



# Military Despatches

Vol 62 August 2022

## Sayeret Matkal

Israel's Special Forces unit



## The Night Witches

The Soviet all-female night bomber regiment

## The White Mouse

The remarkable story of Nancy Wake

## Air Aces

A few facts about air aces during World War II

*For the military enthusiast*



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**Paratrooper Wings Quiz**

Most military paratroopers are awarded their jump wings after they have qualified.

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Military slang from the SADF and around the world

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**Elite Military Units Quiz**

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Famous military quotes quiz

**Who said that?**

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**Bullpup rifles**

We show you 15 bullpup rifles. You tell us what they are. Easy enough.

**Please remember to subscribe to our channel.**

**Feel free to leave a comment, and share this video.**



## Editor's Sitrep

Here we go, it's August again. The eighth month of the year, and only a month away from Spring.

As I've mentioned before, in every August edition of the magazine, it's always a bit of a strange month for me.

I was born in August, my brother was born in August, and my wife was born in August. It should be a month to celebrate - not so fast.

My mom died in August, my dad died in August, and my brother died in August. Oh, and my wife's mother also died in August. So I must confess that August always makes me a bit nervous.

I recently sold my Series III Land Rover. It was an ex-British Army vehicle that I bought about ten years ago. It had a roof that could be easily removed and had been fitted with a Cosworth V6 engine.

It was fun to drive and I was never once cut off by a taxi. The problem was that it was a thirsty beast and with the price of petrol it cost a fortune to go anywhere with it.

Instead I have purchased a Suzuki DL 650 V-Strom motorcy-

cle. It's a lovely ride, but it does weigh over 200kg. It also costs a lot less to run when it comes to fuel consumption. In a few weeks I may even remove the training wheels from it.

I seem to moan a great deal about the standards of service in this country. Or maybe I should say the lack of service. If anything, it seems to be getting worse.

And it's not just the small businesses that are to blame. Some large corporations and state-owned enterprises are just as bad, if not worse.

This month is, of course, Women's Month. So every August we make sure that we do a few articles about the contribution that women have made to the military. And some of these contributions have been remarkable to say the very least.

I trust that you will enjoy this month's edition.

Until next month, stay safe and stay healthy.

*Matt*

# Hipe! media

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### Front Cover

Female soldiers of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) on a training exercise.

Women have to do two years national service in Israel. The men have to do three years.



# 10 Soviet female pilots

*The debate about whether women should be allowed to take part in combat goes back further than some may realise. Yet throughout history women have taken an active part in combat - either as individuals or as part of a larger group. In this article we look at 10 females during World War II that flew in combat for the Soviet Air Forces.*

August is Women's Month and, with that in mind, a number of our female writers have asked whether we will be doing any articles that focus on women and their role in the military.

Warfare has always been a very male-dominated affair. Many men still believe that members of the fairer sex do not belong on the battlefield.

Yet throughout history there have been women that have taken part in combat. Some of them have even led men into battle.

Take someone like Boudicca for example. Her husband was the king of the Iceni people in Britain. At the time Britain had been conquered by the Romans.

When the king died he left half of his kingdom to Emperor Nero, as per Nero's agreement with the king, and the other half was left to his two young daughters.

Nero, however, decided that he wanted the entire kingdom. When Queen Boudicca protested the Romans had her flogged in public and her two daughters were raped. A really bad mistake by the Romans.

She led a rebellion against the Roman Empire in 60 A.D. and wreaked havoc. She defeated the powerful Roman Ninth Le-

gion and destroyed the capital at Colchester, as well as Verulamium (St. Albans) and Londinium (London).

She was eventually defeated, but not before teaching Nero and the Roman Empire a lesson.

Joan of Arc was another woman warrior that led men in battle. While still a teenager she believed that God had chosen her to save her country during the Hundred Years' War. She then went on to command the French Army in its victory over the English forces at Orleans in 1429, and led King Charles VII to his coronation.

Turning to more modern times, Dr. Mary E. Walker was a contract surgeon during the US Civil War. She became the first, and only, woman to be awarded the Medal of Honour, America's highest award for bravery.

During World War I, Russia created the Woman's Battalion, which attracted thousands of volunteers who saw action against the Germans on the front line.

During World War II the Russians again turned to women soldiers. Many of them were used as snipers and pilots.

In this article we take a look at ten of those female warriors of the skies.



## Raisa Belyaeva

Raisa Vasilyevna Belyayeva was one of the first Russian female fighter pilots and was credited with up to three aerial victories.

Belyayeva attended a technical institute for tanners in Kirov. After graduation she asked her old friend Olga Yamshchikova, a Leningrad flight instructor, to teach her to fly.

Belyayeva soon proved herself an enthusiastic and more than capable pilot. Before the war, she accumulated more than a 1,000 hours flight time and a hundred parachute jumps, instructing hundreds of parachutists. She also took part in many airshows over Tushino airfield, near Moscow.

She took part in the Battle of Stalingrad and flew as an escort

pilot for Nikita Khrushchev.

"Her fighter plane handling technique is excellent. She flies boldly and confidently. She is not put out by difficult weather conditions, and she flies well in formation."

This was the assessment made of Senior Lieutenant Raisa Belyayeva, squadron commander of the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment, in a decree awarding her the Order of the Red Banner.

In the Battle of Stalingrad, she shot down a Messerschmitt Bf 109 in a group attack.

On 19 July 1943, she was badly injured in the skies over Voronezh and died when landing her plane at an airfield.



## Klavdiya Blinova

Several months after the German invasion of the Soviet Union Blinova voluntarily joined the Red Army to join the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment.

After brief training at Engels Military Aviation School the unit was the first of the three women's aviation regiments de-

ployed to combat, having been tasked with defensive aerial operations in Saratov.

Although they were trained to fly the Yak-1 fighter, she and several other women pilots in the regiment were transferred to fight in the Battle of Stalingrad to regiments that used other aircraft.

She was credited with shooting down three German bombers.

On 4 August 1943, Blinova's Yak-1 was shot down. She bailed out with a parachute and was captured by the Germans. On the way to Germany, she managed to escape with a group of POWs and reached friendly lines.

After passing all the checks, Klavdiya Mikhailovna returned to the front and was present at the Victory in Berlin.

She died on 4 August 1988 at the age of 67.



## Yekaterina Budanova

Yekaterina Budanova was one of two female fighter aces, credited with five kills. Accord-

ing to records, she ended up with 11 victories (six individual and five shared).

After the German attack on the USSR in June 1941, she enlisted in military aviation and was assigned to the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment, formed by Marina Raskova. This unit consisted entirely of female pilots and was equipped with Yak-1.

From October until January 1943 Budanova and Litvyak served in the Stalingrad area with the elite 9th Guards Fighter Regiment, commanded by Lev Shestakov, a Hero of Soviet Union. This regiment consisted either of aces or people considered potential aces.

On 19 July 1943, aged 26, Budanova was shot down and killed either by Luftwaffe ace Georg Schwientek or ace Emil Bitsch.



## Galina Burdina

When she was 17, Burdina started to learn how to fly gliders and went on to study at the civil aviation pilot school

in Ulyanovsk. She then began to work as a pilot instructor in Sverdlovsk.

In September 1941, her school was converted to a military pilots school and Burdina continued to train the military pilots.

Along with the other two female instructors from the school, she volunteered for the military. With 24 hours' notice, she was ordered to Moscow. Burdina was posted to a base in Engels, Saratov Oblast.

Upon arrival, she was informed by Marina Raskova that she was to train to become a fighter pilot. When Burdina was posted to the front following training, it was alongside Tamara Pamyatnykh as night fighters in the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment in support of bombers and acting as scouts.

Burdina also flew bombing and strafing missions, including against Romanian targets.

Because of her curly blonde hair, she was later recognized by a Romanian pilot after the Soviet occupation of Romania, as Burdina had flown so close to the ground that her features were remembered.

Following the war she flew for Aeroflot for 15 years before becoming an air traffic controller. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, she lived in Riga, Latvia as a stateless person until her death on 25 November 2006 at the age of 87.



### Valeria Khomyakova

Khomyakova began flying at the local flying club and became certified as a flight instructor.

In 1942, during Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, Khomyakova joined the Soviet Air Force. She became one of the first female fighter pilots of the Soviet Union, quickly reaching the rank of senior lieutenant, and was assigned to the 586th Air Defence Regiment, an air defence regiment of all-female fighter pilots.

On 24 September, 1942, while flying night patrol over Saratov in a Yak-1, Khomyakova shot down a Junkers Ju 88 of the German Luftwaffe flown by Oberstleutnant Gerhard Maak, a decorated bomber pilot of KG 76. She became the first female to shoot down an enemy in a night battle.

On 6 October 1942, two weeks after she had been awarded the Order of the Red Banner, Khomyakova was asleep in her dugout. She had just returned from flying a mission and was

exhausted.

She was awoken by her superior, Major Tamara Kazarinova, and ordered to fly another mission. This was despite the fact that her condition made her temporarily unfit for duty.

She crashed during the take-off and was killed. She was just 28 years old at the time.

Due to Khomyakova's death, Kazarinova was relieved of duty by General Mikhail Gromadin.



### Antonina Lebedeva

While studying biology at the University of Moscow, Lebedeva joined the Dzerzhinsky flying club in Moscow, and worked her way up to instructor.

In 1941 Lebedeva joined the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment and after earning her fighter designation she was transferred to the 434th Fighter Aviation Regiment.

She took part in the Battle of Stalingrad until 3 October 1942, when she was transferred to participate in the upcoming Velikie-Luki Offensive.

In December 1942, Lebedeva and her wingmate were both shot down shortly after having shot down a German plane, which she survived and quickly returned to fighting.

In early May 1943, Lebedeva was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, and on 9 May she was transferred to the 65th Guards Fighter Aviation Regiment to fight at the Bryansk front.

On July 12, Lebedeva was sent to fight in the Battle of Kursk as part of a Soviet offensive. During an evening battle on 17 July 1943, while flying a combat mission with three other fighters, Lebedeva and her comrades were ambushed by a group of 30 German planes. Lebedeva and her comrades were quickly overwhelmed and shot down, went missing and were presumed dead. Lebedeva was 27 years old at the time.

In 1982, a group of school children from Oryol were investigating reports regarding the site of a crash in the village of Betovo in Bolhovsky District, Oryol Oblast, when they discovered the remains of a pilot, along with a parachute, pistol, knife and documents.

Investigations later revealed that the remains were indeed those of Antonina Lebedeva. The former commander of the 1st Guards Fighter Air Corps, Lieutenant-General Yevgeny Beletsky, attended the reburial service of Lebedeva.



### Lydia Litvyak

Lydia Litvyak, also known as Lilya, is considered to be the greatest female ace in history.

In about two years of operations, she was the first female fighter pilot to shoot down an enemy aircraft, the first of two female fighter pilots who have earned the title of fighter ace and the holder of the record for the greatest number of kills by a female fighter pilot.

Lydia became interested in aviation at an early age. At 14, she enrolled in a flying club. She performed her first solo flight at 15, and later graduated from the Kherson military flying school.

She became a flight instructor at Kalinin Airclub, and by the time the German-Soviet war broke out, had already trained 45 pilots.

After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, Litvyak tried to join a military aviation unit, but was turned down because of lack of experience.

After deliberately exaggerating her pre-war flight time by 100 hours, she joined the all-female 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment of the Air Defence Force, which was formed by Marina Raskova. She trained there on the Yakovlev Yak-1 aircraft.

Litvyak flew her first combat flights in the summer of 1942 over Saratov. In September, she was assigned to the 437 Fighter Regiment, a men's regiment fighting over Stalingrad.

Her first kill was a Ju 88 which fell in flames from the sky after several bursts. Then she shot down a Bf 109 G-2 flown by 11 victory ace Staff Sergeant Erwin Meier of the 2nd Staffel of Jagdgeschwader 53.

On 13 June 1943, Litvyak was appointed flight commander of the 3rd Aviation Squadron within 73rd Guards Fighter Aviation Regiment.

On 1 August 1, 1943, Litvyak did not come back to her base at Krasnyy Luch. It was her fourth sortie of the day, escorting a flight of Ilyushin Il-2 ground-attack aircraft.

