Special Edition

Commemorating our Women in Defence
Women in defence who have crossed the divide

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Sharing their skills with our Air Force

Our first ever woman in command at sea

First black woman to obtain a MAN tank transporter licence

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Perseverance pays off

Meet the “Eye of our Force”

On the wings of a nightingale
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From the Editor’s desk

It is August again and we are celebrating National Women’s Day on 9 August. To commemorate this exceptional day we decided to publish another Special Edition on our Women in Defence as we did last year this time. I hope you will enjoy this issue even more than the previous one.

I want to thank everyone who participated by sending articles for publication in this edition. Without your dedicated support this edition would not have been possible.

We are proud of our women in defence and what they have so far achieved in a previously male dominated organisation. They have qualified themselves for careers that were previously largely the preserve of men. Our women are also numbered among the soldiers that are and were deployed inside and outside our borders, and they also act as proper ambassadors for our Defence Force and our country.

Women have a multiple role to play in that they are mothers, workers, wives or even single parents. These multiple roles are a common feature of daily life for many women in our Defence Force and globally. Nevertheless, our women in defence are committed to a better future for all in the DOD, which includes caring for the children of South Africa as mothers and custodians of society.

Therefore we salute all our women in defence, and wish them a most deserved National Women’s Day on 9 August. Pamper yourself on this day and everyday!

Please indulge in this Special Edition of SA SOLDIER and read all about our remarkable women in defence.

Nelda Pienaar
Editor

Van die Redaktrise se lessenaar

Aangesien ons Nasionale Vrouedag op 9 Augustus vier, fokus ons dié maand op vroue in verdediging. Ek hoop dat ons vroue hierdie spesiale uitgawe net so baie soos verlede jaar sal geniet.


Vroue in the Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Weermag vaar uitstekend in hierdie voorheen oorheersmanlike omgewing. Hulle kwalifiseer hulself vir loopbane wat ekslusief deur mans beoefen is. Dink aan die reuse bydrae wat ons vroue in vredessteunoperasies lewer - hoe goed hulle onder primitiewe omstandighede oorleef.

Vroue is nie net soldate nie, hulle is ook eggenotes, moeders en dikkwels enkelouers. Vroue het die vermoë om vele uitdagings gelyktydig te hanteer. Hulle kan beplan, uitvoer en onderskeen - alles terselfdertyd.

SA SOLDIER bring hulde aan ons vroue en wens hulle ‘n welverdiende Nasionale Vrouedag toe. Bederf juiself en geniet dit om vrou te wees!

Lekker lees aan dié spesiale uitgawe van SA SOLDIER propvol merkwaardige vroue in ons Weermag.

Nelda Pienaar
Redaktrise
All the women in the SA National Defence Force are remarkable people in that they are challenging a previously male dominated environment. They are facing daily challenges in which they are called on to prove that their potential can carry them in the defence environment. It is in the interest of the defence community that the male members in the DOD support the women in the challenges they face, to ensure that women in our country are accorded their rightful place in all structures of society, in line with Government policy.

Women from the former Non-statutory Forces were engaged in operations against the then South African Defence Force (SADF). In several cases they were front-line commanders or served in the intelligence corps of their respective forces. Women led wars against land dispossession with the emergence of colonialism in South Africa.

Women in the Anglo-Boer War often disguised themselves to be able to fight alongside their male counterparts against the British. Women in the SADF have served in the Reserves, and have comprised a large component of the Intelligence Corps. They served in the former SADF as communication specialists, and kept the administrative wheel running in the offices while their male counterparts were engaging the liberation movements in Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and other front-line states. This proves that the role of women in defence is not a new one, but it should now be enhanced in all areas possible. At present the SANDF has women deployed in all areas on the continent where South Africa has soldiers in the UN Peacekeeping Forces.

There are three women in defence who have crossed the divide in all respects - they are from different backgrounds and are engaged in different areas of work in the DOD. However, these three women have one vision and one identity in that they have a common goal, which is to contribute to making the DOD a better environment for all, and to be an influence in their respective environments, in whatever small way, in facilitating the dynamic changes in the DOD and the SANDF.

The three women in question all have a multiple role to play in that they are mothers, workers and wives (in two cases) while the other is a single parent. These multiple roles are a common feature of daily life for many women globally.

The three women are Col Debbie Venter, a medical doctor employed in the Directorate Medicine of the SAMHS, Col Belinda Martin, a social worker and previous diplomat and former MK commander, who works in the Defence Reserves environment, and Mrs Elsje Els, a PSAP member, who is a professional executive secretary, PA and computer specialist in the Directorate Medicine of the SAMHS.

These three women have come to know each other in the defence environment. Though from different backgrounds, and from a past that divided nationalities, they have decided to join hands and commit themselves to a better future for all in the DOD, and to care for the children of South Africa as mothers and custodians of society.

Therefore we hail all the women in our country and on the continent of Africa on our day of celebration in South Africa - National Women’s Day on 9 August.
Gone are the days when the children of Africa had to cry day and night. When killing of innocent people took place on each and every day and night. No place to hide, no shelter, no food to eat, no clothes to put on and no knowing about where to be tomorrow. It’s simply to say no future at all.

After all efforts by the African community and international community the citizens of Burundi have gained hope and human dignity and have joined hands in bringing peace to their beloved country.

On 28 February 2005 the new era was born when all citizens queued in different polling stations in all provinces of the country. They were in all age groups, old aged, parents and mostly the youth. All had made sure that they cast their votes in the referendum election. Votes were cast in ballot boxes; hopefully the killings and sufferings will end - a new era of peace, stability and harmony for all.

I want to thank the rainbow nation of South Africa from the top brass to the last proud South African for being always in the front line, ensuring that peace prevails without any harm to human dignity.

You are really making us proud in the way you are dealing with the problems you encounter in the different areas in which you operate. In all missions areas you have never let us down. The South African flag of the rainbow nation is flying high in both the African community and the international community because of you.

You are our true ambassadors.

The SANDF has displayed and shown the true spirit of Ubuntu to the rest of the world. Thank you Commander, Lt Col Ramabu of 4 SAI Bn. We are so grateful to have a man of your calibre, not forgetting us as your subordinates. May the Great Lord always be with you and give you strength, wisdom and grant you more days of life to keep up the good work.

SANDF we are so proud of you. To all our soldiers abroad: you made us true proud South Africans in the eyes of the international community.

Tears off, Mama Africa we are your children; save us and make us a strong nation loving one another, so we pray - Rfn Sebapu Edward Leope, 4 SAI Bn.
Casual Day 2005

Casual Day is regarded as the biggest fund and awareness-raising event for people with disabilities and related organisations in South Africa. The SA National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities manages the Casual Day project, which raised more than R8 million in 2004. The Curamus Association - a non-profit organisation that serves the interests of people with disabilities (uniformed and PSAP members, their children and veterans) within the SANDF - also participates in this project. This year the DOD and the Curamus Association are once again demonstrating their dedication to the members with disabilities. They are hosting, in conjunction with the Casual Day Marketing Team, a jam-packed fun day at Zwartkop Raceway in Pretoria on 2 September 2005.

Approximately 4 000 people, mostly DOD members, attended the Casual Day celebrations at Zwartkop Raceway in 2004. This year, they are not only focusing on the DOD members, but would like to increase the number of visitors by including the public at large and schools in the Pretoria region. They are hoping to involve as many companies and institutions as possible.

The theme for Casual Day 2005 is "Wear your heart on your sleeve for a person with a disability". The aim of this event is to increase the community's awareness and involvement in the lives of people with disabilities. The event will start at 09:00 with a military parade accompanied by the SA Army Band, followed by drum majorettes. A tandem parachute jump by persons with various disabilities is one of the highlights during the opening ceremony. This event will emphasise the abilities of the people with disabilities.

Several motorcar and motorcycle manufacturers will show off their latest models, and for the outdoor fans there is a fine selection of camping equipment. A number of companies, which specialise in aids for people with disabilities (eg computer equipment, hearing aids, etc) will use the opportunity to show visitors the latest and greatest devices available.

A flea market is also planned for the day. There will be motorcar, motorbike and go-kart races - a selected number of spectators may even get the opportunity to be driven around the track in a racing car. The skid-pan and 4X4 track offer a challenge to enthusiasts brave enough to put their ability to the test by putting a 4X4 vehicle through these courses.

Various sporting activities for people with disabilities will take place, for example wheelchair ballroom dancing, weightlifting, cricket for the blind, table tennis, wheelchair athletics, etc. A highlight of these activities will be when DOD dignitaries are challenged to take on one another in a wheelchair race. A 2.4 km fun walk around the racetrack is also scheduled. Entertainment for the children includes helicopter flights, jumping castles, mini-quad bikes, mini-motorcycles and pony rides, an animal touch farm, face painting, a merry-go-round - to mention but a few.

For the hungry, there will be a variety of food stalls available. A beer garden will provide the necessary beverages. A braai garden where visitors can purchase braai packs will also be available. DOD units will be invited to participate in a potjiekos competition, where prizes can be won. Music and a fashion show will add to the festive atmosphere of this fun-filled day.

All this wonderful entertainment is offered to you at the mere cost of an entrance ticket for the day, which is an official Casual Day sticker. These stickers are available at the gate or may be purchased from the Curamus Association. The Curamus Association relies heavily on Casual Day as an opportunity to raise funds in order to fulfil its obligations. Therefore we appeal to you for your support in helping us raise more money than ever before.

The Alpha and Omega

May the good God who was with us when we started this six months period in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that has now come to an end be with you as you read this letter. I believe that you will be blessed and encouraged in your spiritual life.

Remember, when we started this period I said to you that God told us we were going to encourage difficulties, not around, not under, not over them, but through them and He promised to pull us through... Indeed He pulled us through every situation we came across - Jer 43:1-3. Today we are bold enough to be able to stand and say we made it through Christ who give us strength; He is the Alpha (He was with us in the beginning) and He is the Omega (He is also with us in the end). During our stay in the DRC we had daily prayer meetings in the evenings and in the mornings, thanks to the faithful Christians who interceded for us while we went through the fire at all times; may the good God shower you with his blessings and fill all your needs from His glorious riches so that you may lack nothing.

My apology goes to the readers of SA SOLDIER for promising you that I will share with you Why prayers are not answered. In this letter I will try to cover some aspects and close with what God gave us while we were still in the DRC and what we discussed during our Bible discussions.

Let me start with Why prayers are not answered. (People are praying, but their prayers are not answered. Let us consider some of the reasons.

- We fight for what we want instead of asking - James 4:2.
- We ask with selfish motives - James 4:3.
- We ask while committing sin - Psalm 66:18 and Isaiah 59:1-2.
- We are deaf to the cry of the poor - Proverbs 21:13.
- We oppose the saints of God - Psalm 18:40-41 and Micah 3:2-4.
- We are disobedient to a known command of God - Proverbs 28:9.
- We have an unforgiving spirit - Matthew 5:22-24 and 6:12-15.
- We lack faith - Hebrews 11:6 and James 1:6.

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Cpl Joseph Boase.
 feedback

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- We keep idols in our hearts - Ezekiel 18:5-18 and 14:1-3.
- We have turmoil in our home - 1 Peter 3:7.

We really had a wonderful time with God in the DRC, and allow me to share with you the message from Job 2:9 which led to the following points being discussed under the heading “Keep focus”:
- Know your beginning. (Know the foundation of your beginning.)
- Know your destiny. (If you know your destiny, you will not be misled by things that may seem good and their end result will not become stumbling blocks on your journey.)
- Know who is with you. (If you know who is with you, in times of need and trouble you will know where to go for help. You will know that He who is with you is greater than he who is in the world.)
- Make up your mind. (Making up your mind might not be easy, once you have made up your mind never look back.)
- Be ready for challenges. (Expect challenges regarding the decision you made, keep focus, never lose hope, challenges must come.)
- Be careful of the environment. (The environment can result in your making decisions for which you were not prepared; be careful, keep focus like Job who kept focusing on God.)
- Be careful of pleasure. (Pleasure is fun and can derail you, keep focus.)
- Keep on praying. (Prayer can help you from point to point; pray that you do not fall into temptation.)

In closing, I want to mention that during our stay in the DRC the following were discussed during our Bible discussions: prayer, women in the ministry, food and clothes, transfiguration, resurrection, judgement, Passover, foot washing and Holy Communion.

Many thanks to the Chaplains, Cpln Mosweu and Cpln Bathobake, for their support throughout the operation, and not forgetting the commanders at all levels for not having a problem with us when it was time to pray.

I do not want to forget Capt Diseko, who was my Platoon Commander and also my son in the Lord; may God bless you big brother and all Christians who took part in all the events - Cpl Joseph Boase.

Patrol ration packs

The letter of Lt Col K. Ruiters as published in the May 2005 edition of SA SOLDIER refers. During 1999 the Acting Director Diet identified certain problems with the current Patrol Ration Packs. This was brought to the attention of the Surgeon General, who then allocated research funds to address the problem. It should be appreciated that funds are not allocated on the spur of the moment and certain motivations and time lapses take place before the projects are placed on the budget.

It was decided to take a two-pronged approach to the problem. Firstly, the current ration pack will be updated to address the most pressing problems, and secondly research will be done to redesign the pack. The Acting Director Diet embarked on a country-wide tour during 2000/2001 to speak to soldiers at ground level to determine their views on:
- What is wrong with the ration packs?
- What do you take with you when you deploy?
- What can the SANDF do to improve the ration packs?

The information gleaned at these sessions was collated and several trends were identified. It was striking to notice that most deploying soldiers were very realistic in terms of their expectations of what could be included in the ration pack. Their comprehension of shelf-life problems, weight and volume restrictions and range of variety was good and in the process they displayed intelligent analysis skills. In the meantime, a literature study was performed and information gathered to determine what the characteristics of a ration pack were, and what the military and industry constraints were. Information was also requested from other countries.

The most important requirements of the SA Army (which is the main user of the pack) are:
- Shelf-life - the SANDF requires at least nine months’ shelf-life for the current Patrol Ration Pack.
- Weight and volume restrictions: The soldiers who deploy must be able to carry the pack and it is required that the products be nutritious, but concentrated.
- It must provide sufficient nourishment for the soldiers to maintain their weight and therefore their immune status in the field.
- Signature management: This was especially important to Special Forces, and means that packaging that is very shiny and noisy is not acceptable to them.
- The industry has several constraints, which render the production of ration packs very complex. These constraints are related to technologies available in South Africa, as well as the volumes that must be produced to make production profitable.

In 2003 the mandate to change the ration pack specifications was formally handed to the Surgeon General. This specifically involved the SSO Diet. The specifications for the current format were completely reviewed and updated to bring about changes to improve the variety, as well as to cater for certain religious eating patterns and food preferences. The number of pack varieties was changed from five to six to include a vegetarian pack. Unfortunately, as the variety increases, the costs also increase, which explains why certain African countries only have one type of pack. A ration pack is not a normal diet and needs specific planning to ensure that all the nutrients are included. Taking the constraints into consideration, it is not possible to design a ration pack devoid of sugar. Another technological challenge is to include Vitamin C in the pack in an acceptable and stable manner. This vitamin is most stable in a sugar tablet form and therefore this manner of providing Vitamin C will be continued until other methods can be developed to keep it stable.

