with Him!

Let us pray:  
 Father, we want to thank You for loving us so much that You could not let us be lost. We want to thank You for sending Your only Son to die in our stead. We want to thank You Jesus for loving us so much that you were willing to go through such an ugly, horrible death in order to save us and to take our sins upon Yourself. We want to thank You,

**The Shamrock**

Holy Spirit, for working in us in order to make us realize the love that God has for us. Thank you, God, for giving us the opportunity to be safe and to become a child of God. We praise You God for what You have you done for us and what You're still doing for us. In the name of Jesus! Amen!

To close off, I hope you had a great time with your loved one on Valentin's Day. I also hope that you will realize the tremendous love God has for you and me and make use of the opportunity to love Him back....

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**Guide on the older medals of the SANDF**



The Closure Commemoration Medal is a military commemoration medal which was instituted by the President of the Republic of South Africa in 2010, to commemorate the disbandment of the Commandos, the rural defence component of the South African National Defence Force.

The 183 South African Commando units, consisting of 52,000 serving members, were disbanded in 2003 and members were given the opportunity to join the conventional Citizen Force Regiments or the Sector Policing Forums of the South African Police Service, or to demobilise. The Closure Commemoration Medal was instituted by the President in 2010 to commemorate the disbandment of the Commandos.

The medal could be awarded to Officers, Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks who have served in the Commandos, as well as to the Honorary Colonels, who had completed at least five years' service on or after 27 April 2003. The first medals were presented to former Commando members on 30 November 2011. A special clasp inscribed "COMMANDOS" was instituted along with the medal, to be worn on the medal ribbon. It was struck in nickel-silver.

Conferment of the Commemoration Medal has not yet been discontinued and qualifying ex-members may still apply.

**Source list:** Wikipedia  
SA Medal Site  
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**Remember Saint Patrick's Day on 17 March.**

Join the SA Irish Pipes and Drums on St. Patrick's Day at Shamrocks Irish Pub & Restaurant in Pretoria. View our facebook page for more details.