As the Soviets were returning to base near Orel, a pair of Bf 109 fighters dove on Litvyak while she was attacking a large group of German bombers.

One of the Soviet pilots, Ivan Borisenko, involved in the dogfight, saw her the last time, through a gap in the clouds, her Yak-1 pouring smoke and pursued by as many as eight Bf 109s.

Borisenko descended to see if he could find her. No parachute

was seen, and no explosion, yet she never returned from the mission. Litvyak was 21 years old.

Soviet authorities suspected that she might have been captured, a possibility that prevented them from awarding her the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

After a 36 year investigation it was assumed that Litvyak had been killed in action after sustaining a mortal head wound.

On 6 May 1990, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev posthumously awarded her the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

She underwent further flight training in Engels, Saratov Oblast in October 1941, and was subsequently assigned to the 586th Fighter Squadron alongside other female aces such as Lydia Litvyak, and worked as a duo with Galina Burdina.

For her various acts of heroism, Pamyatnykh was awarded the Order of the Red Banner and given a gold watch by King George VI of the United Kingdom.

In 1944, she married Nikolai Chasnyk, a Hero of the Soviet Union and deputy squadron commander in the 148th Guards Fighter Aviation Regiment.

Pamyatnykh later went on to become the chairman of the women's war veterans' commission.

She died on 26 July 2012 at the age of 92.



**Tamara Pamyatnykh**

Pamyatnykh began flying gliders at 16, and soon qualified for a private pilot's license and instructor's certificate at the flight school in Ulyanovsk. When the Second World War began, she signed up for the Soviet forces.

When Marina Raskova was asked to recruit female pilots in 1941, Pamyatnykh was sufficiently well known as a pilot that she was specifically approached.



**Zuleykha Seyidmammadova**

She was one of the first Azerbaijani female pilots and the first Azerbaijani woman to fly in combat.

During World War II she was the regimental navigator of the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment, one of the three wom-

en's military aviation regiments founded by Marina Raskova.

Throughout the war, she fought in over 40 aerial battles and carried out over 500 missions. During the war she would inform the commissar as well as Tamara Kazarinova, the commander of her regiment, about the pilots attitudes towards their leadership.

After the war she was demobilized and in 1952 she became the Minister of Social Security of the Azerbaijan SSR. She died on 10 November 1994 at the age of 75.



**Raisa Surnachevskaya**

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 she volunteered to join a women's aviation regiment founded by Marina Raskova and underwent training to fly Yakovlev Yak-1 fighters at Engels military Aviation School.

She was one of the very few pregnant women to have flown in combat.

She died on 18 December 2005 at the age of 83.



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**“War does not determine who is right - only who is left”**

# Special Force Training - Sayeret Matkal

In our eighth article on Special Forces selection and training, we look at Israel's Sayeret Matkal - the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit.

The General Staff Reconnaissance Unit (formerly Unit 269 or Unit 262), more commonly known as Sayeret Matkal, is the special reconnaissance unit (sayeret) of Israel's General Staff (matkal). It is the prime special forces

unit of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

First and foremost a field intelligence-gathering unit, conducting deep reconnaissance behind enemy lines to obtain strategic intelligence, Sayeret Matkal is also tasked with counter-terrorism and hostage rescue beyond Israel's borders.

The unit is modelled after the British Army's Special Air Service (SAS), taking the unit's motto "Who Dares Wins".

The unit is the Israeli equivalent of the U.S. Army's 1st SFOD-D (Delta Force).

It is directly subordinate to the Special Operations Branch of the IDF's Directorate of Military Intelligence.

## History

In 1954, Israel's first special operations unit - Unit 101 - was disbanded following the outcry provoked by the Qibya massacre.

This left the IDF without a dedicated special-forces unit other than the Navy's Shayetet 13, a naval commando unit that could not fully replace Unit 101.

In 1957, Major Avraham

Arnan, a former yeshiva student and Palmach fighter, petitioned the IDF General Staff to create a unit that could be dispatched to enemy-held territory to carry out top secret intelligence-gathering missions.

Arnan's idea (backed by David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Rabin) was to create a unit that would recruit only the best and the brightest of Israeli youth.

Prospective fighters were to be hand-picked, being physically and intellectually the best soldiers available.

Originally part of Aman's Unit 154 (Unit 504 in present), Sayeret Matkal began to operate independently a year later as the General Staff's special operations force, modelled after the British Special Air Service.

Members of the unit were trained by Bedouin trackers in order to obtain a better understanding of their adversaries.

Established a year after the formation of Israel's first helicopter squadron, the close co-operation between the two units allowed Sayeret Matkal to deploy longer and deeper inside Arab territory than its predecessor.

Arnan's vision for Sayeret Matkal (of which he was the first commander) was of a unit that would carry out strategic intelligence-gathering and other operations; as such it would receive its missions only from the General Staff.

Sayeret Matkal would also evaluate new weapons and doc-

trines that could influence the entire IDF.

Although a top-secret unit, Sayeret Matkal had tremendous influence on the IDF. It was the original developer of helicopter infiltration techniques in Israel.

In addition, their extensive use of the Uzi led them to convince Israel Military Industries to produce an Uzi with a folding stock for increased accuracy while maintaining its small frame.

In 2015, the unit received an honourable mention for its activities during Operation Protective Edge.

## Recruitment & Selection

The unit was kept top-secret during its initial years and its mere existence was never officially acknowledged until the 1980s.

Most of its operations and capabilities are considered classified to this day. Fighters and commanders were selectively hand-picked, based on personal acquaintances and referrals.

Since the 1970s, while still secretive, the unit opened to voluntary recruits. Twice a year it holds a notoriously gruelling selection camp (*Gibbush*) for potential recruits lasting several sleepless days.

To join Sayeret Matkal, one must be usually born in Israel. Candidates must undergo physical fitness testing, medical testing, and intelligence testing, before being able to join *Yom Sayarot* (Pre-Selection Phase), which is followed by *Gibbush Matkal* (Selection or Qualification Course), lasting five days and then the Advanced Basic Training Course.

The physical requirements are tough and a large percentage of those that apply to join the unit do not make it.

During Yom Sayarot, the test that decides the fate of each candidate, the candidates will undergo arduous training.

This phase is followed by five days of testing. Candidates will run up the sand dunes and down numerous times, never told when this testing will stop. They will carry jerry cans up the dunes, participate in group activities carrying stretchers and sandbags up the dune, and so on.

They will dig holes and build tents to sleep in, as group activities. During the whole process the staff, the cadre, will closely observe the candidates. They are looking for genuine teamwork.

Furthermore, Candidates under time pressure, sleep-deprived, have to dismantle and put weapons back together. They want those candidates who never give up, but who are also honest and genuine and team players.

Of course, physical fitness is very important, but it's not the decisive factor. Decisive factors are the overall performance, the units and the military needs at this point, the candidate's medical condition, and an evaluation questionnaire that all candidates have to fill out at the end of the five days.

The recruits are constantly monitored by doctors and psychologists. Those who make it through with a passing grade are admitted. During the 1990s, this selection practice was picked up by other IDF special



forces (Sayeret).

## Training

Once admitted to the unit, the recruits' training lasts for about two years, with heavy emphasis on small arms, martial arts, navigation, camouflage, reconnaissance, and other skills required for survival behind enemy lines.

They must also complete the 120–150-kilometre Beret March in the final four days to receive their red beret. Those who pass through training are brought to the mountain fortress of Masada. There, they are greeted by cheering veterans of the unit and receive a helicopter visit from the Israeli Chief of Staff.

The training regime consists of the following:

- Four months of basic infantry training, held in the Paratroopers basic training base; it is part of the regular Paratroopers basic training routine.
- Two months advanced infantry training, within the unit.
- Three weeks parachuting course in the IDF Parachuting School.



- Five weeks counter-terror (CT) course in the IDF Counter-Terror Warfare School, followed by more inner-unit CT training.
- The rest of the training is dedicated to long-range reconnaissance patrol training, and especially to navigation/orienteering, which is of vast importance in the unit. While most of the orienteering training is done in pairs for safety reasons, as in every other unit in the IDF, Sayeret Matkal is one of the handful of IDF units which conducts long-range solo navigation exercises.



**DRESS REHEARSAL:** Members of the Sayeret Matkal team that took part in Operation Thunderbolt carry out final rehearsals for the mission.

Toward the end of their training, Sayeret Matkal recruits, along with recruits for other special forces units and pilot cadets, undergo a two-week course in enduring captivity.

After a surprise mock kidnapping, they are held in prison-like conditions and subjected to interrogation, threats, and physical violence, and forced to perform demeaning activities.

Today, all the soldiers in the unit undergo officer's course at the end of their training and move on to hold positions in the unit as well as other IDF units.

The combat soldiers are required to sign on for an additional 36 months in addition to their mandatory service term. Most of the combat soldiers will commence an undergraduate university degree towards the end of their service.

Although Sayeret Matkal has its own insignia, it is also one of only two units in the IDF, the other being Duvdevan, whose soldiers are not allowed to wear it in public due to its classified

nature.

This lack of insignia often leads to Sayeret Matkal operators being recognized as such, as the fact that Matkal troopers don't wear insignia is well known.

### Notable members and operations

Sayeret Matkal veterans have gone on to achieve high positions in Israel's military and political echelons. Several have become IDF Generals and members of the Knesset.

Ehud Barak's career is an example: a draftee in 1959, he later succeeded Unit 101 commando Lt. Meir Har-Zion in becoming Israel's most decorated soldier. While with Sayeret Matkal, Barak led operations Isotope in 1972 and Spring of Youth in 1973.

He later advanced in his military career to become the IDF Chief of Staff between 1991 and 1995. In 1999 he became the 10th Prime Minister of Israel.

Probably the most famous operation carried out by Sayeret

Matkal was Operation Thunderbolt - the successful counter-terrorist hostage-rescue mission carried out by the Unit at Entebbe Airport in Uganda on 4 July 1976.

A week earlier, on 27 June, an Air France Airbus A300 jet airliner with 248 passengers had been hijacked.

After several stop-overs, the aircraft landed at Entebbe, the main airport for Uganda.

The Ugandan government supported the hijackers, and dictator Idi Amin, who had been informed of the hijacking from the beginning, personally welcomed them.

Over the following two days, 148 non-Israeli hostages were released and flown out to Paris. Ninety-four, mainly Israeli, passengers along with the 12-member Air France crew, remained as hostages and were threatened with death.

Israeli transport planes carried 100 commandos over 4,000 kilometres to Uganda to carry out the rescue mission.



## Bullpup Rifles

Last month in our Head-to-Head section we looked at bullpup rifles. This month it's time to test your memory. We show you 15 bullpup rifles, and you tell us which rifles they are. You can even use last month's issue to check the rifles out. Answers on page 82.

1		2		3	
4		5		6	
7		8		9	
10		11		12	
13		14		15	



# The Night Witches

The 588th Night Bomber Regiment became a crucial Soviet asset during World War II. They flew nearly 24,000 combat missions and dropped more than 23,000 tons of bombs on German targets. They were both hated and feared by the Germans. And they were an all female regiment.

The Germans nicknamed them the *Nachthexen*, or 'night witches', and they were so feared and hated by the Nazis that any German airman who downed one was automatically awarded the Iron Cross medal.

They flew under the cover of darkness in bare-bones plywood biplanes. They braved bullets and frostbite in the air, while battling skepticism and sexual harassment on the ground.

During World War II they flew 23,672 combat sorties and dropped more than 23,000 tons of bombs, and 26,000 incendiary shells on Nazi targets. They were the 588th Night Bomber Regiment - and they were all female.

## The Soviet Amelia Earhart

Marina Raskova was not only the first female navigator in the Soviet Air Force, she also held numerous records for long distance flights. In fact she was known as the 'Soviet Amelia Earhart'.

Women across the Soviet Union had been sending her letters. They all wanted to join the war effort. Many had lost brothers, sweethearts or even husbands while others had seen their homes and villages ravaged by the Germans.

While women had been allowed to participate in support roles, many of them wanted to be pilots or gunners. They

wanted to take an active part in combat and were not content with merely playing a supporting role.

Raskova decided to petition Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin and ask for permission to form an all-female fighting squadron.