The new specifications were promulgated by Chief Logistics in October 2003 and, when the contract for the provision of ration packs expired in 2004, these specifications were used for negotiating the new contract. The first consignment was delivered in early 2005 and will soon be available for use by the soldiers.

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Project AFRICAN WARRIOR

While changes were being made to the specifications for the Patrol Ration Pack, the project to redesign the ration packs commenced. This project is run under the auspices of Project AFRICAN WARRIOR and is performed according to project management principles. The process included compiling a User Requirement statement. This was done in consultation with representatives of all Services. All relevant scientific literature was collected and studied.

The SA Army submitted several additional requirements. An important user requirement is that all main meal items should be ready to eat, which eliminates the use of dehydrated food or instant products. The format is to change to a one-meal format instead of a 24-hour format. The importance of protection against chemical and biological contamination was emphasised. The weight and volume restrictions were reiterated and definite limits placed thereon. This led to the requirement that metal cans be replaced with another packaging material. The shelf-life should also be increased to at least one year under ambient temperatures and two years under controlled temperatures. An increase in the variety of main meal products must be designed and the energy content of the pack be increased to meet the energy requirements of the deployed soldier, which is quite a different matter for a soldier on a course or undergoing strenuous training. Consideration was to be given to ethnic and religious eating patterns.

The next step was to develop the specifications for this new pack. The industry was invited to participate and scientific agencies were involved. The CSIR performed several tasks in this regard. The SSO Diet completed these specifications in the previous financial year. The next step is to verify the specifications with the food and packaging industry and the team is currently discussing this with several industry players. This will lead to the correcting of the specifications according to industry inputs. When the specifications have been verified, Armscor will place orders with identified contractors to enable the taste tests and field studies to take place. Only after this step has been completed will the ration pack be ready for operationalisation and will the specifications be handed to the SANDF. Project AFRICAN WARRIOR has ensured that information about the project is disseminated throughout divisions that have an interest in it or are affected by it. SAMHS dieticians were informed about the new developments during a presentation in October 2004. Dieticians were invited to forward suggestions for improvement directly to the SSO Diet - Lt Col T.P. Seokamo, Project Officer Project AFRICAN WARRIOR.

Celebrating National Women's Day

By Maj Gen Mohato Dan Mofokeng, Chief Defence Corporate Communication

The 9th of August is National Women’s Day, a special day as we will be celebrating the importance of the women and mothers of our nation. South African women of all races have a proud legacy of determination and strength. On 9 August 1956 thousands of women from all over South Africa displayed extraordinary courage by marching to the Union Buildings to protest against passes for women. Our history is proof that this was only the beginning, a small indicator of what was to come.

During the years of struggle for democracy women played a front-line role through passive and active resistance to ensure the freedom of our nation. In this painful time many were arrested, banned and restricted to certain areas, detained and some even lost their lives. Through their commitment and sacrifices they brought about constitutional changes, which made a positive difference to the lives of fellow South Africans and ensured a bright future for their children.

Celebrating National Women’s Day is not just another public holiday. Women are the custodians of the core values of society. Classical African cultures were centred on the women, the family and the community. Today we see that most home and community-based care projects are led by women. They are still caring for the most vulnerable among us. Many women face enormous challenges as single mothers and sole providers for expanded families. Therefore, we have an obligation to protect their rights by restoring a culture of respect and love for the women of our nation.

The development of South African women must become a priority. If we look at their achievements, there is no doubt that the contribution of women to our economy, political environment, defence, education, the health sector and social welfare is of great benefit to our society.

The SANDF ensures that women have the same military career opportunities as men. They undergo the same training and, therefore, are qualified to apply for the same posts as their male counterparts. Currently, women are being deployed externally as a part of the SANDF contingent in support of peacekeeping in Africa. I am proud to say that in spite of the discomfort and danger, they are rendering outstanding service. The SANDF will increase its efforts to promote equity, and women will be empowered to steer defence in this country. It is time to alter negative perceptions about the competency of women in our society.

In conclusion, I want to remind you that women are vulnerable. They suffer social injustices, they are abused, are victims of violence and rape and thousands are caught between fighting factions in war-torn regions. Let it be different in our society. Let us value and appreciate the strong women in our society and provide opportunities for our daughters to reach their full potential.
Focus on gender equity training

By Maj P.H. Hartslief, SO2 Social Work and Development
Photo: F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

Central to the Constitution of South Africa is its commitment to furthering equality among all people. The Constitution respects cultural heritage, but states clearly that the right to a unique cultural life is subordinate to the right to equal treatment. Therefore, if a tradition is discriminatory the Constitution will not uphold that tradition. Traditions that are not discriminatory will be respected and even protected by the Constitution. The spirit of the Constitution requires of us to examine our beliefs, cultures and behaviours for those elements that foster and uphold discrimination. We are then challenged to change those discriminatory beliefs and practices we find in ourselves and in our society.

The letter and spirit of the Constitution alone cannot change discriminatory beliefs and values formed over many years. To foster real change hard work regarding our attitudes and behaviours are needed. Since the SANDF supports the Constitution it is committed to addressing gender discrimination by furthering gender equity by means of interventions, such as the gender equity training programme.

Background

In 2002 the Directorate Social Work conducted a study on violence against women in the SANDF. This research confirmed that both female military personnel and female life partners of soldiers were exposed to gender based violence. The study found a clear link between strongly held stereotypes and patriarchal beliefs, and the tendency of violent behaviour towards women and children. In other words men in the military who hold strong patriarchal beliefs and stereotypes regarding women are more likely to act violently towards them.

At the same time social workers in the SANDF observed that reported incidents of violence against women and sexual harassment were on the increase. Unfortunately, in the majority of instances, only the victims of the violence, viz the women, came for help. Very often the women were so fearful that they did not want to involve their partners, the actual perpetrators of violence, in the helping process. This made it very difficult for social workers to address the violent behaviour successfully.

What followed was a search by social workers for a strategy to address effectively the issue of violence against women. This led to the Directorate Social Work making contact with various non-governmental organisations working in the field of gender based violence. It became apparent that in order to address gender based violence successfully, gender inequality had to be addressed by reaching out to men and women regarding the issue.

With the help of the University of the Witwatersrand’s Women’s Health Project, the Men as Partner Programme as compiled by the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa and Engender Health (an international non-profitable agency addressing reproductive health in developing countries), a unique training programme addressing both HIV/AIDS and gender discrimination equity was developed. What is unique about the programme is that it targets both men and women simultaneously.

The training addresses the following: relationships, gender and health, domestic violence, gender and inequality, sexual and reproductive rights, as well as human rights and gender.

The work in creating the training programme culminated on 14 April 2003 when the Gender Equity Training Programme was launched. The Gender Based Violence Policy of the SANDF was introduced at the same time.

The link between gender equity and HIV/AIDS

A South African study carried out among 1 366 women who attended health centres in Soweto found that women who were beaten by their partners were 48% more likely to become infected with HIV than women not subjected to violence. Those who were emotionally or financially dominated by a male partner were 52% likelier to become infected. Studies have shown that women may be unwilling to
discuss faithfulness in relationships, as well as condom use with their male partners for fear of a violent reaction.

In 2004 UN AIDS and the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that 39.4 million people were infected with the HIV virus globally. Two thirds of these people live in Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of whom are women and girls.

The SANDF addresses the prevention of the transmission of HIV/AIDS by means of the Masibambisane Programme. The Masibambisane Programme focuses on providing information, and promoting behaviour change in order to prevent infections with HIV. To change behaviour people must have the power to make informed decisions on their behaviour. They must also be willing to allow others to do so, irrespective of their gender.

Most cultures are more accepting of men who are sexually active with more than one partner, while this is not accepted of females. This leaves men with most of the decision-making power regarding sexual behaviour. Generally it is men, not women, who dictate whether or not intercourse will take place and whether a condom will be used.

Studies have indicated that men can and do change their attitudes regarding gender roles and sexual decision-making through the implementation of relevant programmes.

The fight against HIV/AIDS is aimed at protecting both females and males, with both genders having an equal responsibility in this fight. Both the Masibambisane Programme and the Gender Equity Programme support the empowerment of both genders in this regard.

**Implementation of the gender equity programme**

Training in the Gender Equity Programme was implemented and is ongoing on three levels, namely:

- Master trainers (social workers) trained by Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa and Witwatersrand’s Women’s Health Project.
- Peer educators trained by master trainers.
- Other personnel trained by peer educators.

This was planned to achieve a snowball effect in order to reach the maximum number of SANDF members in the shortest possible time.

Progress regarding the training of Master Trainers and Peer Educators were very positive thus far. However, the critical success factor in order to reach the ultimate outcomes of the training is to be able to train all DOD members. It was also found that for the programme to be implemented successfully the following is required at unit level:

- Members who are nominated for the Peer Educators Training must be selected on the basis of their ability and willingness to commit to the HIV and Gender Equity Programme training programme. They should also be afforded the opportunity to conduct the training in the unit.
- The Force Support Element (FSE) Commander, through the Military Community Development Committee should manage the implementation of the Gender Equity Training and ensure the integration with the Basic HIV Peer Training and the Value and Ethical-based Training.
- All members of the FSE, from the most senior to the most junior, should undergo this training in order to cultivate a climate conducive to gender equality.

**Conclusion**

Our Constitution places a responsibility on all of us to fight discrimination in any form, including discrimination based on gender. In order to live up to the spirit of the Constitution, both males and females must contribute to achieving gender equity.

It is also clear that gender inequality contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The SANDF is committed to addressing HIV/AIDS and gender discrimination through programmes such as Masibambisane and the Gender Equity Programme. The Directorate Social Work would appreciate suggestions and comments on the Gender Equity Programme.

*The IsiXhosa translation of this article is available on pages 45 to 46. To obtain a translation of this article or any article published in SA SOLDIER in any one of our official languages, please make use of the professional services rendered by Directorate Language Services of the DOD. For assistance contact Col Daan Vorster, Director Language Services, at tel no: (012) 392 3176 - Ed.*

**Photo posed:**

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Traditionally honorary colonels’ responsibilities in the SANDF have been to assist in maintaining regimental or unit traditions, to foster esprit de corps and to represent regimental and unit interests. This may include fostering civilian, local and regional connections, creating goodwill and regimental alliances within the SANDF and, externally, assisting in the recruitment of officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and ranks into their particular regiments, to mention but some of their responsibilities.

Is it any coincidence that the SA Air Force appointed two of South Africa’s most influential women as honorary colonels in its basic military and development training institutions, namely the SA Air Force Gymnasium and the SA Air Force College? These women not only assist with the above responsibilities, but also share their unique individual skills with the SA Air Force.

**Honorary Colonel Ngoato Takalo**

Honorary Colonel Ngoato Takalo, who was appointed an honorary colonel at the SA Air Force College in December 2003, is an intellectual and a passionate educator. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree and a University Education Diploma from the University of the North. She studied for her Masters and Doctoral Degrees in Education at the Columbia Teachers College and Boston University in the United States. Her recent achievements include her appointment as Acting Campus Principal at Vista University between 1998 and 2001. She is currently the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the North West.

She loves the SA Air Force because it has always been her childhood dream to be part of it, and also because her grandfather was in World War II. She believes that the SA Air Force plays a crucial role in enhancing South Africa’s democracy. “They are role models to the young and old; therefore they should maintain and improve what they are doing because they are valued in South Africa,” she said of Air Force members. She is an inspiration to all young airmen and airwomen who are passionate about furthering their education.

**Princess of Africa**

Honorary Colonel Yvonne Mhinga, better known as Yvonne Chaka Chaka, or the “Princess of Africa”, was appointed an honorary colonel at the SA Air Force Gymnasium in January 2005. Prior to that she had been involved in the Siyan-diza Aviation Programme, the SA Air Force initiative aimed at encouraging young people to take an interest in aviation. She has obtained a certificate in Adult Education, a Diploma in Adult Education, an Honours Degree in Adult Education, and a Diploma in Speech, Drama and Public Speaking at the Trinity College in London.

She is well known for her music. To date she has released sixteen albums; her singing goes back twenty years. Apart from her music she participates in a number of charitable activities. She is a board member of many non-governmental organisations, and this involves visiting orphaned children and HIV/AIDS centres in Nigeria. She owns a limousine company with her husband, who is a medical doctor, and has her own music label and production company. She teaches literacy part-time at UNISA and was appointed Goodwill Ambassador for the University. She was also appointed to the Board of the Johannesburg Tourism Company.

These women contribute to the SA Air Force by using their different careers to raise funds, to bring young people into the SA Air Force and to educate those who want to be part of the Air Force.
The SA Navy has announced the appointment of its first ever woman in command at sea. She is Sub-Lieutenant Latha Starling, who has been appointed Officer Commanding of SAS TEKWANE, the inshore patrol vessel (IPV) currently based in Durban.


Following sea-time in the mine countermeasures vessel, SAS UMZIMKULU, and the combat support vessel, SAS DRAKENSBERG, she completed her Astro-Navigation Course in 2002. Thereafter she completed her Bridge Watchkeeping Qualification and commenced IPV training.

In 2004 she spent time in the IPVs SAS TERN and SAS TEKWANE as First Lieutenant. She was appointed in command at a change of command ceremony held in Durban on 20 May 2005. According to a Navy spokesperson, this is yet another example of women being appointed to key command positions throughout the SA Navy, both ashore and at sea. (Article issued by the Department of Public Relations: SA Navy)

WO1 Mariëtte van der Merwe became the first female RSM of the SA National War College on 3 June 2002. Before that she was a Senior Facilitator at SANDF Colet; and before that she was the Acting RSM of the SA National Defence College, to mention but two of her last posts that she occupied.

She was born in Pretoria in 1966 and completed her Matric in 1983 at the then Verwoerdburg High School. WO1 Van der Merwe volunteered at the SA Army Women’s College at George in 1984 and attested in the SA Defence Force (SA Army) on 1 January 1985. Within ten years of service she had attained the rank of Warrant Officer Class 2.

During this period she successfully completed military courses in Communication Operations, Intelligence, Counter-intelligence, Bomb Countermeasures, Personnel, Mainframe (Persol), Educational Technology and Development Level One and Two and in 1996 Warrant Officers Development.

WO1 Van der Merwe was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 in 1997 and saw service at Military Intelligence Division, SA Army Headquarters (various posts), North West Command, Gatsrand Commando, Personnel Services School, Special Forces Brigade, SA National Defence College and SANDF Colet. She currently serves as the Regimental Sergeant Major of the SA National War College.

She is a divorcee and mother of two children, Nicolette (10) and Dewald (2). WO1 Van der Merwe enjoys needlework, knitting, reading, gardening, jogging and cycling. (Article and photo courtesy of WO1 M. van der Merwe)
First black woman to obtain a MAN tank transporter licence

By Lt Layzer Maswanganyi, Comm Officer 1 SA Tank Regiment
Photo: Capt Clinton Nel

Tpr Mary Hala did the Tank Transporter Driving and Maintenance Course from 2 November to 10 December 2004, at the end of which she failed the yard test. She was detached to the Tank Transporters Regiment from middle February 2005 and started practising the yard test again with the help of Lt Martin Makuka. Tpr Hala proved to be dedicated towards achieving her goal, which was to be a tank transporter driver.