Using female pilots in combat wasn't a first choice. While women had been previously barred from combat, the pressure of an encroaching enemy gave Soviet leaders a reason to rethink the policy.

Adolf Hitler had launched Operation Barbarossa, his massive invasion of the Soviet Union, in June 1941. By the fall the Germans were pressing on Moscow, Leningrad was under siege and the Red Army was struggling. The Soviets were desperate.

On 8 October 1941 Stalin gave orders for three all-female air force units to be deployed.

## Training begins

The Soviet Union was the first nation to officially allow women to engage in combat. Marina Raskova wanted to take full advantage of this fact and began to recruit her teams.

She selected 400 women from the more than 2,000 applications she received. Their ages ranged from 17 to 26.

Those selected then moved to Engels, a small town north of Stalingrad. They underwent a highly compressed training

schedule at Engels School of Aviation. They were expected to learn in months what it took others years to grasp. Each recruit had to train and perform as pilots, navigators, maintenance and ground crew.

## Into action

They were originally known as the 588th Night Bomber Regiment. Later they would become the 46th "Taman" Guards Night Bomber Aviation Regiment, of the Soviet Air Forces. Yevdokia Bershanskaya became the regiment's commanding officer.

The steep learning curve in their training wasn't the only problem facing the regiment. There was open scepticism from many of the male military personnel who believed that the women added no value to the combat effort. The men didn't like 'little girls' at the front line. After all, war was a man's job, wasn't it.

Raskova did her best to prepare her women for these attitudes, but they still faced sexual harassment, long nights and gruelling conditions.

Another glaring problem was that the Soviet Air Force was not prepared for women pilots. They had no uniforms available and the women had to make down with hand-me-down uniforms from the men. It was difficult to find boots that were the right size and the women had to



**NIGHT WITCHES:** Pilots of the 588th Night Bomber Regiment are given a briefing before setting out on a mission.

tear up their bedding and stuff them into the boots, just to get them to fit.

The equipment they were given to use was not much better. The Soviet Air Force provided them with outdated Polikarpov Po-2 biplanes. These light two-seater, open-cockpit planes were never meant for combat, they were crop dusters from the 1920s and had been used as training vehicles.

The Polikarpov Po-2 was made out of plywood with canvas pulled over, the aircraft offered virtually no protection from the elements. Flying at night, pilots endured freezing temperatures, wind and frostbite. In the harsh Soviet winters, the planes became so cold, just touching them would rip off bare skin.

Due to both the planes' limited weight capacity and the military's limited funds, the pilots also lacked other "luxury" items their male counterparts enjoyed. Instead of parachutes (which were too heavy to carry), radar, guns and radios, they were forced to use more rudimentary tools such as rulers,

stopwatches, flashlights, pencils, maps and compasses.

There was, however, a plus side to those old aircraft. Their maximum speed was slower than the stall speed of the Nazi planes, which meant these wooden planes, ironically, could manoeuvre faster than the enemy, making them hard to target.

## Tactics

The Polikarpov Po-2 could only carry a single bomb under each wing. The regiment would

sent out up to 40 two-person crews at night. Each crew would carry out between eight and 18 missions per night. They would drop their bombs before heading back to re-arm before setting out once more.

The weight of the bombs forced them to fly at lower altitudes, making them a much easier target. This was why they could only fly missions at night.

Each plane would carry a pilot in front, with a navigator behind her. They would fly in packs, and only at night.

The first planes would go in and act as bait. They would attract German searchlights which provided much needed illumination. The navigator would then release a flare to light up the intended target.

The following planes would cut their engines to an idle and glide in darkness to the target before releasing their bombs.

German soldiers likened the sound of these gliding aircraft to broomsticks and named the pilots *Nachthexen* - Night Witches.



**FLYING COFFIN:** The Night Witches flew the Polikarpov Po-2, which was nicknamed the 'Flying Coffin'. Constructed from plywood and canvas it would often catch fire if hit by tracers.



**LEGENDS:** From left to right: **Marina Raskova** was known as the Soviet Amelia Earhart, she started the 588th Night Bomber Regiment. **Yevdokia Bershanskaya** was the regimental commander of the 46th Taman Guards Night Bomber Aviation Regiment during World War II and became the only woman ever awarded the Order of Suvorov. **Irina Sebrova** flew 1,008 sorties in the war and was awarded the title 'Hero of the Soviet Union'.

The Night Witches had 12 commandments that they followed, and the first one was "be proud you are a woman."

While killing Germans was their job, a job they did very well, when they were off duty they behaved as most women their age did. They enjoyed needlework, patchwork, decorating their planes, listening to music, and dancing. They even put the pencils they used for navigation into double duty as eye liner.

### Their record

They became the most highly decorated unit in the Soviet Air Force during the war.

In total the regiment collectively accumulated 28,676 flight hours, flew 23,672 combat sorties, dropped over 3,000 tons of bombs and over 26,000 incendiary shells, damaging or completely destroying 17 river crossings, nine railways, two railway stations, 26 warehouses, 12 fuel depots, 176 armored cars, 86 firing points, and 11

searchlights. In addition to bombings the unit performed 155 supply drops of food and ammunition to Soviet forces.

A total of 261 people served in the regiment, of which 32 died of various causes including plane crashes, combat deaths and tuberculosis in addition to 28 aircraft written off.

Twenty-three personnel from the regiment were awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union, two were awarded Hero of the Russian Federation, and one was awarded Hero of Kazakhstan.

Nadia Popova was one of the first female military pilots in the Soviet Union, and also one of the most highly decorated. She was awarded the title 'Hero of the Soviet Union', the Gold Star Medal, the Order of Lenin, three Orders of the Red Star in Second World War, and three Orders of the Patriotic War.

Marina Raskova, the mother of the movement, died on 4 January 1943, when she was fi-

nally sent to the front line - her plane never made it. She was given the very first state funeral of World War II and her ashes were buried in the Kremlin.

### An inglorious end

They flew their last mission on 4 May 1945, operating within 60 kilometres of Berlin, during the Vistula-Oder Offensive. Three days later, Germany officially surrendered.

Five months later, despite being the most decorated unit in the Soviet Air Force, the Night Witches Regiment was disbanded without ceremony and service members were demobilized.

And when it came to the big victory-day parade in Moscow after the war, the Night Witches were not included. It was decided that their planes were too slow to take part in the parade.

Their determination and dedication proved that not only could women cope with war, they could excel at it.

# Is it worth anything?

Many readers that served in the military probably still have old kit packed away in a cupboard. The type of stuff that we never use. Yet, according to **Matt O'Brien**, some of it may be worth quite a bit of money.

**B**ack in 1982 I flew across to the United States to attend a three-day military collectables fare. Events such as this are held regularly across America.

With me I took a pair of jeans, a tee-shirt, a tracksuit top, a pair of shoes, three pairs of underpants and three pairs of socks.

I was allowed to take 30kg of luggage and I had two suitcases that were filled with Rhodesian camouflage that I had purchased for R500. It was stuff such as shirts, pants, caps and bush-jackets.

I was hoping that I could sell some of it at the collectables fare. I had paid \$30 for a small stall. The fare opened to the public at 9.00 on a Friday morning. By midday I was sold out.

Did I make any money from it? Let's just say that it paid for my return airfare, accommodation, meals and I spent an extra week in the States. Plus I still brought back quite a few dollars with me.

The buying and selling of



military collectables is a huge business. Many individuals and companies make a living through buying and selling military collectables. Their policy is buy for as little as possible - sell for as much as possible.

Private collectors will also pay a small fortune for something that they want for their collection.

Recently a FP-42 Liberator pistol was sold for R42,336. The Liberator was a World War II single-shot pistol designed for resistance forces in occupied territories.

A British 1907 sword pattern bayonet sells for around R15,000 while a *Luftwaffe* paratrooper knife is about R10,000.

A black and white photograph of Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, that had been signed by him, sold for R18,000.

Now you probably don't have anything like this sitting in a cupboard somewhere, but you do possibly have old military kit that could bring you in a few bucks.

A Rhodesian bushjacket is worth about R1,000. Your army sleeping bag will get you in the region of R360. Even a set of *vark panne* could fetch R100.

A set of shoulder flashes go for anything between R40 and R800, depending on the unit. The same goes for berets with badges.

Some stuff will obviously



bring in more money. Anything to do with Special Forces is worth a bit. For example, an old SADF Parachute Jump Jacket, nicknamed a *slangvel*, (pictured above) costs around R3,500.

If you do have something that you feel might be of value and you want to sell it, there are a few things that you may want to consider.

First of all, be careful about taking it in to a second-hand shop or even military collectables dealer. Remember, they pay as little as possible.

Rather do a bit of research on the Internet and see what prices are being offered for what you have. This will at least give you a ballpark figure of what you might ask for it.

Don't forget to look at military collector sites in the USA. They will normally offer far more for what you have. This is one time where the Rand-Dollar exchange rate works in your favour.

# Hang on, I know her...

Many celebrities and famous figures have served in the military. And many of them were women. Here are just a few that you've probably heard of.

Very few people are born famous. Unless you were born into a 'Royal Family' or had famous parents, then fame normally comes later in life.

Many of us knew people before they became famous. The plain looking girl that used to live next door grows up to become an international super model. The guy that sat next to you in class later become a rock star.

It's also interesting to see how many famous people once served in the military. Of course some of them were already famous when they did their military service. Yet many only became famous after serving.

As it is Women's Month, we're going to look at a few celebrities and famous women that served in the Armed Forces.

## Queen Elizabeth II

Queen Elizabeth II needs little introduction. Born on 21 April 1926, she is now 96 years old.

In 1953, at the age of 25, she became the Queen of the United Kingdom. This year, 2022, she celebrated her Platinum jubilee. This made her the longest reigning monarch in British history.

Yet many do not know that she also served in the British Armed Forces.

In February 1945, at the age of 18, she begged her father, King George VI, to take part in helping out with the war effort.

She joined the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service in England that same year, and was known as "Second Subaltern Elizabeth Windsor."

While serving, the young princess drove military trucks and trained as a mechanic - making her, to this day, the only female member of the Royal Family to enter the armed forces.

## Bea Arthur

For many of us she will also be best remembered as Dorothy Zbornak on the award-winning television sitcom "The Golden Girls".

Yet before going on to become an Emmy Award-winning actress Bea Arthur was a US Marine.

In early 1943, at the age of 21, she enlisted in the US Marine Corps under her original name, Bernice Frankel.

Her superiors described her conversation as 'argumentative' and her attitude and manner as 'over aggressive'. In a handwritten note, the Marine interviewer remarked, "Officious, but probably a good worker - if she has her own way!"

She was one of the first members of the Women's Reserve and, aside from driving military trucks, Arthur was also a typist.

She worked her way through the ranks from private to corporal, sergeant, and finally, staff sergeant. In September 1945 she received an honourable dis-

charge. She married a fellow Marine, Private Robert Arthur, shortly afterwards, and changed her name to Bea Arthur before enrolling in the Dramatic Workshop of the New School in New York in 1947.

## Eileen Collins

From an early age Eileen Collins had a fascination with aircraft and flying.

She joined the Air Force in 1978, becoming one of the first four women to go through pilot training at Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Oklahoma.

She wrote in *Time*, "The Air Force was testing whether women could succeed as military pilots. We obviously were living in a fish bowl - everyone knew who we were, our personal business, our test scores and our flight performance. My philosophy was to be the best pilot I could be."

She served as a T-38 flight instructor until 1982. From 1983 to 1985 she was a C-141 Starlifter aircraft commander and instructor pilot. She was assistant professor of mathematics and T-41 instructor pilot at the Air Force Academy from 1986 to 1989 and graduated from the Air Force Test Pilot School in 1990.

While attending the Test Pilot School, Collins was selected by NASA for the astronaut program and became an astronaut in July 1991.

In 1995 Collins, now a colo-



**A REAL STAR:** US Air Force test pilot, Colonel Eileen Collins became the first woman to pilot a space shuttle, and the first woman shuttle commander.

nel, became the first woman to pilot a space shuttle and in 1999 she was the first woman shuttle commander. She has over 5,000 hours in 30 different types of aircraft and has spent over 537 hours in space.

After four successful shuttle missions, Collins retired in 2006.

## Jennifer Marshall

'Stranger Things' is a hit television series on Netflix. Jennifer Marshall plays the role of Susan Hargrove. She previously starred in series such as 'NCIS' and 'Hawaii Five-0'.

Prior to her acting career she served in the United States Navy from the ages of 17 to 22.

During her time in the service she was a forklift operator, aircraft handler, and logistics specialist, and also worked for the USS Theodore Roosevelt's Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI) program.

Marshall was awarded many honours and medals for her time in the Navy. Now, in addition to acting, she works with Pin-Ups For Vets, a non-profit organization that aids hospitalized veterans and deployed troops.

## Dr Ruth

At the age of 10, as the Nazis came to power, Ruth Westheimer's parents sent her to an orphanage in Switzerland for safety. It was a decision that saved her life.

Her parents were subsequently arrested by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp where they were later killed.

After the war ended Ruth immigrated to British-controlled Mandatory Palestine.

At the age of 17 she joined the Haganah, the Zionist paramilitary organization. Because of her height, she was only 4 feet 7 inches (1.39 metres) tall, she was trained as a scout and

as a sniper. By all accounts she was an excellent sniper.

On her 20th birthday, Westheimer was seriously wounded in action by an exploding shell during a mortar fire attack on Jerusalem during the 1947 - 1949 Palestine war, and almost lost both of her feet.

Two years later she moved to France and studied psychology at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Immigrating to the United States in 1956, she worked as a maid to put herself through graduate school, earned an M.A. degree in sociology from The New School in 1959, and earned a doctorate at 42 years of age from Teachers College, Columbia University in 1970.

She launched a television show, *The Dr. Ruth Show*, which by 1985 attracted two million viewers a week. She became known for giving serious advice while being candid, but also warm, cheerful, funny, and respectful. She is the author of 45 books on sex and sexuality.

## Ann E. Dunwoody

The first woman to serve as a four-star general in both the Army and the U.S. armed forces, General Ann E. Dunwoody joined the Army in 1974, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Women's Army Corps in 1975.

Her first assignment was as supply platoon leader, 226th Maintenance Company (Forward, Direct Support), 100th Supply and Services Battalion (Direct Support), Fort Sill, Okla.

Her biggest impact was as commander of the Army Materiel Command, or AMC, one

of the largest commands in the Army, employing more than 69,000 employees across all 50 states and 145 countries.

## Grace Murray Hopper

Known as “Amazing Grace,” Commodore Hopper’s importance in U.S. naval history is apparent everywhere you turn: a destroyer was named after her (USS Hopper, DDG-70), as was the Cray XE6 “Hopper” super-computer.

As founder of the COBOL programming language, a precursor to many of the software code approaches of today, her work is legendary among computer scientists and mathematicians.

She mastered the Mark I, Mark II, and Mark III computers. While trying to repair the Mark I she discovered a moth caught in a relay. She taped the moth in the log book and from that coined the phrase “a bug in the computer”.

## Gal Gadot

At the age of 18 she was crowned Miss Israel 2004. Two years later, at the age of 20, she reported for her compulsory two years national service in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) where she served as a Combat Fitness Instructor.

After completing her military service she went on to become an international model, gracing the front covers of many popular magazines.

In 2017, Gadot was placed at number one on FHM’s “100 Sexiest Women in the World” list. The following year she became a brand ambassador for Revlon and Reebok.



**WONDER WOMAN:** Model, actress, and former Miss Israel, Gal Gadot did two years national service in the Israeli Defence Force where she served as a combat fitness instructor.

Gadot is also a black belt in both karate and krav maga and an avid martial artist.

In 2009 she was offered the role of Gisele Yashar in the movie ‘The Fast and the Furious’. Director Justin Lin offered her the role because he was impressed with her military background and her knowledge of weapons.

Since then she has gone on to star in 19 movies with her most famous role being that of Wonder Woman in the 2017 movie of the same name.

## Tammy Duckworth

Senator Tammy Duckworth, is an Iraq War veteran who lost both legs in 2004 when the Black Hawk helicopter she was flying was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

When she was elected to Congress in 2012, she became the first disabled female to do so.

She retired from the Army National Guard as a lieutenant

colonel in 2014.

## Christy Wise

Major Christy Wise attended the United States Air Force Academy and, in 2009, commissioned as an officer in the United States Air Force and in 2011, she received her pilot wings to fly the HC-130.

On 11 April 2015 she was visiting her friends for the weekend in Destin, Florida and she was on her paddleboard in a protected cove behind her friends’ house when she was struck by a hit-and-run boat driver.

Although Christy’s life was miraculously saved, she lost her right leg above the knee in the incident.

Christy was determined not to let this change her life so she fought to stay in the Air Force and continue flying. In July 2016, she became the 6th Air Force pilot (and first female) to return to flying after an amputation.

# The first repeating rifle

*In 1860 Christopher Spencer introduced a rifle that was set to change the face of warfare. Yet the American military authorities were not to thrilled about the idea.*

Early warfare was very much an up-close and personal affair. You needed to be close enough to your opponent to club him or stab him.

Then the spear was introduced. You could now throw a weapon at an opponent before he got close enough to engage you. Of course if you missed, you were in trouble.

The next major revolution was the bow and arrow. It could engage opponents at a far greater distance than a spear. And you could carry quite a few arrows with you.

The invention of gunpowder and the firearm was another game changer.

Up until the late 1800s there was a small problem with using firearms. Most of them were muzzle-loaders in where each round had to be loaded individually and then primed before it could be fired. Trained soldiers could fire up to three rounds a minute.

This could lead to a few minor problems if someone on a horse was charging at you, ready to cut you down with a sword or drive a lance through you.

In 1860 American inventor Christopher Spencer came up with what he thought was a great idea - a lever action repeating rifle.

The Spencer is a lever-action repeating rifle designed by Christopher Spencer in 1860. It uses a falling breechblock mounted in a carrier. Firing forces are contained by the receiver at the rear of the breechblock.

Actuating the loading lever causes the breechblock to fall. Once the breechblock is clear of the receiver, the carrier “rolls” downward, ejecting a spent cartridge from the chamber and collecting a fresh round from the tubular magazine in the buttstock. Closing the lever chambers the new cartridge and the breechblock then rises vertically to close the breech.

The hammer of the Spencer needs to be manually cocked after each loading cycle. The Spencer was initially produced as a carbine, chambered for the .56-56 Spencer rimfire cartridge.

The problem was that the Department of War Ordnance did not like the concept in the least.

They felt that soldiers would waste ammunition by firing too rapidly with repeating rifles, and thus denied a government contract for all such weapons.

It was only after President Abraham Lincoln had been given a personal demonstration of the weapon that he ordered General James Wolfe Ripley to adopt it for production.

It would go on to become adopted by the US Navy and the US Army.

- Designer: Christopher Spencer
- Designed: 1860
- Manufacturer: Spencer Repeating Rifle Company
- Length: 1,200 mm (rifle); 997 mm (carbine)
- Barrel length: 760 mm
- Cartridge: .56-56 Spencer
- Calibre: 13 mm
- Action: Manually cocked hammer, lever action
- Rate of fire: 14-20 rounds per minute
- Effective firing range: 460 metres
- Feed system: Seven round tube magazine



# Warfare's game changers

*The prime objective of any war or battle is to defeat the enemy. And if you can come up with a weapon or tactics that can achieve this, then you're ahead of the game.*

**W**arfare has been around for as long as recorded history. And those involved in wars have always been on the lookout for weapons or innovations that would give them the edge over the enemy.

While training, morale and leadership are important factors in warfare, so are weapons and tactics.

Let's look at some weapons and technology that changed the fact of warfare when they were introduced. Real game changers.

## The Chariot

The two-wheeled, horse drawn chariot was one of the most important achievements in history. It provided man with his first concept of personal transport, and for almost 2,000 years it was used as a key mili-

tary weapon system of war.

The critical invention that allowed the construction of light, horse-drawn chariots was the spoked wheel. The earliest spoke-wheeled chariots date to around 2000 BC.

The chariot, with a driver and an archer armed with a composite bow, revolutionised warfare after 1700 BC.

A common tactic was for a line of chariots to approach the enemy until they were within archery range. The archers would then fire volleys of arrows at them. If the infantry charged, the chariots could quickly turn and retreat, with the archers still able to fire.

Some armies made use of a scythed chariot. The scythed chariot was a modified war chariot. The blades extended horizontally for about one meter to each side of the wheels. The chariots were normally driven by four horses and had a driver and two warriors for protection. They would charge in an extended line, cutting down the enemy with the scythes.

millennium BC, making these weapon systems the early foundation for cavalry.

## The Sarissa

It was Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, that introduced the sarissa, a long spear or pike about 4-6 metres in length.

Made from tough and resilient cornel wood, the sarissa was a heavy spear, weighing in the region of 5,5 to 6,5 kg.

It had a sharp iron head shaped like a leaf and a bronze butt-spike that would allow it to be anchored to the ground to stop charges by enemy soldiers.

The bronze material of the butt-spike prevented it from rusting. The spike also served to balance out the spear, making it easier for soldiers to wield, and could be used as a back-up point should the main one break.

The weapon had to be wielded with both hands due to its sheer size and bulk. This meant that only a 60 cm shield, suspended from the neck, could be used to protect the left shoulder.

Complicated training ensured that the phalanx wielded their sarissas in unison, swinging them vertically to wheel about, then lowering them to the horizontal.

The sarissa-bearing phalanx would usually march to battle in open formation to facilitate

movement. Before the charge, it would tighten its files to close formation or even compact formation.

Their tight formation meant that the phalanx created a wall of spears that were so long that there were five rows of them projecting in front of the front rank of men. Even if an enemy managed to get past the first row, there were still four more rows to stop him.

The Macedonian phalanx was considered invulnerable from the front, except against another such phalanx. The only way it was ever generally defeated was by breaking its formation or outflanking it.

## Sailing Ships

The first sailing ships were most likely Egyptian and existed around 3000 BC or earlier. They were used on the River Nile, which was ideal for primitive sailing vessels. The winds on the Nile are usually from the North. So if they wanted to go South they just raised the sails on the double mast. If they wanted to go North they just lowered the sails and drifted with the river's current. It was through these early sailing ships that the navy was born.

Produced from the 13th to the 18th centuries and commonly used in Northern Europe, Viking longboats were clinker built boats. They were sturdy, long and slender with a large square sail, making them swift and capable of long voyages. By 1200 AD this type of ship was used by militaries throughout Northern Europe. The skeid, which means 'that which cuts through water, were larger war-

ships, consisting of more than 30 rowing benches.

The technology of the sailing warship developed from 1775 to 1862 and required little extensive research and there were few new developments. Sails, ropes and guns would eventually become the main components of this military weapon system, and timber the most basic and vital component. Timber was available in abundance in most countries.

## The Cannon

Once upon a time all you needed was a strong castle with towers and thick walls, surrounded by a moat and a draw-bridge, and you were sorted.

Then as early as the 12th century the Chinese went ahead and invented the cannon. Suddenly castle walls were not that safe anymore. By the 1350s the cannon was used extensively in Chinese warfare.

It wasn't long before the cannon made its appearance in Europe and the cannon took on its classic form at the beginning of the 17th century and remained almost unchanged until the mid 19th century when it was superseded by the breech loading rifle gun.

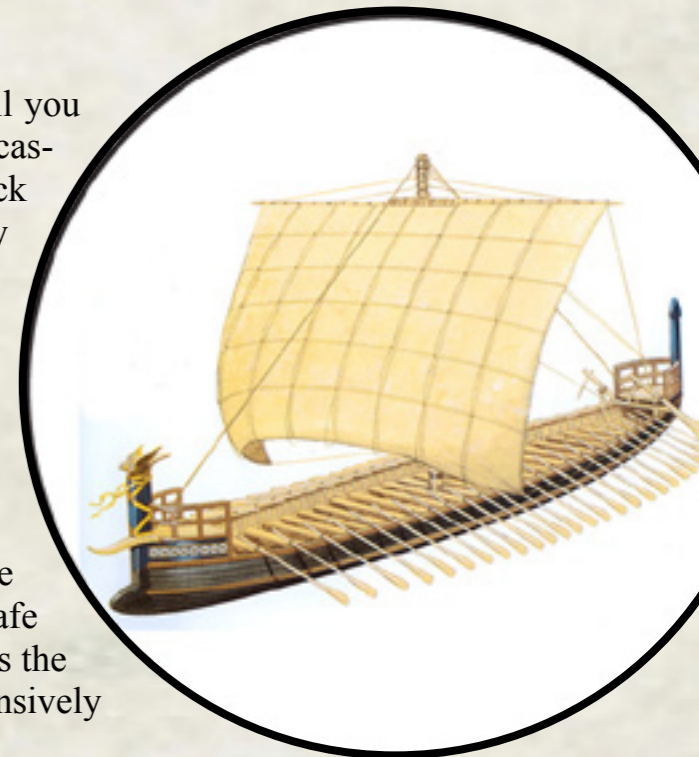
At first cannons were immobile and it took time before the development of the two-wheel gun carriage.