“Two weeks before I was even aware that she was ready, she told me that I had to bring the truck and a tester; she would show me. At that stage she was still struggling with alley docking. The following week she gave an excellent display of her skills during the yard test and told me that she was ready,” said Lt Makuka. Tpr Hala started to work at Tank Transporters Regiment where she performed daily tasks, including moving pavilions for parades on the vehicles to transporting Rooikat armoured vehicles and Olifant MK 1A battle tanks to Pretoria and the SA Army Combat Training Centre. Finally she was tested on 9 May 2005 by Sgt Jabulani Mitileni and qualified.

Tpr Hala, who is currently working as a female tank transporter driver finds the work exciting, but very stressful when it comes to changing tyres and maintenance. On the other hand it is a privilege for her to represent women and a good opportunity to prove that women can also stand at the forefront. With the support of male soldiers the job becomes easy and less stressful. She is hoping to achieve much more in future as the first black woman to qualify as a tank transporter driver.

Chaplain with a gentle voice

By Hanrie Greebe, Senior Journalist AD ASTRA
Photo: Capt J.P. van Vuuren

Women are traditionally associated with a nurturing and caring role in society. When the well-being of people becomes a professional career choice, why are people then surprised to find a woman appointed as chaplain in a military environment? Add to that a person with the academic and physical qualities to be nominated as best overall student in the SA Air Force’s Officers’ Formative Course, and you have Chaplain Melanie Smit.

She is level-headed and bestows her spontaneous affability on every person she encounters. A smile constantly hovers behind her eyes and her sincere compassion for people is evident in her manner of speaking. She sees herself firstly as an officer and a soldier who can empathise with members in the SA Air Force environment, regardless of the level of their professional mustering. The curriculum of the Officers’ Formative Course is integrated and standardised throughout all Services. Cpln Smit says: “I obtained great benefit from the course; it provided me with an opportunity to learn to know people and myself, and our reactions, especially in times of suffering.” Cpln Smit was the recipient of the Academic Trophy, Officership Trophy and Air Squadron Sword for Best Overall Learner.

Cpln Smit expects in the future to “remain in touch with the people, to be there for everybody” and will serve as chaplain at Waterkloof Air Force Base in Pretoria.
Passion for flying

Capt Catherine Labuschagne, a fighter pilot at 85 Squadron, Hoedspruit Air Force Base, is one of the people who successfully completed the SA Air Force Pilot's Course. She joined the SA Air Force in 1998 and she says she always wanted to be an air force pilot. She also works as an air traffic controller.

Her husband, Maj Jaco Labuschagne, is also a pilot at 85 Combat Flying School. Before Capt Labuschagne became a fighter pilot she flew the Cessna Caravan and King Air aircraft in the transport line.

Capt Labuschagne joined the SA Air Force immediately after she matriculated from Willowridge High School. She sees herself flying the Gripen fighter jet in ten years' time. Her message to other SA Air Force members is: "Stop complaining about petty things - you chose to be here!"

Here are a lot of courses to be taken before a person can become a fighter pilot. Having qualified, the pilot has to convert to the Impala, followed by a Fighter Orientation Course combined with the Impala Operational Training Course. The courses take three years, which then qualify the pilot as a fighter pilot.

To become a fighter pilot a person must have completed the SA Air Force Pilot's Course, for which the maximum age is 28. After doing the Operational Training Course the pilot qualifies as a Wingman until such time as he or she is ready to go on the Flight Leaders Course. This requires a high level of hard work, dedication and commitment. Fighter pilots fly simulated operational sorties to maintain a high level of combat readiness.

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By Thuli Dube, Journalist AD ASTRA
Young pilot flying high

By Thuli Dube,
Journalist AD ASTRA
Photo: Sgt B.L. Stewart

The flying of planes in the SA Air Force has always been male dominated, but recently the number of female pilots in the SA Air Force has grown. Lt Tamara Thomas is one of many female pilots in our Air Force.

Lt Thomas is our first coloured female pilot, and she has been streamlined to be utilised as a fighter pilot. She has been in the SA Air Force for three years, and she received her wings on 10 March 2005 on completion of the Pilot Wings Course 104/05 at the Central Flying School Langebaanweg. "It was a big day for me when I received my wings; it motivated me a lot," she said. She says that flying planes was a childhood dream and to be a pilot is exciting because every day is different.

At the age of 21, Lt Thomas is the youngest pilot at 41 Squadron. She matriculated in 2001 at Fish Hoek Senior High, whereafter she joined the SA Air Force. She did a two-and-a-half-year Pupil Pilots Course, one year of which she spent at Ground School and another year flying. The rest of the time she did military training at Central Flying School Langebaanweg.

When she was in high school she used every opportunity she got to go to air shows at Ysterplaat Air Force Base in Cape Town because she was always interested in aviation. She believes that if you work hard you achieve success. Another reason why she joined the SA Air Force was that she felt that there she would get the best flying experience, work for her country and help to protect her country.

To motivate other Air Force members she said: "We forget how privileged we are; we should always try to remember that people look up to us. Be proud of your uniform and set an example to civilian people."

Officer Verster - a star indeed

By Maryke Lynn,
Journalist AD ASTRA
Photo: Capt J.P. van Vuuren

"Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." These are the words that Lt Col Lynette Verster - better known as "Sterretjie" among friends and colleagues - lives by.

Being a sports lover and campaigner for a balanced and healthy lifestyle, she always wanted to do something physical and joined the SA Air Force in 1990 with this objective in mind. In 1991 she became an instructor at the SA Air Force Gymnasium where she thoroughly enjoyed drilling trainees under her instruction.

January 2005 marks her appointment as the first woman in command of a security squadron. 516 Squadron is responsible for the safeguarding of the SA Air Force Headquarters Unit, as well as patrols, searches and entrance control on the grounds. As officer in command she firmly believes that it is part of her duties and responsibilities to set a good example that others are willing to follow. Loyalty and dedication in all aspects of life are also noteworthy characteristics that she strives to live by.

Lt Col Lynette Verster, the first woman in command of a security squadron.

Her experience and involvement in outdoor life and sporting activities know no bounds. She takes pleasure in nature and, whenever the opportunity arises, finds herself on a hiking trail or camping site. Her enthusiasm for sport is evident from her black belt in karate, her position as centre in the SANDF Netball Team for the past eight years and her regular squash games. The Comrades Marathon is also a definite on her future "to do" list.

Her message to women in the Air Force is to believe in their abilities, to make use of opportunities that may come their way and never to stand back because of a lack of faith in themselves.
Educated for the future

By Lebohang Letaoana
Photo: F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

After months of hard work and dedication, the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) learners were rewarded for their contribution to this programme. This was borne out by the saying: “You are never too old to learn”.

Armscor’s Human Resources General Manager, Mr Xolani Magojo, presented certificates to thirty ABET learners for completing the fundamental modules. They were presented with certificates on Communication in English (ABET: Level 1), Mathematics (ABET: Level 2) and Communication in English (ABET: Level 3). The presentation ceremony was held at the Armscor Building in Pretoria on 15 June 2005.

The aim of ABET is to train and develop employees who are illiterate and semi-illiterate, as well as to introduce the prospective learners to learnership programmes so that they may obtain suitable qualifications.

Learners who participated were from various organisations, such as Armscor, Armscor contractors and the SANDF. Learners on the various ABET levels met all the necessary South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) requirements, and were finally assessed and accredited by an independent and external assessor, namely UNISA.

“I would like to thank Armscor for organising the ABET class; it has given me more knowledge. Now I can read and write, and I can also speak English,” said Ms Masesi Agnes Mahlobo, one of the two representatives of the SANDF, after receiving her certificate.
Meet our female Air Supply Instructor

By Pte T.D. Maluleke, Acting Corp Comm Officer DOD Air Supply Unit

The Department of Defence Air Supply Unit, the second oldest airborne unit in the SANDF, and the only air supply unit in the sub-Saharan region, prides itself on having in its fold Sgt Beauty Sawula, who achieved a first by being the first African woman to qualify as an Air Supply Instructor.

Sgt Sawula joined the former Ciskei Defence Force in 1986 and completed her Basic Training in 1987. In 1991 she was promoted to the rank of lance corporal, and in 1993 she completed the Basic Storeman Course and was subsequently promoted to full corporal.

In 1995 she was transferred to Group 8 in East London (Eastern Cape Province). In 1996 she was nominated for a micro-vehicle management system course, which she passed. In 1998 she was transferred to DOD Air Supply Unit (formerly known as 101 Air Supply Unit).

In 1999 she attended the Junior Non-commissioned Officer Formative Course where she scooped the award for the fittest woman on course. In addition to these courses she successfully completed, inter alia, the Specialist Storeman Course (1999), the Basic Air Supply Course, and the Air Supply Assistant Instructor’s Course. The highlight of her military career was when she was the first black African woman to qualify as an Air Supply Instructor in the SANDF, in fact the first in the whole sub-Saharan region.

Sgt Sawula is also known for her sporting prowess, having won numerous awards in netball circles. She was also deployed to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Proud to be a woman in the SANDF

By Col Belinda Martin of the Reserve Force Division

Even if it does nothing else it will make you proud if you see our girls in Burundi. They are smart, motivated and real ambassadors of our country - doing us proud by serving in peacekeeping efforts when beckoned to do so like true soldiers responding to the call to end conflict and war in the regions of Africa.

The women are at ease in their new and challenging environment, which was previously a male domain, and they have shown the resilience that a woman can be capable of as long as she is driven and believes in herself and the “I can” philosophy.

Well done to our girls on the continent. Well done, brave young women in Africa, far away from home. We salute you on 9 August - National’s Women’s Day of South Africa.
The Environmental Lady

Article and photo courtesy of Lt Col Roshni Varaden

Lt Col Roshni Varaden is the SO1 Regional Environmental Manager for KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape and is based at the Regional Facilities Interface Management Office Durban. She was previously with the Area Military Health Unit KZN, where she worked as a Chief Environmental Health Officer. This career change shifted her focus from the impact of an unhealthy environment on DOD members to that of the impact of military activities on the environment.

The main function of the Regional Environmental Manager is to co-ordinate, monitor, advise and guide the implementation of environmental programmes and projects. The implementation of environmental management programmes and projects is a function of Army Support Bases in the DOD. The Army Support Bases in the Regional Facilities Interface Management Durban area of responsibility face numerous challenges with the implementation of environmental management. The challenges of note are:

- That the structure for environmental management, as is required by SA Army Office/CD Force Struc/401/1/P of April 1999, Concept of SA Army (D Force Structure) Policy Directive/Facilities Management, has not been adhered to.
- That members who have been staffed in environmental posts are not qualified in the environmental field.
- Lastly, that few or no funds are available for the environmental function.

Lt Col Varaden stated that her liaison with external environmental role players, such as the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, has been instrumental in overcoming some of these shortcomings. These organisations have the environmental expertise that is lacking within the DOD and they are willing to assist the DOD in spite of their own shortage of capacity and resources.

Lt Col Varaden has secured assistance from the University of KZN and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to assist with the updating of the ecological management plan for the Bluff Military Base. The sustainable management of training areas is not only of importance to the environment, but is also critical to sustain military training activities. The above-mentioned organisations are also called upon to provide environmental education to environmental service members of the Army Support Bases. Thus these members have been empowered to implement some environmental projects.

National days of environmental importance (e.g. National Water Week and National Arbor Week) are utilised to create an environmental awareness among members of the DOD. However, this is a piecemeal effort and does not secure the full co-operation of all members in finding solutions to environmental challenges in the DOD. It is important that all DOD members understand the close ties between military activities and the environment. The environment and the concept of Integrated Environmental Management must be worked into all military courses. Furthermore, the environmental education of DOD members at management level is vital to overcome the obstacles that impede the implementation of Integrated Environmental Management.

Lt Col Varaden has been appointed as the DOD’s Regional Co-ordinator for Operation VUSELELA. Operation VUSELELA is a joint project between the DOD and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. The aim of Operation VUSELELA is to remove invasive alien plants from DOD controlled property. The term “alien plant” refers to a tree, creeper or shrub, which has its place of origin outside the South African sub-continent. Alien plants must be controlled, as they grow rapidly and easily outcompete local plants and utilise vast quantities of water. (The removal of alien plants is governed by the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act No. 43 of 1983.) In addition to the environmental benefits, Operation VUSELELA also has social benefits, e.g. poverty alienation. Unemployed military veterans are recruited by the Service Corps as workers for Operation VUSELELA.

The withdrawal of the DOD from the Hellsgate Training Area is another interesting project that Lt Col Varaden is currently involved in. The Hellsgate Training Area is situated on a declared World Heritage Site, which is due to be handed over to the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park Authority in March 2006. The DOD will, however, have to rehabilitate the Hellsgate Training Area prior to its withdrawal.

An environmental impact audit was conducted in September 2004. (Continued on page 20)
In addition to this the DOD has to make the Hellsgate Training Area “safe” as the area is contaminated with unexploded ordnance.

The cost of such rehabilitation runs into millions of rands and such funds are obviously not readily available in the DOD. The Regional Facilities Interface Management Durban Office has therefore embarked on a process of negotiation with the various role-players to determine what “reasonable” rehabilitation measures the DOD has to undertake. Lt Col Varaden is of the opinion that this is a wonderful opportunity to put into practice the system of co-operative governance that is included in Chapter Three of the National Environmental Management Act.

Lt Col Varaden was born in Durban and studied at Technikon Natal where she obtained a Bachelors Degree in Technology: Environmental Health and in October 2004 she graduated at the University of KZN with a Masters Degree in Environmental Management. She is married to Ajith Gobindal and they are the proud parents of Lauren and Nickeël.

Living on the cutting edge

Article courtesy of Rozelle Smit
Photo: F Sgt David Nomthongwana

In 2002 she was given the opportunity to participate in a tandem parachute jump during the opening ceremony of the Casual Day celebrations. This was the first time ever that she had jumped from a plane and her comment afterwards when asked if she had been scared at all was an emphatic: “No, it was absolutely fabulous! I would love to go again!” This attractive 37 year old brunette from Pretoria (Chief Military Information Systems, Regional Service Centre, Ministry of Defence - Service Centre Poyntons) believes in living life to the full despite her visual impairment.

This philosophy of hers is most certainly true of other facets of her life. Rozelle Smit matriculated at the Pioneer School in Worcester - previously known as the School for the Blind - in 1985 and in the subsequent year completed a switchboard course at the same institution. She was the first blind person ever to have registered and successfully completed an N4/N5 secretarial course at the Technical College in Worcester in 1987.

After a brief interlude during which she worked as a secretary cum switchboard operator at the Natal Society for the blind, and as a switchboard operator at the First National Bank in Cape Town and Durban respectively, she enrolled for a Bachelor’s Degree in languages at the University of Potchefstroom in 1990 and graduated in 1992. In August 1993 she was appointed as a switchboard operator in the DOD - a position that she still holds today.

Rozelle firmly believes in involving herself actively in her community because she cannot see any reason for a person with a disability not doing his or her share in this respect. She currently serves on various committees, eg the board of trustees of her residential complex and on the PSAP-forum at her unit in the capacity of secretary. The planning committee for the DOD’s Casual Day 2005 celebrations have called upon her to be part of their marketing team in which she was assigned the specific duty of liaising with the media. She is, furthermore, of the opinion that she should play an active role in her son’s school and has hence decided to join the school’s revue group for parents, which is to present an item during the annual Revue Event in October.