This development led to the formation of a new service within the military and the artillery joined the ranks of the cavalry and the infantry.

The cannon was a shock weapon that was usually used in mass and its placement was critical.

A volley of cannon fire at charging infantry and cavalry could be devastating. They were vulnerable to cavalry that managed to flank them or charge them from the rear, making their powerful fire useless.

Yet it was the cannon that made the once powerful for-



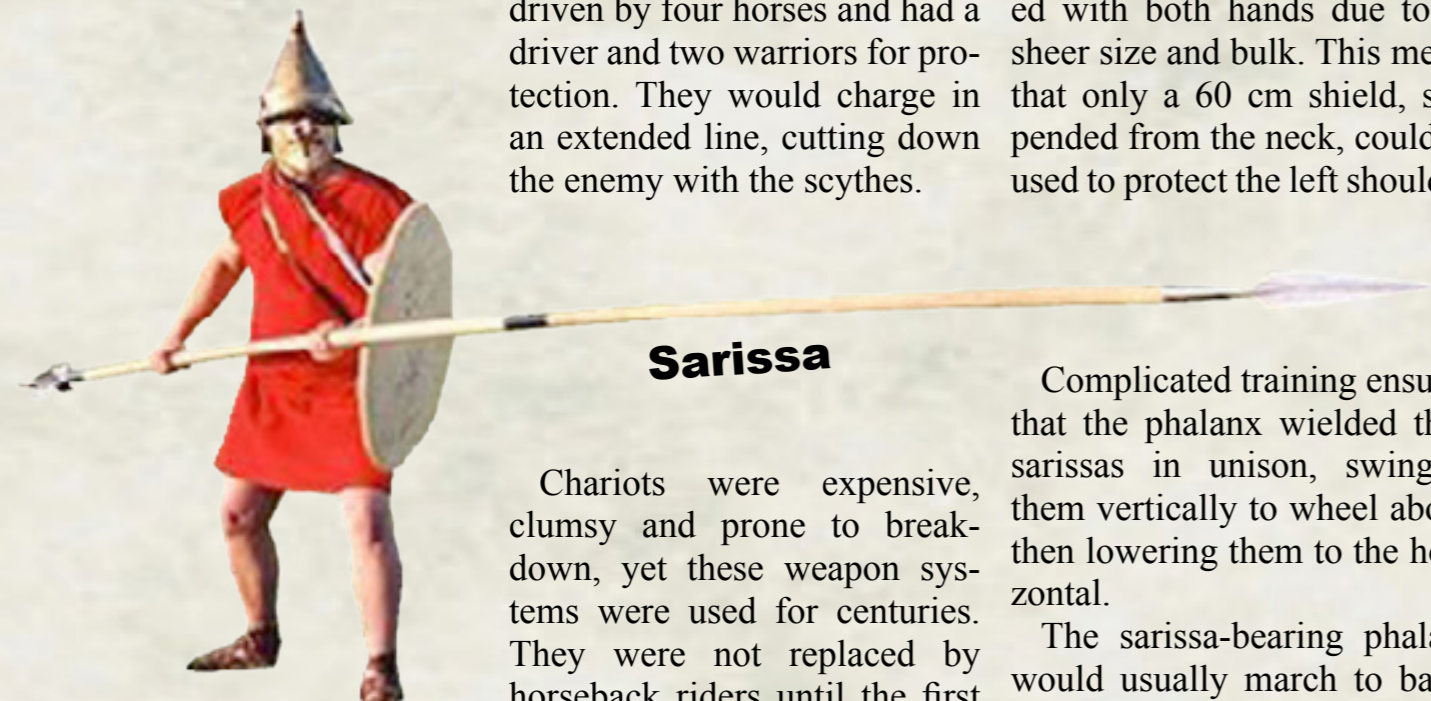
tresses and castles obsolete.

Later developments would make artillery a valuable part of any modern-day army.

## The Machine Gun

A machine gun is best described as "a fully automatic firearm that loads, fires and ejects continuously when the trigger is held to the rear until the ammunition is exhausted or pressure on the trigger is released."

The first successful machine gun designs were developed in the mid 19th century.



The Model 1862 Gatling gun had a relatively high rate of fire and more importantly mechanical loading. The weapon was adopted by the United States Navy.

These early machine guns were still powered by hand. This changed with Hiram Maxim's idea of harnessing recoil energy to power reloading in his Maxim machine gun.

The Maxim machine gun used the recoil power of the previously fired bullet to reload rather than being hand-powered, enabling a much higher rate of fire than was possible using earlier designs such as the Nordenfelt and Gatling weapons. Maxim also introduced the use of water cooling, via a water jacket around the barrel, to reduce overheating.

Maxim's gun was widely adopted, and derivative designs were used on all sides during the First World War. The design required fewer crew and was lighter and more usable than the

Nordenfelt and Gatling guns.

First World War combat experience demonstrated the military importance of the machine gun. The United States Army issued four machine guns per regiment in 1912, but that allowance increased to 336 machine guns per regiment by 1919.

Machine guns became categorised into light machine guns (LMG), medium machine guns (MMG), and heavy machine guns (HMG).

Light machine guns act as squad support weapons, require only one man to operate, and can be carried on patrols.

Medium and heavy machine guns are normally crew-served weapons and require a bipod or tripod. They are generally static weapons used for defence.

Medium and heavy machine guns can also be mounted on vehicles or aircraft.

Some modern machine guns have come a full circle, going back to the Gatling gun's use of

multiple rotating barrels.

The General Electric M134, commonly known as the Minigun, can fire up to 6,000 rounds per minute without overheating.

## The Submarine

If ships were such an innovation, that how about a ship that could travel undetected underwater?

Although experimental submarines had been built before, submarine design only really took off during the 19th century.

Submarines were first widely used during World War I (1914–1918), and now figure in many navies large and small. Today there are 41 countries that make use of submarines as part of their navy.

During World War II, Germany used submarines to devastating effect in the Battle of the Atlantic, where it attempted to cut Britain's supply routes by sinking more merchant ships than Britain could replace.

By the end of the war, almost 3,000 Allied ships (175 warships, 2,825 merchantmen) had been sunk by U-boats.

Military uses for submarines include attacking enemy surface ships (merchant and military), attacking other submarines, aircraft carrier protection, blockade running, ballistic missile submarines as part of a nuclear strike force, reconnaissance, conventional land attack (for example using a cruise missile), and covert insertion of special forces.

In September 1954 the first nuclear submarine was commissioned and these days a number of navies have nuclear



submarines.

Some of these submarines are attack submarines, while others are missile boats capable of launching nuclear missiles.

## Paratroopers

Perhaps no military weapon system has provided as much flexibility on the battlefield as the employment of paratroopers. Certainly no weapon system has been so spectacular.

Shortly after World War I General Billy Mitchell proposed that parachuting troops into combat from aircraft could be effective on the battlefield.

During a demonstration of his concept at Kenny Field in San Antonio, Texas, six soldiers parachuted from a Martin bomber and safely landed. Less than three minutes after exiting from the aircraft they were on the ground, had their weapons

assembled, and were ready for action.

Although US military observers dismissed the concept, not all of the observers came to the same conclusion. The German observers eagerly grasped the idea and their military planners worked quickly to establish a military parachute organisation.

The Germans developed their airborne forces and at the start of World War II they used parachute troops in their spearhead assaults in Holland and Belgium.

Spurred by the successful employment of airborne troops by the Germans in the invasion of the Low Countries, US military authorities began an all-out effort to develop this new method of warfare.

From the paratroopers of Operation

Overlord who first secured the flanks of Normandy's landing beaches, to the mass drops of the US 82nd and 101st Airborne and the British Parachute Regiment that formed part of Operation Market-Garden, to the modern day paratroopers and special forces elements that jump into enemy territory, paratroopers provide a tactical edge in modern warfare.

The paratrooper can drop into areas inaccessible to regular

soldiers. They can thin an enemy's defences by forcing them to protect areas that would normally be safe by virtue of geography.

## Aircraft

On 17 December 1903 a few kilometres south of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina the Wright brothers made the first powered flight.

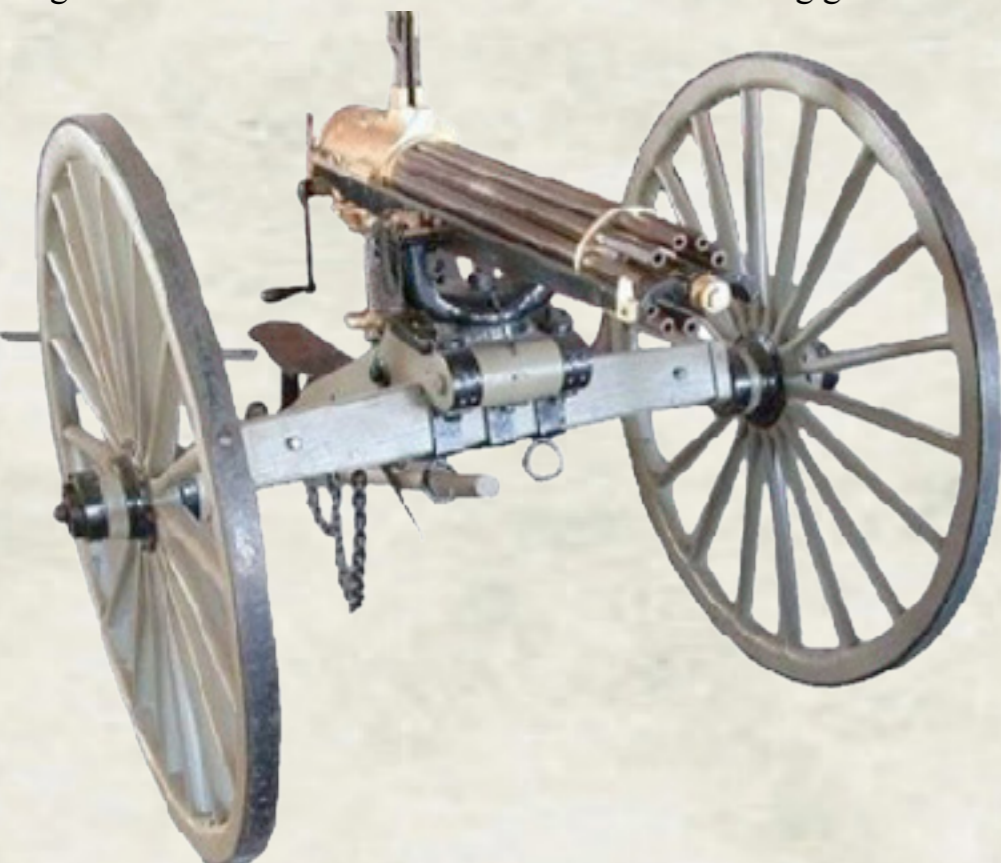
Balloons were one of the first mechanisms used in air warfare. Their role was strictly recognised for reconnaissance purposes. They provided humans with the first available method of elevating themselves well over the battlefield to obtain the proverbial "birds-eye view."

The first decisive use of a balloon for aerial observation was performed by the French Aerostatic Corps using the *aerostat l'Entreprenant* ("The enterprising one") at the Battle of Fleurus in 1794. The following year, during the Siege of Mainz an observation balloon was employed again. However, the French military use of the balloon did not continue uninterrupted, as in 1799 Napoleon disbanded the French balloon corps.

Eleven years after the Wright brothers had made their first flight, the world was at war. And the aircraft would play its role.