Despite the many challenges that exist in the open labour market for a visually impaired person, Rozelle still strives towards improving her skills. In 1995 she completed a computer course at the National Council for the Blind and did another course in 2005 in order to stay abreast of the latest developments in this field. She was also faced with having to deal with the typical prejudice of ignorant people when she approached PSAP ETD to attend one of the courses presented by them. She was, however, prepared to face the challenge head-on and eventually convinced the organisers to allow her onto the course. She completed this course successfully.

In her free time Rozelle enjoys outdoor life, eg camping, hiking, mountaineering, etc. She also enjoys curling up with a good book and a cup of coffee or socialising with friends.

Rozelle certainly believes in taking on life’s challenges and turning them into opportunities. She smiles brightly, and shrugging her shoulders she says: “Life, after all, waits for nobody, so one has to make the most of it, don’t you agree?”
Col Susan Palmer (née Steyn) was born in Acornhoek in Mpumalanga on 29 March 1960. She was raised among the pine tree plantations in the vicinity of Pilgrimrest, Lydenburg and Sabie and matriculated in 1977 from the high school in Lydenburg. She joined the SA Air Force on 4 January 1978 where she met and later married Col Joe Palmer in 1982. The couple has two sons.

From 1978 to 1998 - Col Palmer joined the SA Air Force on 4 January 1978 as a logistician and did her training at the then School for Logistic Training, now known as 68 Air School. Col Palmer did the two-year Candidate Officers Course and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 1980. Most of her career from the rank of lieutenant to lieutenant colonel in 1989 was in the logistic environment in the SA Air Force, where she specifically dealt with auditing and inspections, dress regulations, stores administration and damage and loss control. She served during these years at intervals at the then Air Force Headquarters and the Chief of Staff Logistics. One of the highlights of her career at this time was in 1995 when she, as a member of the Organising Committee, assisted in arranging the air shows held in South Africa and Africa (as far north as Kenya), in celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the SA Air Force.

From 1998 to 2001 - In 1998 the Directorate in the SA Air Force in which Col Palmer was serving was transferred to the Logistics Division as part of the transformation process of the SANDF. The member once again excelled in the logistical environment (this time for the SANDF). The fact that she had previously served with the Chief of Staff Logistics made the transformation an easy process and the knowledge she acquired in the SA Air Force was put to good use in the field of stores administration for the SANDF. Col Palmer attended the last Senior Command and Staff Course presented by the SA Air Force in 2001 and was promoted to the rank of Colonel in December 2001.

From 2001 to 2004 - Col Palmer was appointed as Senior Staff Officer Logistic Policy for the SANDF at the Logistics Division in November 2001. This post posed various challenges as it and the office had been vacant for three years. All logistics policies and instructions had to be realigned with the new structures and functions and republished in the format of the prescribed Department of Defence Instructions (DODI). In 2003 Col Palmer applied for selection for deployment to Italy in January 2005.

From 2005 to date - Col Sue Palmer, supported by her husband Col Joe Palmer, arrived in Rome, Italy, in January 2005. The reaction of members of the Italian Defence Force was very positive, but the member was informed that she was “entering a point in history in Rome”. Col Sue Palmer is the first and only female Military Attaché in Rome, which has in the region of 150 embassies and 107 Military Attachés. Col Palmer believes that everything that happens to a person during his lifetime is either a lesson to be learned or an opportunity not to be missed. Col Palmer is privileged and proud to represent South Africa and the SANDF in Rome, which has in the region of 150 embassies and 107 Military Attachés. Col Palmer believes that everything that happens to a person during his lifetime is either a lesson to be learned or an opportunity not to be missed. Col Palmer is privileged and proud to represent South Africa and the SANDF.

A healthy body supports a healthy mind, and Col Palmer supported badminton in the SANDF. She was a keen player, but excelled more in the administration of the sport. She was the Chairperson of SA Air Force Badminton and the Secretary of SANDF Badminton for a period of ten years, prior to handing over to her successor in 2000.

Col Palmer’s career of 27 years in the SANDF was both exciting and fulfilling, with numerous highlights. Being deployed as one of only two female Military Attachés from South Africa and the only one to Europe makes the posting the highlight of her career at this stage. Col Palmer has the opportunity to liaise and socialise with all the foreign defence attachés in Rome, as well as in Bucharest (Romania) and experience the cultures of both the western and eastern European countries. The experience gained during her three-year deployment in Italy will be put to good use upon returning to South Africa in 2008.
Female Infanteers wielding the sword with the men

By Maj Merle Meyer, Comm Officer
SA Army Infantry Fmn

The SA Infantry Corps was established in 1954 and last year the corps celebrated its 50th anniversary. Since 1954 the Infantry have come a long way. Women were previously not allowed in the Infantry corps and today we have women serving with the men and doing what the men are doing.

All Infanteers can remember the well-known Maj Kraai Kamffer who excelled at training equestrian soldiers at 12 SAI Bn. She was also well known as an excellent horsewoman, who took part in several national championships. She opened the doors for women in the Infantry.

First female battalion commander

Lt Col Topsy Mpaxa was appointed in 2001 as the first female Officer Commanding of an Infantry Battalion, namely 14 SAI Bn in Umtata. She completed the Senior Command and Staff Course in 2003. Before she was ap-pointed to this post she was a company commander at 6 SAI Bn and there she commanded her company on the border of the Eastern Cape and in the Western Cape during the time of unrest between the taxi bosses and the Golden Arrow bus company.

During the first deployment of 9 SAI Bn to Burundi the Acting Officer Commanding of the Battalion was Maj Hermien Brandt, yes not an Infanteer, but she handled the whole unit in a calm and controlled manner. The unit budget was handed on in time and the unit routing continued as normal.

Female performers

Vrede Commando led the way when they appointed WO2 “Suster” Pretorius as the first female RSM of a commando. Truly, we have progressed as a large number of women are presently serving in the commandos and the Conventional Reserve Force units. Some of them have completed their Officer’s Formative Course and are ready to become officers. Dedicated women indeed.

At the Infantry School WO2 Annerie Cornelius was a member of the research and development team and she contributed to the curriculum of several courses. She wrote several bulletins for the SA Army on the Code of Conduct and the values - a very versatile woman.

12 SAI Bn in Potchefstroom has always had a very positive approach towards women in the Infantry. In 2003 the company that was deployed at Madumo was commanded by a woman - Capt Connie Hugo (née Starke), and the following deployment by Maj Romie Jansen van Rensburg (now a member of 7 SAI Bn). Both women handled the deployment very well and the company was very successful.

Competing with the best of the best

At most of the Infantry battalions we have women in the Infantry corps serving in various posts and at 21 SAI Bn we have several women serving in the Reaction Company. Boy, oh boy, I would not like to be on the wrong side of some of those women.

The women have proved that they

Lt Col Topsy Mpaxa is the first female Officer Commanding of an Infantry Battalion.

S Sgt Mayke Poo, who took part in the Infantry Pace Stick Competition and was selected as the then best Corporal in 2001.

(Photo: Maj Merle Meyer)
First female second in command in the Joint Operational structure

By Capt Elaine van Staden,
SO3 Comm Officer Joint Tactical HQ Western Cape

An enthusiastic and ambitious woman, Lt Col Winnie Bobelo of Joint Tactical Headquarters Western Cape, Silvermine, became the first female second in command in the Joint Operational structure in the Western Cape.

Lt Col Bobelo, who was born in Port Elizabeth on 17 November 1960, is a divorcee and mother of two. She joined the ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in October 1977 after which she did her Basic Training in Angola followed by a three-month long specialisation course in "military combat work". As she was determined to achieve further success and enrichment in her career she then in 1979 completed a ten-month long political science course in the former Soviet Union.

She returned to Angola in 1980. In 1982 she did her intelligence training in the former German Democratic Republic and in the USSR. Lt Col Bobelo also did various international courses in Germany, amongst others a course in International Relations Diplomacy.

Lt Col Bobelo worked in different structures of the ANC Intelligence Department, and was an Intelligence Processing Officer at the ANC Intelligence Headquarters. In 1990 she returned to South Africa and worked in the political structure as a transitional local councillor of Queenstown. In 1995 during the integration process of the SANDF, she was appointed as a Captain in Military Intelligence and shortly thereafter was transferred to the then Eastern Province Command Intelligence in Potchefstroom and finally at the SA Army Combat Training School in Lohatla. At the beginning of 2001 she was promoted to SO2 Processing at the Regional Joint Task Force South under the command of Maj Gen Dan Mofokeng (who is now Chief Defence Corporate Communication). Later in 2001 she was transferred to the School of Tactical Intelligence as SO1 Force Preparation and chief instructor.

After the successful completion of her Senior Joint Staff Programme Lt Col Bobelo was appointed as the second in command at Joint Tactical Headquarters Western Cape on 6 February 2004.

Lt Col Bobelo aspires to further her studies in international relations and diplomacy and to develop her career in the military operational structure, particularly in the Chief Joint Operational environment to contribute to the success of peacekeeping operations. Currently, Lt Col Bobelo is deployed as a Military Advisor to the Force Commander during a peace support operation in Burundi and is expected back home by the end of August 2005.

Last but not least, she is the mother of two beautiful children to whom she offers everything she can so that they can follow in her footsteps.
Firsts for the custodian of national security education

The SA National Defence College (SANDC) as the custodian of national security education “delivered” on many strategic issues in the past. One ongoing issue is the quest for gender equality in our country and the DOD. The SANDC has in this regard been privileged to achieve two “firsts” in the last five years.

Col Mariëtte Hartley became the first Chief Senior Directing Staff in the DOD’s Joint Training environment with effect from 1 December 2002.

WO1 Steph Ferreira was appointed on 15 February 1999 at the SANDC as the first female RSM in the SA Army, as well as the first female RSM in the Joint Training environment.

The core business of the SANDC is the presentation of two Executive National Security Programmes (ENSP) per year, attended by 36 members at a time. The ENSP represents the highest level of training supplied in the DOD and aims to train senior officers from the DOD, international attendees and officials from various government departments to function at the national strategic level.

Chief Senior Directing Staff

Col Hartley is a BA Honours graduate in both International Politics and Psychology. Her responsibilities include the co-ordination of the training effort to achieve the objective mentioned above. Her career started off in Defence Intelligence in 1977 covering various disciplines, such as counter-intelligence, covert intelligence and foreign relations.

WO1 Steph Ferreira has a diploma in Total Quality Management. She is a recognised shot of distinction (silver).

She served during her career as instructor at the SA Army Women’s College, the Personnel Services School and at the SA Army College. Her responsibilities include discipline in general, the full ground maintenance of the SANDC, as well as dedicated logistic and administrative support to the training and support wings of the SANDC.

Apart from being a dedicated career woman, Col Hartley is also a wife to Llewellyn, and mother to Mireille and Celeste. She is a keen gardener and has other interests, such as international politics, the theatre and sport.

First female RSM in the Army

WO1 Steph Ferreira has a diploma in Total Quality Management. She is a fully qualified Physical Training Instructor, a Driving and Maintenance Instructor and was a Testing Officer. She is a recognised shot of distinction (silver).

Personnel at the SANDC are very proud to have two women of such quality in their midst to add value and give guidance in their respective fields. We wish them well in their future careers and personal goals still to be achieved.
Determined despite the odds

Article courtesy of WO1 Poppy Moatshe
Photo: F Sgt David Nomthshongwana

Sergeant Major Naomi Poppy (née Nchoe) Moatshe, known to most of her colleagues as “Pops” was born at Rooijan-tjiesfontein (Gannalaagt) in the district of Lichtenburg (North West Province). She was born into a big family (six boys and seven girls), including two sets of twins. Her humble parents who earned a modest income taught her the virtue of honest hard work. Her parents have been her role models since she was a child.

She started her school career at Kunanana Lower Primary School in the district of Lichtenburg and matriculated at Kebalepile High School in Mafikeng. WO1 Moatshe also developed herself and enrolled with the University of South Africa and studied Total Quality Management, which is in line with her field of work. She chuckles when she thinks of her father who always wanted the best for his family and would remind them that “Knowledge is Power”, and to this end he even gave each of them an encyclopedia from his valuable book collection.

Her father, the principal of the school, was a teacher by profession and a part-time farmer during school holidays, and was like most parents from the lower income group beleaguered not only by being concerned with raising his family, but also with taking care of their future careers. “In most of the African cultures there was the perception that daughters were deprived from going to school, the reason being that they were going to be married, change surnames and not be fully part of the family anymore,” but that was not the case with WO1 Moatshe’s father, who instead saw to the education of his children. Today her sisters and brothers are professionals in other fields. She chose a different career and became a soldier and a lady in the Army. WO1 Moatshe was one of the first few women to start working as a typist, and later she served as a uniformed member in the former Bophuthatswana Defence Force in 1980. She underwent all the training presented by their expert instructors from 21 SA Infantry Battalion in Gauteng. She laughed when she recalled that when she applied to join the Defence Force she did not know what type of treatment as a wife, mother and woman she was going to get, but as a brave woman and a risk taker, she ended up putting on a “rucksack, webbing and water bottle on my back” and went to the bush for training and exercises. A married woman and a mother, she had a baby boy of six months who was about to be christened. She followed the correct channels and applied for a weekend pass to attend her son’s christening. She realised that the boots she had worn on the long walk in the bush had hurt her feet. She chuckled: “It was difficult to put on my high heels, as there were blisters all over my feet.”

These problems did not stop her, but made her more motivated to face challenges as a woman in the SANDF. She worked as a personal assistant to General J.A. Jordaan and as a senior administrative clerk and a typist in the Bophuthatswana Defence Force, and later in 1994 she joined the integration group at Wallmannsthal where she worked at the complaints office as a senior administrative clerk until 1996. Then she was transferred to Army HQ and appointed as the Chief Clerk at Directorate Communications. She was part and parcel of the establishment of the Army Office and was appointed as an Internal Warrant Officer whose task was to focus on Army Office General Assistants’ welfare and their role in the organisation. She recalls that her father’s wish was that she should be the best ambassador wherever she went and that she was to represent her family, society and the country as a whole, which would prove her good background and upbringing.

Her proud record of achievement was shown when she was appointed as the very first African woman in the history of the Defence Force with two stars as the Ceremonial Warrant Officer. There was a lot of criticism when she was appointed as the first African woman to wear stars and there was a perception that she was doing a man’s job in handling the ceremonial activities for the whole SA Army. She proved herself by conducting every single parade with success and obtained Letters of Appreciation from the different Services, as well as a Recommendation Certificate for a job well done, which was signed by the Chief of the SA Army. She has obtained various medals during her career in the Defence Force: the 20 Years Service Medal, the 10 Years Service Medal and the 20 Years Service Medal.

After serving for four years in the Ceremonial Section she was appointed as the first African woman wearing three stars in the SA Army at the Inspector General Directorate. She encourages other women in the SA Army to be positive risk takers and to take the lead - “A Woman’s Touch” - always makes the difference.
Female academic leadership

By Maj A. Hanekom, Comm Officer Military Academy

Transformation at the Military Academy has always been a multifaceted matter since its beginnings in the early 1990s. Several issues had to be addressed first and foremost, among which was the face of the institution being predominantly white, male and military. Just as important was the lack of a strong academic presence characterised by research and publications in academic journals. As the institution grappled with these issues, it was surprisingly enough a woman who played the leading role in transforming the institution to enable academics, and particularly female academics, to play a more meaningful role.

Prof Elize Kotze joined the ranks of the Academy at the end of 1989 as one of the first civilian lecturers in the Faculty of Military Science. As she was known as the principal of the local pre-primary school, her appointment was frowned upon by many staff and students. What her critics did not seem to realise was that she had a Masters Degree and had already taught at two tertiary institutions. However, through her typical people-orientated approach, sheer hard work, and dedication she succeeded in breaking down the stereotypes. In due recognition of her efforts she was awarded the Rector’s Award for Meritorious Teaching in 1996 and in 1999 for Meritorious Research - the first in the Faculty and also a first for female academics.

Dean, and in 2003 she was appointed as a full professor by Stellenbosch University - the first female, and, after the dean, the first civilian to reach this milestone.

Prof Kotze was born in Vredefort in the Free State, matriculated at the Gymnasium High School in Potchefstroom and continued with her tertiary studies at the Potchefstroom University. She obtained a BSc (Psychology and Statistical Mathematics), BSc Honours (Psychology), MSc (Psychology) cum laude, and she lectured in Psychology and Industrial Psychology at this institution for four years.

She subsequently taught at the Pretoria Teacher’s Training College until her husband, Col Kobus Kotze, was appointed as a lecturer (later professor) in Military History at the Academy in 1973 when the couple moved to Saldanha. Here she focused on the upbringing of her three sons, but also enrolled for a Diploma in Higher Education at Unisa, and later for the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, specialising in Pre-primary Education. Upon completion of the latter she established the first pre-primary school in Saldanha and taught there for five years. During this time she completed a National Diploma in Personnel Management through Technikon SA. She was then appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Industrial Psychology at the Academy, completed her internship as Counselling Psychologist in 1992, obtained her PhD in Industrial Psychology from Stellenbosch University in 1998 and was promoted to full professor in 2003.

Prof Kotze’s research has concentrated on career psychology, psychometrics, the social responsibility of international corporations operating in developing countries, and the psychological empowerment of workers. Over time she has received several grants for research from, inter alia, the National Research Foundation, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the USA Fund for International Military Education and Training (IMET), Stellenbosch University and the SANDF.

She regards her participation in three international research projects as the highlights of her academic career. One was a cross-cultural study on management and change in the South African Defence Force with Dr Terence Jackson, formerly from the ESCP-EAP European School of Management (Paris-Oxford-Berlin-Madrid). The results of this study were published in the international...
"Administration and Society" journal. The second was with Dr Frederick Bird from Concordia University, Montreal, on a project titled "Global responsibilities: Managing international companies in developing countries." This work has already been published as a book. Presently she is engaged in research with Prof Sanjay Menon from Louisiana State University, USA, on the psychological empowerment of workers.

Her international interdisciplinary research has now encouraged her to take the lead in a similar approach to research in the SANDF. This involves co-operative research with senior and junior faculty colleagues, and former students. It is, furthermore, her ideal to strengthen academic bonds with all her former students who have obtained postgraduate qualifications in Industrial Psychology. For this purpose she intends organising a (*) research seminar where they can report on their research.

Over the years students, young and old, here and abroad, colleagues and members of her community have come to know Prof Kotze for her passion in caring for and concern about the people whose lives she touches, for her conscientious work ethic and commitment and her national and international academic stance. Furthermore, the long list of academic publications and papers is a reflection of her work drive despite her constant fight against cancer. The latter gave rise to her involvement in an initiative to assist a young Ethiopian girl in getting a bone-marrow transplant and in raising funds for the adornment of the rehabilitation ward of 2 Military Hospital. Nevertheless, she always has time for a good joke, enjoys reading fiction, Afrikaans and English, and most of all cherishes time spent with her grandson and daughter who live in the UK.

Prof Kotze, the Department of Defence salutes you!

(*) The proposed research seminar is planned to take place in 2006 and all interested former students of the Military Academy with a postgraduate qualification may contact Maj J. A. Hanekom at tel no: (022) 702 3004 with their details.

First female coxswain on board

AB Zelda (Lizzy) Lebelo, Assistant Media Liaison Officer Naval Base Simon’s Town

Crew members of the SA Navy hydrographic survey vessel, SAS PROTEA, known to many as "The White Lady" had a first-hand experience of history in the making on 6 May 2005 as they welcomed on board their first ever female coxswain, WO1 Wendy Lancaster. WO1 Lancaster joined the Navy in 1980 and did her Basic Training at SAS SIMONBERG in Simon’s Town.

After Basic Training she successfully completed courses as a radar operator, then served in both Simon’s Town and Durban in different posts. She did excellent work on the Strike Craft Flotilla where she worked closely with R Adm Hennie Bester, current Flag Officer Fleet of Naval Base Simon’s Town. At the time R Adm Bester was the Officer Commanding of Naval Station Durban: "He is one of the people who believed in me and gave me great responsibility," she said.

Although WO1 Lancaster planned to become a schoolteacher during her high school days, she decided to join the SA Navy instead and ever since has never looked back. Now almost 25 years down the line she is the first female coxswain of a naval ship, which is a great feeling, "I never saw this appointment coming and I am still bewildered by the whole thing," she said.

As the most senior rating on board, her main responsibilities include maintenance of discipline and high morale among the crew members, and helping them with any problems they may encounter. She is the liaison between officers and ratings. "This is not such an easy job," she said, "as it requires one to be more understanding, especially at sea because everyone needs to stay positive even though they are away from families and friends." WO1 Lancaster’s first sea-going experience with the SAS PROTEA after her appointment was when the ship sailed to Richard’s Bay for six weeks. At the time she got to know the ship and the crew much better. During these six weeks and after the crew members got to know her better, she was described as being understanding, considerate and a very strong woman, and to her they, in turn, are a brilliant group of people.

WO1 Lancaster’s face glows when she speaks of her sons, Brice (18) and Lance (13) - they have been extremely proud of their mother and understand when she has to sail and be away from home for a little while. As a mother she always has words of encouragement to give. When asked to encourage young women who some day wish to be like her, she said: "They have to work hard, keep their noses clean and have a positive attitude in everything they do." WO1 Lancaster’s love of the Navy and good guidance are tools that have kept her going and that is how she got to where she is today.
A Personal Assistant who seizes the moment

By Thuli Dube, Journalist AD ASTRA
Photo: WO2 C. Crous

Lt Samantha Pillay, Personal Assistant to the Chief of the SA Air Force, Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, is a woman who is passionate about what she does. “I have learnt a lot from the senior officers. I am always keen to grasp the knowledge they have and I apply it to my working environment,” she said.

Her duties as a personal assistant to the Chief of the SA Air Force are diverse. She has to ensure that all documentation of meetings attended by the Chief of the SA Air Force is prepared and that inputs are received, make all arrangements for his staff visits, and co-ordinate all activities with his spouse. And these are just some of the responsibilities she has in serving the Chief of the SA Air Force.

Before she was promoted to a personal assistant, she was a senior personnel functionary at the same office, where she was responsible mainly for the administrative support to the office of the Chief of the SA Air Force and all personnel matters relating directly to the office.

At the moment Lt Pillay is studying at the Military Academy for her B Mil Degree in Human and Organisational Development. Though her work may be challenging, she says that she enjoys working with people: “I come into contact with many people on a daily basis, and I learn a lot. I improve myself and show professionalism in my working environment”.

Besides her challenging job, she enjoys relaxing at home with her son, socialising and participating in sport.

To motivate Air Force members she said: “Working towards Vision 2012 as officers within the SA Air Force we are faced with many challenges and great opportunities. Seize these opportunities to develop yourselves and attain the vision of the SA Air Force for future members still to come. Always maintain your loyalty”. 

A first for women in the Reserve Force

By Lize Pienaar, Group 33
Photo: F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

Belfast Commando is the first commando unit in the SA Army to have a female second in command and a female RSM. It is a well-known fact that women can do several tasks simultaneously, and if you have two women of this calibre at one unit at the same time you can expect things to happen.

Female second in command

Maj Susanne Marè grew up in a military environment as the daughter of the late Col JAP Steyn and matriculated in 1974 at the Afrikaans Hoër Meisieskool in Pretoria. She commenced with tertiary studies at the University of Pretoria and completed her BA Degree in 1977 with Psychology and Criminology as main subjects.

She joined the Defence Force in 1977 at Military Intelligence (Directorate Counter-intelligence) and served in this division until 1981. During 1984 to 1988 Maj Marè served at the then Eastern Transvaal Command in the Secretariat Eastern Transvaal Joint Management Centre.

In 1996 she joined the Belfast Commando, where she started as an intelligence officer and later on also became responsible for operations and communication. She received Commendation Certificates of Group 33 for Intelligence, Communication and Operations.

Over the period June 2000 to February 2001 she completed the Company Commanders Course. During 2001 she was promoted to the rank of Major, and on 24 January 2001 she was appointed as the second in command of Belfast Commando.

Maj Marè currently serves as an intelligence officer and communications officer. In 2004 she also completed the Unit Commander Army Territorial Reserve Distance Training Course where she obtained second place and in this regard is also the first woman to do the course.

Female RSM

WO1 Martina Wilkie joined Belfast Commando in 1979, and completed the Basic Training Course at Group 12 HQ in February 1981. In 1985 she was promoted to the rank of corporal. In 1996 she completed a PTF Personnel Administration Course and a Basic Intelligence Distance Training
Maj Susanne Marè, second in command of Belfast Commando (left), and WO1 Martina Wilkie, RSM Belfast Commando.

A woman takes control

By Lebohang Letaoana

When Lt Col René Mercuur joined the SA Army Intelligence Corps in 1994 she did not know that one day she would be the first woman in the history of 1 Tactical Intelligence Regiment to be its Officer Commanding. Only 30 years old, she is one of the youngest woman commanding officers in our Defence Force.

The official handing and taking over of command parade between Lt Col Tsihililo Albert Mukwevho and Lt Col Mercuur was held at 1 Tactical Intelligence Regiment in Potchefstroom on 3 June 2005.

Lt Col Mercuur was born in Cape Town on 3 September 1974. She completed her Basic Training Course at the SA Army Women’s College in George, and later joined the SA Army Intelligence Corps in December 1994.

Asked if as a woman Officer Commanding she did not expect things to be easier, she replied: "No, I think with the different cultures that we have it will be difficult, but I will conquer." She also said that as the first woman she would be bringing in some changes, but did not want to elaborate any further.

Lt Col Mercuur worked as a Processing Officer at Northern Cape Command HQ in Kimberley from December 1994 to November 1997. In 1996 she assisted 525 Troop in Olifantshoek as the Intelligence Officer of the Electronic Warfare Station.

In January 1997 she assisted as an Administrative Officer at the School of Tactical Intelligence. In November 1997 she was transferred to Group 1 HQ in Cape Town, where she worked as the SO3 Processing Officer until June 2002.

She was transferred to SA Army Intelligence Formation in June 2002, where she worked as the SO2 Administration of Operational Technical Officer. After promotion to a Major in 2002 she worked as the SO1 Combat Readiness Officer in the formation. Lt Col Mercuur is married to Gavin and they have a two-year old son named Corbin.
Excellence in the language practitioner environment

By Dr J.L. Marais, D Lang, HRSC
Photo: F Sgt Amelda Strydom

Miempie Louw’s office is on the twenty-eighth floor of the Poynton Building in Pretoria. Sheets of paper are posted against the bookshelves full of dictionaries and other language books. On these sheets Miempie has been mapping the post structure of the Directorate Language Services as it has developed since 2004 as part of the Human Resources Support Centre. There are also files on the floor about training initiatives for learners on different levels.

“I can live with disorder up to a point,” says Miempie while she turns to her desk where she has piled paper and books in an orderly and particular manner. Her hand sweeps over an open dictionary. Miempie clearly has the ability to organise and to take the initiative.

“Miempie works towards a goal in life. She always works hard to equip herself better for her career and her position in life,” says Eugene Muller, a language practitioner colleague who has been working closely with her at the Army Office. “She is dynamic and not shy to perform in front of people.”

Miempie’s other colleagues in the Directorate Language management team, as well as those who deal with her as Head of the Official Languages Section, will certainly agree.

“I used to be very shy as a child,” says Miempie. “Today I regard myself as a well-adapted introvert. Often I have to take the lead because there are no other people who are willing to do so. I also have the ability to see things in a broader perspective. It is one of my talents, and my training helped to develop that.”

After her undergraduate studies at the University of Pretoria (where she admits she was more interested in sport and especially netball, for which she eventually got University and Provincial Colours), she completed an honours degree in journalism at the University of Stellenbosch.

Miempie Louw, Head of the Official Languages Section.

“I met my husband while I was studying at Stellenbosch. We did the same course. We got married in 1980 and from the start worked together as journalists. These were difficult, but very rewarding times. I learned a lot about journalism and regard myself in the first instance as a journalist. I am actually first of all a writer, then an editor and then a translator,” says Miempie.

Her career as a journalist started with the Afrikaans newspaper Beeld in Pretoria and Johannesburg. In 1991, after eight years of raising her three children and doing freelance journalism, she joined SALUT, the forerunner of the current SA SOLDIER, on a half-day basis. Her husband, Riaan, also joined the DOD and is currently a colonel and working in the office of the Chief of the SANDF.

As her husband had to work alternately in Pretoria and Cape Town every other six months for the Ministry of Defence for a couple of years, Miempie worked alternately in Cape Town and Pretoria for SA SOLDIER. When her husband was transferred to Cape Town in 1995 she was appointed at the Castle in Cape Town as a language practitioner. There she worked at the Western Province Command Headquarters until the middle of 1999. Apart from working as a language practitioner, she co-ordinated Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in the Western Cape for all the DOD learning sites. She also acquired her Post Degree Diploma in Translation from UNISA during this time.

“I am thankful for the experience I gained through my involvement with ABET. It was very rewarding to work with the learners. It was especially stimulating to see how people acquired new basic life skills and how thankful they were. This made me humble.”

Miempie sees the DOD as an environment where people have incredible opportunities if they could only recognise them. “They are not presented to you on a tray, and you must never allow yourself to be confined to a specific mindset.” She is also thankful to her husband with whom she forms a good team; they understand each other’s work environment very well.

She is currently in the second year of MBA studies at the University of Pretoria. This qualification will give formal recognition to her leadership skills, for which her colleagues respect her.
Perseverance pays off

By Tshidi Baloyi,
Journalist AD ASTRA
Photo: Capt J.P. van Vuuren

She started as a cleaner at the SA Air Force - today she is a Warrant Officer. WO2 Emma Lekalakala was promoted in December 2002 from a Sergeant to a Warrant Officer Class 2. She recently won the 2004 Top Warrant Officer of the Year Award.

In her job as a Warrant Officer she is a Personnel Functionary Officer in charge of administrative work and human resources.