At first the aircraft were unarmed and used for aerial reconnaissance and observation. Enemy pilots would pass each other in the sky, often greeting or saluting each other.

Then someone had the bright idea to take a revolver with them and take a few shots at the



opposition.

Soon machine guns were being mounted and the aircraft became a weapon system.

The sky became filled with flimsy aircraft performing a fascinating but deadly aerial ballet that became known as ‘dog-fights’.

If a pilot managed to shoot down five enemy aircraft they earned the title of ‘ace’.

The *Fliegertruppen des deutschen Kaiserreiches* (Imperial German Flying Corps) had Manfred von Richthofen, better known as The Red Baron, with 80 kills.

The French air force, *Aéronautique Militaire*, had René Fon-

ck with 75 kills. The United Kingdom’s Royal Flying Corps had Edward ‘Mick’ Mannock with 61 kills.

The aircraft had come into its own.

World War II saw the rapid development of the aircraft as a weapon system. Not only were there fighter aircraft that could reach heights in excess of 12,000 metres and travel at speeds of more than 700 km per hour, there were large four-engine bombers that could travel more than 5,000 kilometres and carry up to 10,000 kg of bombs.

Before the end of the war the first jet engine fighters were in service.

During the Korean War between 25 June 1950 – 27 July 1953 jet fighters engaged in combat for the first time.

Aircraft have become a vital component of any modern day military organisation and gaining air supremacy over the battlefield is considered a must.

## Aircraft Carrier

If both ships and aircraft rated among the top military innovations, then what about a combination of the two?

We’re not talking about a flying ship here, but rather a seagoing airbase.

the deck of a United States Navy ship, the cruiser USS Birmingham anchored off Norfolk Navy Base in Virginia.

Two months later, on 18 January 1911, Ely landed his Curtiss pusher airplane on a platform on the armored cruiser USS Pennsylvania anchored in San Francisco Bay. On 9 May 1912, the first airplane take-off from a ship underway was made from the deck of the British Royal Navy’s pre-dreadnaught battleship HMS Hibernia.

Early in World War I, the Imperial Japanese Navy ship Wakamiya conducted the world’s first successful ship-launched air raid. On 6 September 1914, a Farman aircraft launched by Wakamiya attacked the Austro-Hungarian cruiser SMS Kaiserin Elisabeth and the Imperial German gunboat Jaguar in Kiaochow Bay off Tsingtao. Neither was hit.

The first carrier-launched air-

stroyed two Zeppelin airships.

The development of flattop vessels produced the first large fleet ships. In 1918, HMS Argus became the world’s first carrier capable of launching and recovering naval aircraft.

Launched on 24 September 1960, the USS Enterprise (CVN-65) became the world’s first nuclear powered aircraft carrier.

Modern day aircraft carriers are typically the capital ship of a fleet, as it allows a naval force to project air power worldwide without depending on local bases for staging aircraft operations.

As of August 2018, there are 41 active aircraft carriers in the world operated by thirteen navies.

## The Atomic Bomb

No other weapon system has changed the face of warfare more than nuclear weapons.

Building on scientific breakthroughs made during the

1930s, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada collaborated during World War II, in what was called the Manhattan Project, to counter the suspected Nazi German atomic bomb project. In August 1945, two fission bombs were dropped on Japan, standing to date as the only use of nuclear weapons in combat. The Soviet Union started development shortly thereafter with their own atomic bomb project, and not long after that both countries developed even more powerful fusion weapons known as “hydrogen bombs”.

The first test of a fission (“atomic”) bomb released an amount of energy approximately equal to 20,000 tons of TNT. A modern thermonuclear weapon weighing little more than 1,100 kg can release energy equal to more than 1.2 million tons of TNT.

Since the first atomic bomb was tested, over 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted in over a dozen different sites

around the world.

While modern nuclear weapons make the atomic bomb look like a firecracker, the atomic bomb makes this list by virtue of the fact that the bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain the only two instances of nuclear weapons being used in combat. Let us hope and pray that this remains the case.

## The future

Every year billions of dollars are made available for the research and development of new weapons and military technologies.

Already we have drones and smart bombs that play a vital role on the modern battlefield.

Without doubt many of these weapons and new technological developments will go on to become essential to the military.

And, no doubt, some of them will go down in history as game changers.



# 7 Medical Battalion Group

*Officially formed in 1987, 7 Medical Battalion Group was the 'Special Forces' unit of the South African Medical Services of the SADF.*

The 7th Medical Battalion Group, or 7 Med, provided medical support to the Special Forces, the Parachute Battalion, the Intelligence Division, South African Police Task Force, and Koevoet.

This specially trained unit was also tasked with research and instruction in chemical warfare, combat techniques, field medical techniques, and parachute training.

The South African Medical Service (SAMS) was organised in July 1979 as the fourth SADF (South African Defence Force) service along with the Army, Air Force and Navy. It has its headquarters in Pretoria, with regional Medical Commands controlling the three military hospitals located in Pretoria (1 Mil), Cape Town (2 Mil), and Bloemfontein (3 Mil), as well as the medical services located at most military installations.

SAMS was also responsible for the examination of all National Servicemen prior to induction, disaster relief operations, the maintenance of medical service to military dependents, the provision of medical services to the poorer population of South Africa, and veterinary support to the SADF and the local population. All 7 Med specific training was conducted at the SAMS Training Centre and College.

In the early 1980s the South African Reconnaissance Commandos (now the South Afri-

can Special Forces Brigade) identified the need for a special medical unit to support Special Forces on operations and the Detachment Medical Special Operations was formed. Under command of the Surgeon General, a group of nine doctors with Commandant Wouter Basson at the head, founded what would later become the 7 Medical Battalion Group at Special Forces Brigade Headquarters (Speskop) south of Pretoria in 1984.

The first group of doctors and medics completed the full Special Forces training cycle, or were already Special Forces operators.

The need for specially trained medics and doctors to support the Airborne units (Parabats) and the Recces increased as the Angolan Bush War intensified. The unit eventually started its own training as required by the Reconnaissance and Airborne units. The training cycle produced an Operational Medic or Operational Doctor who was fully qualified and equipped to support and deploy with Airborne or Special Forces during operations.

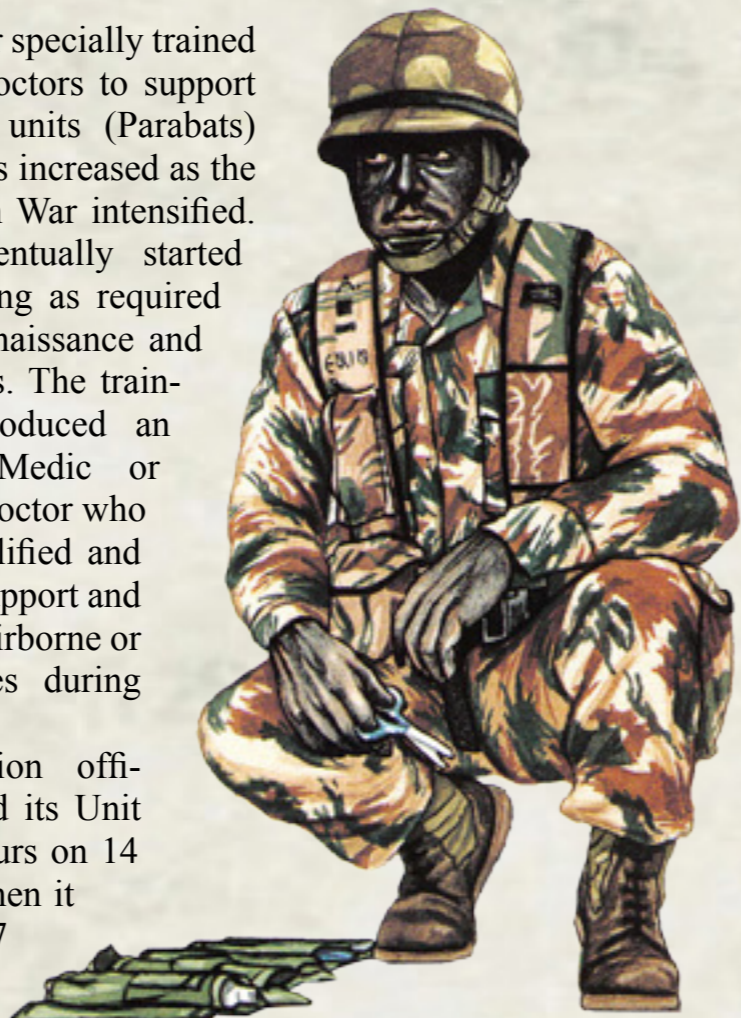
The Battalion officially received its Unit flag and Colours on 14 April 1987 when it

was named 7 Medical Battalion Group

and incorporated into the South African Medical Service (now the South African Military Health Service). The year 1987 is considered the unit's birth year although the exact date is unknown.

The importance of the 7 Med operational medical orderly (Ops Medic), and doctors of SAMS could never be overstated. The time factor is crucial when attending to wounded on the modern battlefield, since 90% of fatalities occur within the first 60 minutes after being wounded.

In a combat situation, each soldier was trained and capable



of providing first aid to a comrade. This 'buddy aid' assisted the wounded soldier by stopping bleeding and immobilising the patient until a field medic could arrive on the scene. The field medic then stabilised the soldier for eventual casevac to a hospital.

Transport usually consisted of a flight in a Puma helicopter with a doctor present. En route to the scene the doctor main-

tained constant radio contact with the field medic and was briefed on the patient's injury. The doctor advised the field medic as to what additional medical support was needed, and relayed medical information to the hospital to enable doctors and staff to prepare operating rooms in preparation for surgery. Once the patient was on board the Puma the doctor continued needed treatment until the hospital was reached.

The SAMA ratio was one doctor to one company of troops. In areas where the troops were highly dispersed or the distances great a ratio of one doctor to 30 troops was maintained. The goal – that was usually achieved – was that a wounded man reached a doctor's care within 20 minutes.

The field medic was trained in 'buddy aid' procedures and

other techniques including administering saline drips, anaesthesia and minor surgical procedures. The training of the typical 7 Med doctor included civilian medical training, advanced emergency situation training, and the completion of a military medical course that included the treatment of high velocity and explosive injuries, shock and trauma.

In 1994 7 Medical Battalion Group became part of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

On 21 February 2014, the unit received Battle Honours to be displayed on the unit colours for the first time for its participation in the Battle of Bangui Central African Republic March 2013. It is unusual for a medical unit to receive Battle Honours.

**Click on the photograph below to take a virtual tour of Warrior's Gate and find out more about the MOTH Order.**



# Sea Cadet officer training

On an officer's training course held at TS Woltemade in Lakeside, Cape Town, Sea Cadet officers have some serious fun, while also learning a great deal. By Cdr (SCC) Anthony-Glenn von Zeil.

As part of their mandate to provide maritime training for Sea Cadets the Corps provided 18 Officer training for adult instructors from 27 April to 2 May 2022 at TS Woltemade, in Lakeside, Cape Town. The course was presented by retired experienced SA Navy officers Captain (Ret) Herman de Vries supported by Captain / Dr (Ret) Chris Merts and Cdr Steve King.

The majority of the learners were in the junior rank groups representing Midshipmen, Ensigns and Instructors. The background, experience and cognitive capabilities of the group were concentrated in this core, with a few Senior Officers providing a balancing force. The senior members, also, were keen to take as much as they could from this course and this made for a generally high spirit of learning.

Capt (Ret) de Vries indicated that "because of this high spirit, the individuals in this group were focussed, well disciplined and eager to participate in all activities."

The course comprised the following modules and outcomes in order to support the adult officers, most with no prior military training, to fulfil their roles as instructors, role models and Sea Cadet officers.

**Officership.** Demonstrate an understanding of the concept 'officership'.

**Command.** Apply command

in terms of conducting elementary missions and achieving limited objectives in a maritime environment.

**Leadership.** Apply the Management Functions and the Leadership Relationship as an Officer.

**Divisional System.** Demonstrate teamwork and administrative efficiency in ensuring the welfare, discipline, training and general administration of the members in the team, within the context and structure of the divisional system.

**Policies and Regulations.** Willingly fulfil the obligations required by the Warrant of Appointment.

**Training.** Conduct an elementary training session using

the training process.