WO2 Lekalakala matriculated from Gasietsiwe High School (Warmbaths) in 1981. Thereafter her first job was as a cleaner in the SA Air Force. She learned how to operate the switchboard and did part-time work there. She applied to join the SA Air Force in 1985, but was turned down. However, she did not give up and in 1990 she was accepted.

She joined the SA Air Force because she liked the appearance of its members in uniform. "They all looked smart," she said. Since starting her career in the SA Air Force she has worked as an Apprenticeship Career Manager at the Directorate Operations Support and Intelligence Systems, and next as a Career Manager of Technical Electronics.

WO2 Lekalakala is married and has two sons. One of her sons, Sgt Modikana Jacob Lekalakala, is also a member of the SA Air Force. He is an aircraft mechanic at Makhado Air Force Base and has a National Diploma in Engineering. Her other son, Koketo, is a Grade 12 learner at Pretoria West Technical School.

She is currently studying Management Assistance at the Centurion College as part of the SA Air Force's Thusanong Programme to empower women in the SA Air Force. WO2 Lekalakala believes that "there is nothing that is impossible; be confident and believe in yourself." This is also her message to other Air Force members. When asked where she saw herself in ten years' time, she said she would like to be the Sergeant Major of the SA Air Force.

Fitness fanatic

By Tshidi Baloyi,
Journalist AD ASTRA
Photo: Capt L. Greyvenstein

There are six female instructors in the SA Air Force Gymnasium and Sgt Desiree Namise is one of them. She became an instructor in 2001, when she worked as a trainer at Central Flying School Langebaanweg.

As an instructor she trains the new SA Air Force recruits on the ethos and structure of the SA Air Force; and after three months the students choose which field they want to go into. "I love what I am doing; in a sense I have wanted to be here ever since I was a child," she said.

Born on 7 July 1977, Sgt Namise matriculated from Valhalla Senior Secondary in Cape Town in 1996. After school she worked in a clothing factory for almost a year, and then was accepted into the SA Air Force in 1997.

Before she became an instructor she worked as a permit clerk at Central Flying School Langebaanweg. She then completed an instructor’s course, which qualified her to be an instructor in the SA Air Force. Sgt Namise loves what she does. She was awarded the trophy for the Best Basic Training Instructor at the last Basic Military Training passing-out parade held at the Air Force Gymnasium in April 2005. With great confidence she said: "Men now know that whatever they can do, I can also do".

When asked what she would like to be in ten years' time she said: "I want to be a Regimental Sergeant Major of the SA Air Force Gymnasium and still be involved in training". Her message to other Air Force members is: "If you have dreams, believe in them and they can come true. Only you can make your dreams come true".

Sgt Namise is married, and has a six-year-old daughter who shows a lively interest in physical training. In her spare time she enjoys reading, playing soccer and netball, and running. She is a keen athlete and was a member of the SANDF Athletics Team, which competed against the Botswana Defence Force members in Botswana in July 2005.
Meet the "Eye of our Force"

By Sgt Mercia Engelbrecht, former Reserve Force Scriptwriter Defence TV

A tragic car accident almost left her paralysed in 1989, but she was miraculously given a second chance in life. Today Ms Cindy Ludick is living life to the fullest as the Executive Producer of Defence TV, the television unit of the DOD. As a young schoolgirl she dreamt about being involved in the magical world of television production, either as a reporter or as a presenter. Ms Ludick completed her Honours degree in Communication at the Potchefstroom University for Higher Education in 1990. In 1991 she joined the SA Air Force as Production Manager of SAAF TV, the then television unit of the SA Air Force. As she was medically unfit to serve as a uniformed member, she was appointed as a Public Service Act Personnel member. She completed various military and civilian courses and in 1996 she was promoted to Executive Producer of SAAF TV. Defence TV was established in January 2000 as a result of the amalgamation of the formerly independent television units of the various Services into one central capability. The offices and studio of the "old" SAAF TV were identified as most suitable for the new unified unit. Today Defence TV is still situated at the Air Command Building in Pretoria, although it functions as part of Defence Corporate Communication of the DOD. While Colet holds the mandate for training, Defence TV has the mandate for all audio-visual communication in the DOD. Ms Ludick has been awarded numerous awards during her career in the DOD, and is the heartbeat of Defence TV. Within her career she has experienced more than most, including a flip in a Cheetah fighter jet! Some of the highlights she would like to point out during her career in the DOD are: meeting the First Lady, Ms Zanele Mbeki, on Women's Day in 2001, as well as the participation of Defence TV in the International Military Film Festival held in Rome, Italy, in 2001 and 2002 - where Defence TV received awards. Ms Ludick is married to Jacques and has a five year old son, Juan. After her car accident she was told that she was medically unfit to have children and although his birth was premature in December 1999, Juan is a healthy and lively young boy today. Ms Ludick enjoys life to the fullest, deeply thankful for the second chance she has been given. Her motto in life: "Any noble deed is a stepping stone towards heaven!"

First female Formation Sergeant Major

By Lt Col D. Botha, SO1 Corp Comm, Tertiary MH Fmn

WO1 Christa Stoop, currently the Formation Sergeant Major of the Tertiary Military Health Formation, was the first woman to be appointed as a Formation Sergeant Major in the SAMHS and in the SANDF. This woman in uniform describes herself as a "straightforward" person, who is dedicated to serving the military to the best of her ability. WO1 Stoop has three children and says it is possible to be a professional soldier and still fulfil the role of a mother "if your support systems are in place and you really want to be successful". According to WO1 Stoop the highlight of her military career was when she was the RSM of the SAMHS Nursing College, where she was involved with the nursing students, and was almost the sole provider of both care and discipline. She says that transformation granted her the opportunity to make her stand as a woman in the SANDF, where only men had traditionally fulfilled the role of members responsible for discipline in the military. "Women can enforce discipline just as men can and may be even better, because we as women are more strict, though our approach is softer. However, our results are just as effective," said WO1 Stoop. WO1 Stoop dislikes "people who are late and lie", but has admiration for people who are committed and who have a strong sense of self-discipline. "One must remember that we are in the business of training members to be disciplined at all times in order to successfully survive times of endurance and eventually to be prepared to face war," continued WO1 Stoop. In her leisure time she likes spending time with her family. She enjoys Gospel music and good food. Where does she see herself in ten years time? WO1 Stoop confidently replied that she "will be the Sergeant Major of the SANDF". This is definitely a woman with a mission.
Farewell Sally

By Lebohang Letaoana
Photo: F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

It is so hard to say goodbye to the people you have grown to love and appreciate for the past nineteen years. This is how Ms Sally Jordaan feels about having to retire from her post as Control Personnel Officer at the Directorate Labour and Service Relations.

When SA SOLDIER arrived at the Bank of Lisbon Building in Pretoria, she was waiting to meet us. Ms Jordaan was born on 27 July 1940. Before her employment in the DOD, she worked for Volkskas Ltd as a Clerk, whereafter she worked at the Department of Water Affairs where she was promoted to a Senior Clerk. From 7 May 1975 to 31 August 1981, she was a Senior Typist at General Mining and Finance Corporation Ltd in Windhoek.

In 1982, she was transferred to the Department of Agriculture as a Senior Personnel Clerk, a position she held until 1984. She was responsible for handling appointments, statistics and matters concerning the Fixed Establishment. On 1 November 1984, Ms Jordaan was appointed as Senior Personnel Clerk (Administration: House of Assembly). Her duties included all matters relating to the Fixed Establishment regarding the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health, the Department of Local Management, Housing and Works and Budgetary and Support Services.

She joined the South African Defence Force on 14 January 1986 and was appointed as Senior Personnel Clerk. She worked in the Directorate Personnel Administration where she was responsible for, inter alia, administration relating to civilian appointments, interdepartmental transfers and transfers within the Defence Force. Ms Jordaan worked her way up until she became Control Personnel Officer on 1 March 1995. She was responsible for performing certain duties regarding civilian personnel, such as dealing with their grievances in the Department, post promotions and merit awards in the Upper Structure.

“I am very sad to leave, although on the other hand I should be glad to leave because my husband is very seriously ill and I am looking forward to being with him,” said Ms Jordaan. She has been married to Dr Jan Jordaan for the past 31 years and they have five children. (Since the interview took place Ms Jordaan’s husband passed away on 22 June 2005.)

Ms Sally Jordaan retires after nineteen years of service in the Department.

A secretary with vision

By Lebohang Letaoana
Photo: F Sgt Amelda Strydom

It is not often that you find a secretary speaking highly of her employer, but in the case of Phindile Mgaga it is so.

Phindile is the Secretary to the Chief of Defence Corporate Communication (CDCC), Maj Gen Mohato Dan Mofokeng. Asked what it was like to work for CDCC, she said it was interesting to work under Maj Gen Mofokeng because he is a leader rather than a boss. She described Maj Gen Mofokeng as someone who is polite and understanding and who played the role of a father figure.

Before she joined the SANDF in 1992, she worked for CSIR and Woolworths. She says it was hard for her in the beginning because she did not understand the ranks: “I used to call everyone a General,” said Phindi laughing.

Phindi was born in Ratanda near Heidelberg, but grew up in Mamelodi East. She attended Mamelodi High School and Technikon North West, where she obtained the National Diploma in Commercial Administration. She is currently busy with her studies in Public Relations at Davelin. She credits Maj Gen Mofokeng as someone who inspired her to learn.

Her day in the office starts with a briefing by Maj Gen Mofokeng and his PSO, Maj Vivian Petrus, during which time they discuss the daily tasks. Her involvement in Defence Corporate Communication does not end with her being a secretary, as she sometimes helps with the organising of the Directorate’s activities, ie Golf Days and other public relations events. She spends her leisure time cooking or watching TV with her daughter Matshepo (7), whom she describes as an angel.
First woman Officer Commanding in the Service Corps

Lt Col Marné Malan, Officer Commanding of the Service Corps Regional Office Port Elizabeth, became the first female Officer Commanding in the Service Corps when she was appointed to the post on 19 May 2002.

Lt Col Malan believes that no woman is really free without being empowered - and to become empowered one must be educated. With this in mind, the main function of the Service Corps Regional Office Port Elizabeth is to empower people through education.

One of the initiatives of Lt Col Malan was a project to enable Public Service Act Personnel (PSAP) within the Department of Defence to become empowered by adding value to their lives by giving them the opportunity to do vocational training in various fields, such as hair care, welding, electricity, catering, spray-painting, motor mechanics and entrepreneurship classes - more than 180 clients were trained in this manner.

One of the issues very close to Lt Col Malan’s heart is that of HIV/AIDS. Since there is at this stage no cure for this epidemic, Lt Col Malan believes that the only solution to the problem is to educate people. One of the greatest risks concerning HIV/AIDS is that people are uneducated and therefore indifferent about HIV/AIDS. She believes that education might change the behaviour of people. Lt Col Malan strives to educate all clients of the Service Corps Regional Office Port Elizabeth with regard to the HIV/AIDS issue. An HIV/AIDS programme is presented to every intake of clients that goes through the Service Corps process. Through this programme they are taught what HIV/AIDS is, how to prevent it and also how to handle it once infection has occurred.

Another issue that is of great importance to Lt Col Malan is that some people in this country have never had the opportunity to learn or to go to school and that they can therefore not read or write. In the SANDF there are many previously disadvantaged members with little or no educational skills. Lt Col Malan saw an opportunity in this. She contacted the Department of Education and reached and agreement with it that the Department would make some of its Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) facilitators available to present ABET to the members of the DOD - free of charge.

Through these classes, the members have now had the chance to learn and write for the first time in their lives. During 2003 the first ABET group consisting of 44 learners was trained and there is at present a group of more than sixty learners undergoing ABET training.

This initiative of Lt Col Malan is a first for the Eastern Cape. She has also added a woman’s touch to the offices of the Service Corps in Port Elizabeth by renovating it so that it has become a place where her staff members like to be and where they can be optimally productive.

Lt Col Malan, in her capacity of Officer Commanding of the Service Corps Regional Office Port Elizabeth, lives by the motto of the Service Corps - "To Open New Horizons". She supports the empowerment of women in the SANDF and the principle of equity.

Lt Col Malan has an exceptional ability to determine objectives and to organise and prioritise tasks given. During 2004 there were indications that an exercise to train military veterans would be launched and this officer showed initiative when she started to compile a database of all military veterans in her area of responsibility. She also held workshops and gave guidance to the military veterans so that they could organise themselves into areas and elect committees to represent them. (She ensured that such committees represented all genders.) This has made the communication process much easier and it also ensures that information is relayed to the lowest level. The first group of military veterans entered learnerships with Palace Construction (a private company) as artisans in July 2005.
Lt Col (Dr) Aquina Thulare (Lt Col SAMHS Reserve Force) joined the SAMHS Reserves in April 2004 since when she has been in the Office of the Surgeon General. Since joining the SAMHS she has been involved in promoting the University Reserve Training Unit and represented SAMHS in 2004 at the Confederation of the Inter-Allied Medical Reserve Officers (CIOMR) annual meeting in Vienna, Austria.

Lt Col (Dr) Thulare was educated at Leketi and Phiro-Kolobe High Schools in Limpopo province where she matriculated in 1979. She studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, obtaining her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) in 1985. She completed a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Reproductive Medicine (University of Stellenbosch) in 2001, a Master of Business Administration (University of the Witwatersrand) in 2003 and a Graduate Certificate (University of the Witwatersrand) in 2004. She is currently writing her dissertation on her Public Policy Masters in Management at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Following her medical internship at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in 1986, Lt Col (Dr) Thulare was appointed Senior Medical Officer in various departments (1987-1989), including Obstetrics and Gynaecology at King Edward VIII Hospital and Paediatrics at Chris Hani Baragwanath. She established a family medical practice in Tembisa (1997-1998).

Lt Col (Dr) Thulare is the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer and Secretary-General of the South African Medical Association (2005- ). Previously she was the Deputy Secretary General of the South African Medical and Dental Practitioners Association (SAMDP) (1999-2003). She has, inter alia, also held the positions of Deputy Chairperson of the SAMDP and Executive Director of SAMDP Group Holdings and its subsidiaries (equity and operational interests in the Netcare Group of Companies) from 2003 to 2005. She also holds several other directorships, including Director of Faranani Investments (Pty) Ltd, an investment portfolio for professional women from a historically disadvantaged background.

Lt Col (Dr) Thulare is also a board member and non-executive director of the World Childhood Foundation - Guild Cottage (Swedish Funded Project) and of the Banabaka Care Institute and Tshwaranang Care (hospice sponsored by the Missions of the Sacred Heart and Catholic Bishops Conference), all of which are NPOs within the development and the HIV and AIDS sectors.

She previously also held the positions of non-executive director of Aganang HTV Management Centre and Calabash Health Solutions (Pty) Ltd, both of which are subsidiaries of the Mx-Health Group of companies (2000-2005). In addition to being a member of the South African Medical Association, Lt Col (Dr) Thulare is a member of the South African Medical and Dental Practitioners Association, the South African HIV Clinician’s Society and the Wits Business School Association.

As the Secretary-General of the South African Medical Association (SAMA), Lt Col (Dr) Thulare’s short-term ambition is to drive and entrench the transformation agenda so that SAMA can truly represent and embrace the aspirations of all medical doctors in the country. She also hopes to contribute towards meaningful advocacy and mainstreaming of issues relating to improving the working conditions of medical professionals in the country.