As is the norm at all Training Ships the day started with "Colours" and ended with a "Flag Lowering / Sunset" where the officers and adult instructors were expected to wear uniform. In addition Officers of the Day were appointed taking charge of the learner body and regulating the adherence to the laid down routines.

Application took place in the classroom using problem solving and cooperation exercises, on the leadership trainer letraubaun using practical teamwork and command and control challenges and on the vlel in pulling boats forging cohesive teamwork and command & control in a maritime context.



**BRAVO ZULU:** Rear Admiral (JG) Koos Louw (Ret), Chairman of the Sea Cadets Board, and Captain Herman de Vries (Ret), course convenor, celebrating the Officers and Adult Instructors achievements.

The practical leadership activities were conducted by Cdr Steve King. His vast experience, expert knowledge and re-assuring approach guaranteed a thorough practical application of the elementary command and control skills.

Congratulations to the following Sea Cadet Officers and adult instructors for completing the course and they received a course certificate:

- TS Rook Lieutenant Lisa Spencer
- TS Rook Ensign Colin Harris
- TS Tiburon Ensign Neil Kistnasamy
- TS Tiburon Lieutenant Ronnie Naidoo
- TS Tiburon Ensign Victor Naicker

- TS Saldanha Civilian Instructor Roy Arends
- TS Saldanha Petty Officer Dirkie Vraagom
- TS Saldanha Civilian Instructor Samantha Huysamen
- TS Birkenhead Midshipman Lorenzo Hendricks
- TS Birkenhead Civilian Instructor Christobel Hendricks
- TS Birkenhead Civilian Instructor Maria Booysen
- TS Woltemade Lieutenant Gaylene Pillay
- TS Woltemade Ensign Bradwin Davids
- TS Woltemade Midshipman Claytin Kordom
- TS Woltemade Ensign Reuben-Lee Pillay
- TS Woltemade Midshipman

- Daliante Nelson
- TS Knysna Staff Instructor Eastern Hennies
- TS Knysna Staff Instructor Raylene Donson

The training was successfully carried out and the participants have shown an eagerness to apply the outcomes in their Training Ships.

Thank you to the Senior Officer Sea Cadets, Capt (SCC) Paul Jacobs and CEO of the Sea Cadet Company Capt (SCC) Ian Loubser for being on hand to support the learners.

Bravo Zulu to TS Woltemade for making the logistical arrangements and for hosting the training team and Officers and adult instructors.



**TEAM WORK:** Practical leadership and camaraderie was developed on the letraubaun. This exercise involved problem solving and cooperation using practical teamwork and command and control challenges.

# WWII Aces - a few facts

A number of World War II battles were won, or lost, in the air. Practically every air force that took part in World War II produced a number of aces - pilots that had shot down a minimum of five enemy aircraft. We look at a few facts about these aces.

Air power would play a major role during World War II. A number of significant battles were fought in the air and some were vital to the eventual outcome of the war.

Probably one of the best known battles of World War II was the Battle of Britain. It took place between 10 July and 31 October 1940.

Hitler was planning 'Operation Sea Lion', an invasion of Britain. To do this he needed to have air superiority over the English Channel and the skies of England.

The *Luftwaffe* were directed to achieve to use bombers, escorted by fighters, to lure the Royal Air Force (RAF) into the air, and then destroy them.

It didn't work out exactly as *Luftwaffe* chief Hermann Göring anticipated and it was the RAF that emerged as the eventual victors.

The Battle of the Philippine Sea was one of the most decisive battles of World War II. This was the largest carrier-to-carrier battle in history, involving 24 aircraft carriers, deploying roughly 1,350 carrier-based aircraft.

The Battle of Kursk is remembered as being one of the largest tank battles in history. Yet it was also regarded as the costliest single day of aerial combat in history.

Practically every country that

took part in World War II had an air force. Most fighter pilots had an ambition of becoming an 'ace'.

The requirements for being regarded as an ace were simple enough - destroy five enemy aircraft. Destroying an enemy aircraft was commonly known as a 'kill'. Get five kills and you became an ace.

Unfortunately many, if not most, pilots never achieved their aim. Some of them ended the war with four kills, just one shy of their target.

Other were even less fortunate and were shot down before they even achieved a single kill. Some pilots never even managed to survive their first operational flight.

## Quite a few made it

While the majority of pilots never managed to become aces, quite a few of them did.

In fact during World War II no fewer than 1,791 pilots would go on to become aces.

Some of them would achieve far more than the five kills required to become an ace. No fewer than 107 pilots would manage to get 100 kills or more.

## The Lofty Luftwaffe

When it came to having the most aces of the war, the German *Luftwaffe* were way ahead of any other country.

In fact so far ahead that the

leading 119 aces of World War II were all from the *Luftwaffe*.

This was followed at 120 by Ilmari Juutilainen with 94 kills. He was a member of the Finnish Air Force. The next 34 aces were also from the *Luftwaffe*.

A total of 91 German aces managed to achieve 100 or more kills, 13 scored 200 or more kills, and two of them achieved more than 300 kills.

## Top aces by country

### Germany (352)

Erich Hartmann of the *Luftwaffe* was not only the top ace of World War II, but also the most successful ace in the history of aerial warfare.

Nicknamed 'Bubi' (The Kid), he flew 1,404 combat missions and participated in aerial combat on 825 separate occasions. He was credited with 352 kills during the war, with 345 of them being Soviet aircraft and seven of them being American.

He was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds and finished the war with the rank of Major.

After the war he surrendered to United States Army forces and was turned over to the Red Army. He was tried for war crimes and convicted, receiving a sentence of 25 years in prison. He served 10 years before being released in 1955.

In 1956, Hartmann joined the newly established West Ger-

man Air Force in the *Bundeswehr* and rose to the rank of *Oberst* (Colonel) before retiring in 1970.

Hartmann died on 20 September 1993 at the age of 71.

### Finland (94)

Eino "Illu" Juutilainen was a fighter pilot of the *Ilmavoimat* (Finnish Air Force), and the top scoring non-German fighter pilot of all time. He ended the war with 94 kills.

34 of his victories were achieved while flying the American-designed Brewster Buffalo fighter. He finished the war without a single hit to his plane from enemy fighter airplanes. The only time that he was ever hit was by friendly anti-aircraft fire.

He died on 21 February 1999 at the age of 85.

### Japan (80)

Tetsuzō 'Tiger' Iwamoto was a member of the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service (IJNAS). He would go on to become the most successful Japanese fighter ace, ending the war with 80 kills.

He survived the war, but died at the age of only 38 when he had surgery that led to sepsis.

### Romania (69)

Constantin 'Bâzu' Cantacuzino was a Romanian fighter pilot who ended the war with 69 kills.

Besides his passion for flying, he loved motor sports and he could afford to practice them all the time, as he was from a wealthy noble family. He was an excellent motor bike racer, winning several races, and race car driver. He set a new record

on the Paris-Bucharest race.

He also played tennis and was the captain of the Romanian ice hockey team at the World Championships in 1931 and 1933.

He died on 26 May 1958 at the age of 52.

### Russia (60)

With 60 kills, Ivan Kozhedub was the Allies highest scoring ace.

He is one of the few pilots to have shot down a Messerschmitt Me 262 jet, and the first Soviet pilot to have done so.

He was made a Hero of the Soviet Union on three occasions.

After World War II, he remained in the military and went on to command the 324th Fighter Aviation Division during Soviet operations in the Korean War.

Kozhedub died on 8 August 1991 at the age of 71.



### Croatia (44)

Croatian Mato Dukovac certainly managed to do the rounds. Credited with 44 kills, he first flew for the Air Force of the Independent State of Croatia.

He then flew with the Luftwaffe before defecting to the Soviet Union in September 1944. He was returned to Yugoslavia in November 1944 and would go on to become a member of the Yugoslav Air Force.

In April 1945 he defected to Italy and in 1946 he left Italy and became a captain in the Syrian Air Force. During the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, he flew combat missions against Israel.

He later moved to Canada and died in Toronto on 6 June 1990 at the age of 71.

### British Commonwealth (41)

Marmaduke Thomas St John Pattle, better known as Pat Pattle, was a South African-born member of the RAF.

At the age of 18 he was rejected by the South African Air Force, so he went to England and joined the Royal Air Force.

He became the top British Commonwealth and South African ace, scoring all his victories on the Gloster Gladiator and the Hawker Hurricane and is the top ace of both aircraft.

He was killed in action while on combat operations over Greece on 20 April 1941. He was only 26 years old.

### America (40)

A recipient of the Medal of Honour, Richard Bong was America's top ace during World War II.

He shot down 40 Japanese air-

craft, all with the Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter.

He died at the age of 24 while test flying a Lockheed P-80 jet fighter on 6 August 1945, only days before World War II ended.

### France (33)

Pierre Clostermann was a French pilot that flew with the RAF during World War II.

He was credited with 33 kills and became the leading French ace.

He died on 22 March 2006 at the age of 85.

### Slovakia (32)

Ján Režňák was the top Slovakian fighter ace in the Slovak Air Force during the Second World War.

He accumulated 32 kills on the Eastern Front against the Soviet Union.

### Hungary (30.5)

Warrant Officer Dezső Szentgyörgyi was the highest scoring Hungarian fighter ace of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd Air Force in World War II.

The fact that a pilot would be credited with .5 of a kill was as a result of a shared kill. In other words, two pilots had both attacked the same aircraft. So each would be given half a kill.

He died on 28 August 1971 at the age of 56.

### Britain (30)

Robert Stanford Tuck was the leading British ace of the war, being credited with 30 victories.

On 28 January 1942, he was hit by anti-aircraft fire, was forced to land in France, and was taken prisoner.



**ACE OF ACES:** Luftwaffe pilot Erich Hartmann was the top ace of World War II and was credited with 352 kills.

He died on 5 May 1987 at the age of 70.

### Australia (28.5)

Clive 'Killer' Caldwell was a pilot with the Royal Australian Air Force.

With 28.5 kills, he was the leading Australian ace of the war.

He was the highest scoring Curtiss P-40 Tomahawk from any air force, and the highest scoring Allied pilot in North Africa.

He died on 5 August 1994 at the age of 83.

### New Zealand (27.5)

Group Captain Colin Falkland Gray was the leading New Zealand ace of World War II.

He flew for the Royal Air Force and achieved 14 of his kills during the Battle of Britain.

After the war he remained a member of the RAF until 1961.

He died on 1 August 1995 at the age of 80.

### Italy (22)

Teresio Vittorio Martinoli was an Italian World War II fighter pilot in the *Regia Aeronautica* and in the Italian Co-Belligerent Air Force (ICBAF).

He lost his life in a flying accident on 25 August 1944. He was 27 years old.

### A few other facts

- Oscar F. Perdomo of the United States Army Air Force ended the war with five kills. What made his achievement notable was that, on 13 August 1945, he earned all five of his kills on the same day. Anyone that achieved this feat was known as an 'Ace in a Day'. He was the last pilot of World War II to achieve this.
- American pilot Albert Baumler became an ace in World War II with five kills. He was also an ace of the Spanish Civil War with six kills.
- With five kills, Alfred Schreiber of the Luftwaffe was an ace. What made his achievement special was that all of his victories were achieved while flying an Me 262 jet aircraft. This made him the first jet ace ever.
- Remy Van Lierde, a Belgian pilot flying for the RAF, became an ace with six kills. Yet he also managed to shoot down 44 German V-1 flying bombs.
- Theo Osterkamp of the Luftwaffe became an ace in two World Wars. He shot down six enemy aircraft in World

War II, to go along with the 32 he shot down in World War I.

- Luftwaffe pilot Fritz Kruse shot down six RAF bombers - all of them at night. This made him one of the few night fighter aces.
- Not only did Scrappy Blumer of the US Army Air Forces become an 'Ace in a Day', he shot down all five aircraft within the space of 15 minutes.
- American pilot George Andrew Davis Jr. scored seven kills in World War II and a further 21 kills during the Korean War.
- Norman F. Williams of the Royal Australian Air Force was the rear gunner of a Halifax bomber, he shot down eight German fighters, thus making him an ace.
- American pilot Boyd D. "Buzz" Wagner became the first US Army Air Forces ace - and this was within nine days after the attack on Pearl Harbour.
- Arthur Chin became the first American ace of World War II. This was while flying a biplane fighter for the Chinese Nationalist Air Force.
- Adrian Warburton of the Royal Air Force was credited with nine kills. And all of these were while flying aircraft configured for reconnaissance missions.
- While Hans-Ulrich Rudel was considered an ace for claiming nine kills, he was also a top ground attack pilot, with 2000+ targets destroyed.
- Lee 'Buddy' Archer became the only African-American

ace of World War II with nine kills.