Her other longer-term ambition relates to being an active participant in issues of development in the country. Lt Col (Dr) Thulare is cognizant of the fact that globalisation impacts on the lives of every South African, both positively and negatively. As it is a developing country women and children in South Africa may, however, fail to benefit maximally from this notion of global integration. Her ambition is to advance a developmental agenda for disadvantaged women and children in South Africa by being part of the cadre that will redress deprivation, inequality and social fragmentation as a result of factors such as health and economic insecurity. She is already involved in projects that are developing capacity within the next generation of leadership of women and children so that we can benefit from sustained economic growth, improved literacy and the efficient delivery of public health.

1 The South African Medical and Dental Practitioners (SAMDP) Association is a national body of black medical and dental practitioners established in 1989 that serves the healthcare needs of historically disadvantaged populations in South Africa. The SAMDP was incorporated as a non-profit company in 1997. It is a leading professionally driven healthcare association that advocates and mainstreams health policy interests and issues on behalf of black healthcare professionals in South Africa.

2 SAMDP Group Holdings (SGH) was founded as a vehicle of wealth creation for members of the SAMDP. The primary aim of SGH is to achieve participation in mainstream economic activities and to establish itself as a healthcare market leader. Secondarily SGH aims to address the specific needs of doctors for meaningful participation in business through capacity building. The markets that are targeted by SGH are in healthcare services and related industries in South Africa, the NEPAD region and international markets.
Tribute to women of the Military Legal Services Division

By Lt Col Leon Smit, Military Judge, and Lt (SAN) Andre Smit, SO1 Legal Advice, Legal Satellite Office Wynberg
Photos: Lt (SAN) Andre Smit

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.” (Proverbs 31:10-11). Even though the women who serve in the Military Legal Services Division’s five offices in the Western Cape might not be married to their unit, their service and dedication to the SANDF certainly match the spirit of King Lemuel’s ancient and well-known tribute.

The Legal Satellite Office (LEGSATO) Wynberg, of which the Head Office is situated at the Castle in Cape Town, with its four sub-offices in Langebaanweg, Simon’s Town, Oudtshoorn and Port Elizabeth, has reason to pay tribute to the women who serve faithfully alongside the “worse half” of mankind (a term that should be understandable to those of us who subscribe to the belief that women make up the “better half” of society). Our women not only execute instructions at the lowest level, but they also execute instructions at the highest level.

Starting at the top, Lt Col Moyra de Lange (SO1 Legal Services Support) is the epitome of trustworthiness and loyalty. She has been in the military for fifteen years and was the first non-Military Legal Practitioner to fill the post of Officer-in-Charge of a LEGSATO (albeit in an Acting capacity). The fact that she has done this twice for extended periods of time is a feat that might never be repeated by a non Military Legal Practitioner. In this position she was responsible for the administrative running of military courts over a vast area of responsibility, in addition to the running of an office, co-ordinating legal training and legal advice, facilitating litigation against the Minister of Defence, motivating members and administering all personnel and support functions, helping with the homework of two children, cooking, cleaning and keeping her husband happy!

Backing up Lt Col De Lange is our never failing Lt Col Mavis C. Volschenk (Acting SO1 Legal Services Support and SO1 Reserve Force) who has been serving our armed forces since 1962 and has had more than 31 years of uniformed service. Dedication and high personal standards permeate every task performed by Lt Col Volschenk. Bearing in mind that she survived the “old” days when women were relegated only to non-key positions, received less pension than their male counterparts, did not qualify for medical cover if they fell pregnant and were expected mostly to keep quiet, her positive attitude and healthy sense of humour are truly remarkable.

For those who know how much effort and concentration goes into working with money, being responsible for stores, liaising with suppliers and the keeping of endless registers and logs, Sgt Joan W. Westraadt (Staff Duties Clerk) will seem like a machine. She has been doing three people’s jobs for a number of years despite having been staffed in a supernumerary post for all this time and continues to display a dedication that most of us would envy. As an intelligence non-commissioned officer she certainly runs a “tight ship” when it comes to our stores and stationery and woe betide the person who does not follow the rules. This kind of discipline ensures proper control and accounting in her field of responsibility, despite no shortage of supplies.

Sgt Lilian S. Wakis (Snr Administrative Clerk) joined the Military Legal Services Division on 2 August 2004, but she has been in the military since August 1993. She is a highly knowledgeable person who plays her part in the legal “drama” like a well-oiled part in a properly maintained engine. She is one of the people who ensures that our registry runs smoothly, and only those who know a LEGSATO registry will realise that makes her a kind of “special forces” soldier! She aims to create work solutions and certainly succeeds. Not to be overlooked are her hidden talents that include singing and playing the violin.

Our unit would certainly not have survived without our civilian women. Two extremely critical positions are filled by Ms Colleen Duckworth (Clerk) and Ms Belinda Coetzee (Maintenance). Come rain or shine, wind or the Western Cape drought, Colleen is at her post answering the telephone for 29 plus members. She not only acts as the personal assistant to the Officer-in-Charge, typist for all who need her, walking CSW reference source and the ultimate telephone directory, she also knows almost every long-standing Air Force member in the country. She also displays her business acumen in the running of more or less all our fund-raising activities.

Belinda is getting married soon. However, our LEGSATO has always been like her second household. Belinda ensures that those small things that if not attended to become really big problems, are attended to. She has seen people come and go and remains a steady pillar of support to the members of LEGSATO Wynberg.
Always friendly and willing to help and go the extra mile, she is an inspiration to military members as well.

Ladies also play a vital role in some of the sub-offices, specifically in Port Elizabeth and Simon’s Town. At the Sub-office Port Elizabeth Lt Col Adele Bezuidenhout presides as a military judge. She has been a member of the Military Legal Services Division for about thirteen years and became a military judge in 1999. For the last couple of years she has been the most senior judge in LEGSATO Wynberg. Apart from her duties as a military judge she also has a number of administrative tasks to perform. Despite her busy schedule she has found time to do a Masters Degree in Law. Even more remarkable is her interest in and empathy with her colleagues. She always finds time for a word of advice. Her greatest passion, however, is her husband and her two-year-old son. She is a very good example of how to be a successful career woman and loving wife and mother at the same time.

Another lady who contributes to the well-being of Sub-office Port Elizabeth is Mrs Nomhle Sylvia Magiliwe. She has been detached from General Support Base Port Elizabeth for a number of years as the cleaner at the office. Apart from her good work in keeping the offices clean, she seems to command respect for other reasons. Even though she is a grandmother, she is striving to develop herself by studying to obtain her Grade 12 (Matric) certificate. She truly sets an example to everyone.

Sub-office Simon’s Town handles all naval cases relevant to LEGSATO Wynberg in the Simon’s Town area. This office is largely managed by ladies. At the helm is Cdr Lorinda van Niekerk. Not only is she in charge of an office consisting of two male prosecutors and four ladies in support positions, but she is also currently acting prosecution counsel. Cdr Van Niekerk joined the South African National Defence Force on 3 February 1995 and the Military Legal Services Division on 1 September 1996. Given the fact that she is married and furthering her legal studies Cdr Van Niekerk’s proverbial ship is laden with various responsibilities. That does not seem to perturb her, however. She manages to remain positive and passionate about her work. She believes in equity and fairness and that everyone, irrespective of gender, should live life to its fullest.

PO Sandy MacDonald assists with various administrative tasks, especially the smooth running of the courts. One of her most important tasks is to assist in ensuring the presence of accused and witnesses in court. Given the workload at the sub-office and the number of court appearances, and even worse the postponement of cases, her support in this regard is vital. Although she is a final year LL B student, she still finds time to play the oboe in a number of chamber and symphony orchestras.

Mrs Amelia V. Flatwell is the senior administration and support clerk at Sub-office Simon’s Town. She performs a myriad of administrative and logistical tasks that are vital to the smooth running of the office. This friendly mother of one has a passion for people and is never too busy to help where needed.

The principle typist, Mrs E.M. Smit, plays an important role in ensuring the accurate and professional presentation of certain pre-trial and trial documents. She is very dedicated to her duties and loyal to the LEGSATO. She believes in being a team player, both at work and at home with her husband and two boys. She is also a keen sportswoman with provincial colours in badminton.

Mrs Wilma Rhodes, the cleaner, has other talents as well. Her soup making ability is legendary and has been enjoyed by office personnel and visitors alike. As an avid singer Wilma is a regular member of the Simon’s Town Dockyard Choir.

The ladies of LEGSATO Wynberg see their roles in the Military Legal Services as being no different from that of the men and they do not want any special treatment. They are, however, clearly special and deserve the respect and admiration of all their colleagues.

Some of the women of Legsato Wynberg, back row, fltr: Lt Col M.C. Volschenk, Lt Col M. de Lange, Lt Col R.A. Bezuidenhout, Cdr L.M. van Niekerk, Sg t L.S. Wakies and Mrs C. Duckworth. Front row, fltr: Mrs A.V. Flatwell, PO S. MacDonald and Mrs M.E.M. Smit. Absent when photo was taken: Sgt J.W. Westraad t, Ms B. Coetzee, Mrs N.S. Magiliwe and Mrs Wilma Rhodes.
On the wings of a nightingale

By Lebohang Letaoana
Photo: F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

S
he is confident, intelligent and very talent. That is how to describe Cpl Linda Lebona, an opera singer from the National Ceremonial Guard. SA SOLDIER caught up with her during her busy schedule.

We found her in a quiet office, rehearsing for the next day’s event. She says she is totally booked for the whole weekend, but she does not mind because she is doing what she loves best - singing.

Cpl Lebona was born in the Eastern Cape in King William’s Town 37 years ago.

She was recruited by her friend, S Sgt Refiloe Dyer, to join the SANDF in 1997. S Sgt Dyer thought that her talent could be used in the National Ceremonial Guard. Before she joined the SA Army, she worked with the musical group called Amandla (a musical group from exile). She had a short stint at Shell House (the ANC HQ) where she hosted a programme called Voter Education in IsiXhosa.

In 1990 she was in Babsy Mlangeni’s band where she did backing vocals for him. She also did backing vocals for Sophie Mngcina. She was later introduced to Steve Kekana through whom she met her husband, one of the pioneers of bubblegum music - Mr Koloi Lebona. She and Koloi have five children (three boys and two girls).

Cpl Lebona speaks highly of the former Chief of the South African National Defence Force, Gen Siphiwe Nyanda. When asked how she felt when she sang for General Nyanda on his farewell parade, ie officially for the last time, she replied: “I was feeling very emotional, I have never worked with him, but every time we performed at functions he has always motivated us, which made us work even harder”.

The former Chief of the SANDF is not the only person who sings the praises of the National Ceremonial Guard, especially of Cpl Linda Lebona and her “partner in crime” L Cpl Thapelo Molusi. On two occasions Lt Gen Rinus Jansen van Rensburg, the Surgeon General, wrote Letters of Appreciation addressed to Lt Col N. Stephenson, Director Ceremonial and Military Music, to thank the duo for their superb performances during concerts.

“I would like to once again extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Ceremonial Guard Entertainment Group for their support to the South African Military Health Service Secretaries Forum during their recent fund-raising project. The concert would certainly not have been so successful without their participation. Everybody appreciated and enjoyed their lovely voices, their choice of songs and the music. Please convey a special word of thanks to WO1 Lindsey Liebenberg, Cpl Linda Lebona and L Cpl Thapelo Molusi.” This is an extract from a letter dated 6 April 2005 by the Surgeon General.

Cpl Lebona completed a voice training and theory course at the Technikon Pretoria in 2001. (She is currently taking private lessons.) She mentioned that her tutors, Ms Lizette Jonker and Col John Titus, were her pillars of strength.

Facts file
Her favourite way of unwinding: “I do not have time to relax, if I am not in the studio, I am doing ‘gigs’ with Thapelo.”

The book she is currently reading: Four Agreements by Miguel Reeds.

Her favourite music: Any good music.

Her motto: “Just be yourself.”
Female athletes who do not bite the dust

Article courtesy of Maj A.C. Lotriet, Vice-Chairperson SANDF Athletics

Two majors of the Bloemfontein Military Athletics Club, Dinah Heymans (38), a pharmacist at 3 Military Hospital, and René Odendaal (41), SO2 Physical Training, Sport and Recreation (PTSR) Bloemfontein, do not stand back when the senior or junior women soldiers line up for the high jump or middle distances.

High jump

Maj Heymans is the world champion in high jump in the age group 35-39 having won the high jump (1,73 m) at the World Masters Athletics Championships in 2003 in Puerto Rico. She still competes at the Senior SA Championships and came fourth last year, where Hestrie Cloete won the high jump. This year she came sixth at the SA Seniors Championships (1,70 m) and once again won the Free State Senior (1,73 m) and the SA Masters Championships (1,70 m). She holds the SA, the SANDF and Free State record in her age group for high jump. She was the SANDF Veteran Sportswoman of the Year in 2003 and 2004, as well as the SAMHS Sportswoman of the Year. Maj Heymans is also a member of the Bloemfontein Military Athletics Club Committee. Because of course duties she will not be able to compete in the ESALO Track and Field Championships in Botswana in August this year or the World Master Track and Field in San Sebastian, Spain at the end of August.

Middle distances

Maj Odendaal’s best performance was winning the silver medal in the 800 m at the World Masters Championships in Puerto Rico in 2003. She came fourth in the 1 500 m at the same championships. She participated in three previous World Masters Athletics Championships, which take place every two years. The first was in 1999 in England, the second in 2001 in Australia and then in 2003 in Puerto Rico. Every time she reached the finals in both the 800 m and the 1 500 m.

Maj Odendaal is at present preparing to compete in the 800 m and 1 500 m in this year’s World Master Athletics Championships which will be held in San Sebastian, Spain from 22 August to 3 September 2005. In this year’s SA Masters she won a gold medal in the 1 500 m, a silver medal in the 800 m and a bronze medal in the 400 m. She is also the Chairperson of Bloemfontein Military Athletics Club Track and Field.

Maj Dinah Heymans is the world champion in high jump in the age group 35-39.
A visionary secretary

By CPO Dennis Ndaba
Photos: F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

Ms Zanele Bhengu comes across as a person who is larger than life and exudes confidence in the execution of her tasks as a secretary. She was born and bred in Marianhill in KwaZulu-Natal. Before joining the Department of Defence she had a short stint with the Department of Science and Technology.

She was appointed as secretary for the Director Media Liaison in the Ministry, Mr Sam Mkhwanazi. Her duties entailed dealing with the media, stakeholders and Government Communication Information Systems. She reported for duty on 19 June 2000 and got the shock of her life when she was told to pack as she was leaving for Cape Town in thirty minutes.

That was her introduction to a series of long hours, hectic schedules, endless deadlines and commuting from Cape Town to Pretoria. This has destabilised her family environment, but with her family support system she tackled the challenges head on.

Ms Bhengu proved that she was ambitious and a high flyer when she was appointed as Secretary to the Head of Ministerial Services, Mr Thabiso Ratsomo. About her new post Ms Bhengu says that she works with extremely confidential information, which requires her to be clear minded.

She is humbled by the influence that her parents had on her upbringing. Her mother, a principal, and her late father, who was a teacher, encouraged her to be the best that she could be. Her role model is one of her former colleagues at the Department of Science and Technology, who moved from being a Secretary to being a Director through sheer hard work and determination. After a long day, Ms Bhengu unwinds by listening to her favourite singer, Luther Vandross, and seeing a movie.

General Assistant soars

By CPO Dennis Ndaba
Photo: Cpl Elias Mahuma

Ms Leah Ntuli, a General Assistant at Navy Office, received an opportunity of a lifetime when she was chosen to work on Marion Island for two months.

The post was advertised and after the Directorate Maintenance and Personnel Utilisation had considered all the applicants she was chosen. She told SA SOLDIER that after Ms Petra Roos, Principal Personnel Officer Staffing, had explained to her about the prospects and the requirements of the post she got the blessing of her family, and applied for the post. Ms Ntuli left on 28 February 2005 and returned on 6 May 2005.

Ms Ntuli said the trip was an eye-opener and had broadened her knowledge. She flew to Cape Town where she boarded the SS Agulhas and sailed for three days to Marion Island. This was a first for her, since she had not been to Cape Town before and had never sailed. She had a lot of expectations about the trip and requested SA SOLDIER to express her sincere appreciation to all who had made this memorable journey a reality.
Female instructor in a male dominated environment

By Capt T.N. Snyman,
Comm Officer SA Army
Combat Training Centre

Lt Col Annemarie Nieuwoudt, a Chief Instructor at the Intelligence Branch of the SA Army Combat Training Centre, was selected as one of four women to attend the Military Academy after women were absent from the Academy for ten years. "It was both a challenge and an honour. I started my studies for a B Mil (Natural Science) in 1991 and finished in 1993," said Lt Col Nieuwoudt.

"Hard work, perseverance and studying something in which one has talent is the only recipe for success in an academic environment. And if you are the only one studying a particular subject in your third year, you can be sure of the best personal attention of your lecturers!" Lt Col Nieuwoudt continued.

The proudest moment in her military career was when she received the Sword of Honour as the best third year student at the Military Academy from the then Minister of Justice and Defence, Mr H.J. Coetzee, in December 1993.

When asked what it took to be a female instructor in a male dominated environment she replied that it was not always easy. "Fortunately most of my colleagues at the SA Army Combat Training Centre are very supportive. It is my motto at work that a female cannot compete with a male at the physical level, but we can compete at the intellectual level. Therefore, by ensuring that one knows one's work, is diligent and willing to work long hours and sometimes sacrifice some comforts, a female can become just as much a team member in the environment we work in as a man. You must earn the respect of your colleagues," Lt Col Nieuwoudt continued.

Can a woman in uniform keep her femininity? According to Lt Col Nieuwoudt femininity lies not in what you are, but in how you think and portray yourself. Although working in the military often requires a higher degree of independence and assertiveness from a woman than is the case in some other jobs, it is still possible to remain feminine.

Lt Col Nieuwoudt served as a voluntary member at the SA Army Women’s College in George in 1989, and thereafter joined the Permanent Force in 1990. "It was always a passion for me to attend the year of voluntary service at the prestigious SA Army Women’s College in George. After I matriculated I was selected to attend the College and during the year of training I realised that a career in the SA Army did not only promise some adventure, but also the possibility of a good career. I decided to join the SA Intelligence Corps, as the choices in respect of a corps for a woman were still limited at that time. The first unit I served in was the then Danie Theron Combat School in Potchefstroom," said Lt Col Nieuwoudt.

Her advice to new recruits wishing to make a success of their careers is: "One must firstly choose a direction in which you see a long-term career for yourself. That way you will be motivated to work hard and to do your courses when required. It is essential not to postpone courses too long - motherhood and marriage may require your attention, but one will have to make sacrifices if you want to succeed. Remember to compete on the intellectual terrain, not the physical!" Lt Col Nieuwoudt concluded.

Lt Col Nieuwoudt is currently doing the Senior Command and Staff Duties Course presented at the SA Army College.

Lt Col Annemarie Nieuwoudt, a Chief Instructor at the Intelligence Branch of the SA Army Combat Training Centre, indicates to students where “enemy forces” are situated in order for them to plan an own forces plan of action.
Ms Delle Jacobson, the Editor of Navy News, was born in Pietermaritzburg and raised and educated in Johannesburg and Pretoria. From an early age Delle was passionately involved in music (classical guitar and piano, passing UNISA, Trinity College London and Royal College of London exams to Grade 12 level), ballet (stopping just short of her Royal School’s teacher’s licentiate), horse-riding, drama (winning a SACCE Best Actress award in matric, acting for Pretoria Boys’ High!) and established a reputation as a dedicated and multi-talented go-getter with the drive to take her to the vanguard of whatever she chose to focus her energies on.

At the University of Pretoria, she took up karate with her usual tenacity, reaching her second kiu brown belt in two years, earning her Provincial All Styles colours and a Gold medal in the Shukukai Championships. Upon receiving her BA (in Languages and Sociology) in 1984 and winning an academic scholarship to study English further, she followed her first love and opened a stringed instrument repair workshop where she restored and repaired guitars, violins, mandolins, etc while teaching music privately. During this time her long-standing affiliation with the blind welfare world began when she joined a pilot programme at the OPTIMA Training School for the Blind, where volunteers were trained in working and assisting the blind during rehabilitation. Among other activities, she taught blind students guitar, piano and horse-riding.

She began work in the Defence Force as a translator and proof-reader at the Directorate of Language Services at Chief of Staff Personnel in Pretoria. It was from here that she was fortunate enough to be transferred to the erstwhile Naval Language Bureau in Simon’s Town, where she worked for just over a year and where her association with the then staff of Navy News magazine began.

The lure of using her linguistic skills while exercising her artistic temperament and painstaking eye for detail proved too much and she was transferred to the staff of Navy News in June 1990. Here she introduced advertising and established the beginnings of digital layout for the magazine, which until then had been literally cut and paste. She worked as a journalist, photographer, layout artist and admin clerk as the Deputy Editor under the late Mr Casper de Vries, did a brief stint as Acting Editor and then worked under Lt Cdr Stockton (now Cdr) for the next four years. During this time she also became TEFL qualified through Cambridge University with an eye to teaching English abroad, but her love for her country kept her in Simon’s Town. She applied herself tirelessly to developing her skills and knowledge in the then burgeoning digital publishing industry and built Navy News to the point where it was handling the complete in-house digital pre-press production.

As Editor of Navy News from 1996 to the present, she has taken the once lowly, 16-page in-house news rag to its current status as a highly acclaimed and credible naval publication, recognised and popular throughout the world as a positive, vivid 48-page glossy, colour window on the changing Navy of today. Steering the magazine through the sweeping changes in its digital capability, the introduction of subscription and effective, targeted distribution, she has further augmented the section’s capabilities by introducing other graphic products. She also firmly re-established the Navy’s video capability by ensuring long-overdue capital renewal and putting into place the modern editing suite needed to carry what is now SAN TV into the future.

Her creditable accomplishments thus far are all the more remarkable because her personal work ethic of selfless dedication and determined courage has been tested in the face of
Making her mark in foreign relations

By CPO Dennis Ndaba
Photo: F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

"Do you want to speak to the man in charge or to the woman, who knows what's going on?" People working at the Navy Office in Pretoria are familiar with this statement on the door of an office on the 8th deck (floor), as it confronts them on a daily basis. Faced with this challenge, SA SOLDIER chose the latter. Once inside the office, it became obvious to us that we were now in the territory of Capt (SAN) Laura Jansen van Vuuren, Senior Staff Officer, Naval Foreign Relations.

Capt (SAN) Jansen van Vuuren has a good sense of humour, very dynamic, and passionate about the SA Navy. However, she conceded that it has been much easier since 1994 to be a woman in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). "We are being treated equally, but much still needs to be done," she declared.

This, she adds, should happen naturally, as women need to be valued and their contribution respected, as they can make a difference. "When I joined the SA Navy, there were no women in combat positions and the enormous adversity. In 1986 she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, an incurable debilitating disease of the central nervous system which randomly short-circuits nerve function in various areas of the body for indeterminate periods, each attack leaving varying degrees of permanent nerve damage. Delle has endured prolonged periods of severe pain, muscle spasm, paralysis, even blindness and a host of other seemingly unrelated symptoms over the years. Rather than breaking her down, these attacks have only served to spur her on to greater feats of self-discipline and strengthened her resolve to excel.

Her secret? She is fond of saying: "In life we have a choice - to be a victim or a survivor. I am a survivor. All success, all courage, all achievement of whatever kind depends on the one thing we are all 101% in control of - our attitude." She is also a confirmed follower of the principle that "what goes around comes around" - be compassionate and true in all you do and life will treat you accordingly. Her love for nature and the joy she draws from beauty in all its forms is a constant source of inspiration and encouragement, she says. She is also quick to point out that the support and humour her Navy News Team have always shared with her have made a huge difference and been a major factor in keeping her with Navy News.

An avid reader, she is exceptionally well read with an enquiring mind and enjoys a wide range of topics, ranging from mystical realism and science fiction to philosophy and quantum physics. She feels that the importance of reading and extending one's mental parameters cannot be over-emphasised. Her passion for projecting a positive and honest image of the SA Navy and its members to the broader public and as a morale booster to the Navy itself has continued to grow over the years and her vision for the future of the magazine and its related multimedia capabilities and ultimately the Intranet and Internet, are fast becoming a reality.

As Editor of Navy News (which is Chief of the Navy's official mouthpiece) she is in a unique position to assist him first-hand in projecting his vision for the Navy's self-image and working towards fostering a mind-set of morality, patriotism and pride in every serving member. She says that this is probably the most exciting time to be in the SA Navy and indeed the country - "...the changes, the growth and the opportunities are there to be relished and grasped with both hands! Imagination is the highest kite you can fly and all young women in the Navy have been given a limitless line - they just need to believe it and soar!"

Capt (SAN) Laura Jansen van Vuuren, Senior Staff Officer, Naval Foreign Relations.

2002 Capt (SAN) Jansen van Vuuren was appointed as Senior Staff Officer Naval Foreign Relations. She is married to Lou and has two sons, Robin (20) and Paul (12). To all women who aspire to be like her, her message is: "Work hard, prove yourself by doing your task to the best of your ability and regard the SA Navy as a priority. Dream what you would like to achieve with your career and your dreams will come true!"
Lt Col Shantha Balakrishna is a military judge of the SANDF and is currently based at the Legal Satellite Office, Thaba Tshwane. She is the proud mother of three daughters and matriculated two years after the birth of her youngest daughter. Prior to joining the legal profession she worked as a table-hand/cut-ter/machinist in the clothing and shoe industries for seven years. She has completed her BA (Law), LLB and an Honours Degree in Philosophy. She is currently studying for a Master’s Degree in Fundamental Rights.

For several years she was involved in the establishment and management of numerous organisations that participated in the struggle for a democratic South Africa, such as the Azanian Student Movement at the University of Durban-Westville (1987-1988), the Black Consciousness Movement, Durban and Districts (1988), the Azanian Students Convention as National Vice-Chairperson during 1989, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (1997-2000).

She practised as an attorney for approximately nine years and specialised in human rights litigation. Her decision to join the SANDF Reserve Force in 2002 was a conscious one with the intention of contributing to the transformation process and the whole culture of constitutionalism within the organisation. In April 2004 she was appointed as a Regular Force member from among the ranks of the Reserve Force contingent of the SANDF.

Lt Balakrishna believes in the value of legal positivism which regards law as a system that integrates the norms of both state and society. She sees the weaknesses and problems in society as deficiencies in the existing law. Thus the task of judges is misconstrued as that of technicians to formulate new norms and perfect the existing ones.

She stresses the fact that military judges are guided by basic values, which do not, for example, flow from public opinion surveys nor from populism sweeping our soldiers, although all these things are important because they might permeate the soul of the Defence Force and eventually transform it. In this connection she says: “Until that happens these are not standards that should be guiding judges. Hence the military judge has the obligation to protect the right of each individual soldier and therefore an obligation to protect the military community. Where there is no security for the military community there is no existence for the individual soldier. Securing the former is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of the latter.”

Lt Col Balakrishna advocates the idea of transformative adjudication and takes the view that the legitimacy of this idea does not hinge on the availability of an objective legal method, which enables military judges to apply the law and norms in a neutral and determinate manner. It hinges rather on the capacity of our military judges to become involved in democratic accountability. The question that often strikes the mind of the public and in particular the military public is: How does a military judge who is also a member of the military society, manage to maintain his or her independence and objectivity in the courtroom?

“I am a product of my period and objectivity would not seek to tear me off from my surroundings. It enables me instead to properly formulate the fundamental principles of my period. The purpose of objectivity is to stimulate the military judge to make use of her past, her education, her experience, her faith and her values in order to reflect as truly as possible the fundamental values of the military society. In the same breath the military judge must exercise self-restraint that enables her to separate her personal feelings from the inner feelings of the military society. A military judge who imposes on the military society all that is subjective in her will create tension between herself and her environment. This tension may ultimately damage the status of the military court and the military public’s confidence in it. Although there is not much one can do with only the military public’s confidence in adjudication, without it one cannot do anything.”

She subsequently pointed out that what this meant was that a military judge had to free herself as far as she could from all personal preferences and that the work it dictated neutrality in the process of balancing and a reflection on the deep consensus and shared values of the military society. “The military judge through a process of mental accounting must acknowledge her characteristics and must make a conscious effort not to make a decision on the basis of these subjective traits.”

Lt Col Balakrishna is extremely passionate about her work and sees herself as an agent of meaningful change within the SANDF.
Ugqaliso kwisini kulenkqubo yo bulungisa


Umzuko womfanekiso

(Iiyaqityezelwe kwiphepha lamashumi amane anesihlanu)

noculaculo ngobulungisa ngokwesini naye yakwes. Inta eyo kwa ngale nkqubo kubuka ijoleswe kumadoda nabanthina ngaxesha nye. Umsebenzi ezikudalweni kwenkwenkwenkweyo yaphela ngomhla we 14 April 2003 ngexesha ukwakulawula ngalo inkqubo yapheswa yizibiza ngokwakuba yi (Gender Equity Training Programme). Inkqubo yizibiza ngokwakuba yi (Gender Based Violence Policy) ye SANDF yaphakanyiswa ngaxesha nye.

Unxulumano phakathi kobulungisa ngokwesini kune nengculaza (gender equity & HIV/AIDS.)

Ufundo olwenziywa komahhina qa alwaka namakhumulathathu, amamashumi amanamathathathu ane-sithandathu (1336) awayeye kumahhina qezelo emphakasilimi ekuqeqeshi kubeka phumla le ngokwesini ngaphezu kwakwesini. Emphakasilele amapedekeze amaphumla nzimba ezikulupha ezikhathini ekuphumelele emphakasilele emphakasilele yilonsa kubeka phumla.


Ukuphilelo

* The English translation of this article is available on pages 10 to 11. To obtain a translation of this article or any article published in SA SOLDIER in any one of our official languages, please make use of the professional services rendered by the Directorate Language Services of the DOD. For assistance contact Col Daan Vorster, Director Language Services, at tel no: (012) 392 3176 - Ed.
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