- Russian pilot Alexei Petrovich Maresiev ended the war with 11 kills. Three of his victories came after he had lost both of his legs.
- James MacLachlan of the Royal Air Forces scored a total of 16.5 kills. 7.5 of these kills took place after his left arm had been amputated.
- Polish pilot Bolesław Gładych was credited with 17 victories. He flew for no fewer than four air forces - the Polish Air Force, French Air Force, Royal Air Force, and the US Army Air Forces.
- Jorma Sarvanto of the Finnish Air Force ended up with 17 kills. He was another pilot that became an 'Ace in a Day'. Sarvanto, however, shot down five enemy planes within the space of just four minutes.
- Douglas Bader of the Royal Air Force scored all 23 of his kills after losing both legs in a 1931 aircraft crash.
- Not only was South African Johannes Le Roux of the Royal Air Force an ace with 23.5 kills, he is also generally credited with attacking & wounding Erwin Rommel in his staff car in Normandy on 17 July 1944.
- Not only was Werner Mölders an ace in both World Wars, he also shot down 14 enemy aircraft during the Spanish Civil War. He was killed in action when he had 101 victories. He was the first in aviation history to achieve 100 kills.

# Smallest Armies in the world

This month we take a look at the smallest military forces in the world.

Over the years we've read numerous articles about the largest and most powerful military forces in the world.

This month, however, we decided to look at something different - the smallest, and possibly weakest, military forces in the world.

Some of these countries don't even have a military force as such, but rather a paramilitary force. Let's see how they measure up head-to-head.



This Central American Country is best known for its canal which allows ships to travel between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and a fancy hat named after the country.

It also has one of the smallest military forces in the world. While it does have 34,000 military personnel, only 12,000 are active members. The other 22,000 are members of the reserve.

What is also interesting is that the *Fuerza Pública de la República de Panamá* (Panamanian Public Forces) are not actually a military force as such, but rather a paramilitary force, a blend of police, border security and coast guard forces.

They have 19 transport aircraft, four trainer aircraft, and 15 helicopters. They also have

## Panama



65 armoured vehicles and a maritime component of eight patrol craft.

Since 2012 the units comprised of:

- One under-strength Presidential Guard Battalion.
- One military police battalion.

- Eight paramilitary companies.
- 18 police companies.

There have also been reports of a special forces unit having been formed, but these have not been confirmed.

During times of war, countries will often deploy huge armies - often consisting of millions of men. Not every country, however, is able to do this. Some of them just do not have the manpower. Take Montenegro for example. They did fight in World War I, but the total strength of their armed forces was 50,000 personnel.

During World War II, Greenland had an army of just 26 men. They patrolled the coast of Greenland, searching for German weather stations.

## Mauritius



Along with the Seychelles and Zanzibar, Mauritius is a popular honeymoon destination for South Africans. So when one thinks of Mauritius, one does not normally think about military.

Actually, Mauritius doesn't have a standing army. All military, police, and security force duties are carried out by 10,000 active-duty personnel that fall under the command of the Commissioner of Police.

The National Police Force has 8,000 members that are responsible for domestic law enforcement. The 1,500 member Special Mobile Force (SMF) and the 500-member National Coast Guard are the only two paramilitary units in Mauritius. Both units are composed of police officers on lengthy rotations to those services.



Six rifle companies, two mobile paramilitary companies, and one engineer company make up the composition of the SMF. Four patrol craft are used for search-and-rescue missions and surveillance of territorial waters.

They are assisted in search-and-rescue by a 100 member police helicopter squadron.

There is also a special support unit of 270 personnel training in riot control.



## Gambia

Many people have no idea of where Gambia is. It can be found on Africa's western coast, geographically surrounded by Senegal.

Gambia not only has an army, it has a navy as well. In 2002 the government even considered creating a Gambian Air Force. They sent pilots to be trained by Ukraine. In 2003 they purchased their first combat aircraft, a Sukhoi Su-25. Since then, how-



ever, they did not announce the creation of an air force

The Gambian National Army (GNA) is composed of two infantry battalions and an engineering squadron, about 900 strong in total. The GNA also

has eight Ferret armoured cars and four M8 Greyhound armoured cars.

The Gambian Navy is estimated to have between 125 and 250 personnel. The main function of the navy is to enforce

fishery legislation.

The four ageing Dvora-class patrol boats were replaced with three new patrol boats, donated by Taiwan, in 2013.

## Antigua and Barbuda

Responsible for maintaining internal security and helping guard the coast against drug smuggling, the Royal Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force (ABDF) is one of the smallest armies in the world.

It has a mere 245 military personnel, of which 170 are active members. The ABDF consists of four major units.

The infantry unit and fighting arm of the defence force is the Antigua and Barbuda Regiment, consisting of four line companies.

The Service and Support Unit provides administrative, logistic and engineering support to the rest of the defence force.

The Coast Guard is the maritime element and is divided into

four units - the Commanding Officer's Office, Engineer Unit, Administration Unit, and Flotilla.

The flotilla is the operational

branch and they have seven vessels, including two patrol boats.

The final unit is the Antigua and Barbuda Cadet Corps.



## Monaco

Monaco is a principality, a tiny city-state located on the French Riviera. It's the second smallest 'country' in the world.

Monaco is better known for its monarchy, casinos and yearly Formula One Grand Prix.

Its military is the third small-



est in the world, consisting of 225 soldiers. For defence in the face of an aggressive world power it would call on its largest neighbour, France.

There are two full-time military units which fall under the control of the Department of the Interior.

The *Corps des Sa-peurs-Pompiers de Monaco* has 135 military personnel, includ-

ing 10 officers. They are essentially a fire service. The Corps is equipped with fire engines, rescue vehicles and a range of specialist vehicles, including a fire boat and sealed tracked vehicles for entering Monaco's railway tunnels during an emergency.

With a force of 116 personnel, the *Compagnie des Carabiniers du Prince* has the primary duty

is the defence of the Prince and the Prince's Palace in the Monaco-Ville (old town) quarter of Monaco.

The ceremonial "changing of the guard" at 11:55 a.m. each day attracts large numbers of tourists. The ceremony is more than just tourist spectacle, as this small military force is the front line of defence of the Monegasque princely family.

## Barbados

When you think of this Caribbean Island what probably comes to mind are beautiful beaches, cocktails, and fantastic resorts – not necessarily a military force.

Barbados is protected by the Barbados Defence Force (BDF), a force made up of roughly 1,000 troops divided between the regular and reserve force.

These soldiers and sailors are responsible for maintaining internal security and patrolling the coast to stop any illegal activity such as smuggling.

The Force Headquarters is at St. Ann's Fort and provides administrative and logistical support for the entire Defence Force.

There are three main components of the BDF.

The Barbados Regiment is based at St Ann's Fort Base at The Garrison, Saint Michael and Paragon Base. It is the main land force component and encompasses both regular and reserve units.

The Barbados Coast Guard is



the maritime element, responsible for patrolling their territorial waters as well as drug interdiction and humanitarian and life-saving exercises. It too encompasses both regular and reserve units.

The BDF also has a band that is made up of members of the Barbados Regiment, the Coast Guard, and an element of the reserve units.

The military youth organisation, The Barbados Cadet Corps, includes infantry and sea cadets and goes back to 1904.

The first female cadets joined the corps in the 1970s. They began with three normal units, but today have expanded to 22 units.

These units are grouped into Zones. There are also a band, sea cadet and medical units along with a shooting programme.

It is interesting to note that the Commander in Chief of the Barbados Defence Force is none other than Queen Elizabeth II.



## Vanuatu



About 1,500 km from Australia sits the exotic island nation of Vanuatu.

Made up of dozens of small islands and with a population of 250,000 it is a popular tourist destination for scuba divers.

Today the government sees no need for a massive military force and there are two police wings: the Vanuatu Police Force (VPF) and the paramilitary wing, the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF).

Altogether there are 547 police officers organised into two main police commands: one in Port Vila and another in Luganville. In addition, there are four secondary police stations and

eight police posts.

This means that there are many islands with no police presence at all.

This small force ensures the

security of the island and, as you'd expect, helps out in times of emergencies or natural disasters.

## Tonga



- His Majesty's Armed Forces HQ
- Joint Force HQ
- Tonga Royal Guards
- Land Force
- Naval Flotilla

This Pacific island's force may be small, but you don't necessarily want to get into a punch up with them.

Located in the South Pacific, Tonga has an active force of around 500 personnel. Known as His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF), it is composed of three operational components and two support elements (logistics and training groups).

It is organised in a unified command system consisting of three forces: the Regular Force, the Territorial Force, and the Active Reserve Force.

The main elements of HMAF are:

- Training Command
- Air Wing
- Support Unit
- Territorial Forces

The Maritime Force is equipped with three Pacific-class patrol boats, a tanker, a Landing Craft Mechanized and a motor boat that is the royal yacht. Tongan Maritime Force performs patrol missions, occasionally dealing with border violations. Notably at the Minerva Reef and Tonga's restricted fishing zones.

The Royal Tongan Marine In-

fantry is organized as a single Battalion size group with a HQ and 3 Light Infantry Companies. The Tonga Royal Guards is a company size unit that is responsible for the security of His Majesty.

The Air Wing was established in 1996 and operates one Beechcraft G.18S aircraft in the maritime patrol and search and rescue roles, and an American Champion Citabria light trainer. The current position of the HMAF air wing is unclear but both aircraft have not been ac-

tive for a long time.

During World War II, Tonga had about 2,000 troops that saw action in the Solomon Islands.

In 2002 they sent soldiers as part of a multi-national regional peace-keeping force to the Solomon Islands. In July 2004 a 45 member contingent served in the Solomon Islands and a third contingent of 33 troops were sent in July 2005.

HMAF troops also served as part of the multinational force in both Iraq and Afghanistan.



## Iceland



You wouldn't suspect a NATO country of having the smallest military force in the world. Well how about no military force at all.

While Iceland is a member of NATO, it has no real military force to contribute to the alliance.

There's no active or reserve army – just around 130 people in its Coast Guard to patrol its shores. In fact, over the past years Iceland's defence has been shared among other NATO nations, which each rotating men and equipment for a set period of time.

The Icelandic Crisis Response Unit (ICRU) (Íslenska friðargæslan) is an expeditionary peacekeeping force maintained by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It is manned by

personnel from Iceland's other services, armed or not, including the National Police, Coast Guard, Emergency Services and Health-care system. Because of the military nature of most of the ICRU's assignments, all of its members receive basic infantry combat training. This training has often been conducted by the Norwe-

gian Army, but the Coast Guard and the Special forces are also assigned to train the ICRU. Most of the ICRU's camouflage and weaponry is procured from abroad, with some indigenous development. Some arms and uniforms are also borrowed from the Norwegian Defence Forces.



## Vatican City



Many people tend to forget that Vatican City, even though it is surrounded by Rome, is actually a country on its own - the smallest in the world.

The Corps of the Pontifical Swiss Guard is a small force maintained not by the Vatican City State but by the Holy See and is responsible for the safety of the Pope, including the security of his habitual formal residence, the Apostolic Palace.

During the periods of “*sede vacante*” (Time of the empty throne), when there is no pope, the Swiss Guard instead guards the College of Cardinals, so as to ensure that the Cardinals, meeting in Conclave, are able

to perform their duty in electing a new Pope.

The Swiss Guard cooperates with the *Corps of Gendarmerie* of Vatican City, a civilian force maintained by the Vatican City

State. The Swiss Guard has a strength of 110 men, all of whom are Catholic and who have completed basic training with the Swiss Army.

## Andorra



This tiny landlocked state can be found in Europe right between Spain and France.

Less than 500 square kilometres in size and with a population of under 100,000, you'd naturally expect this micronation of having a very small military. Well, it actually has no forces that could even remotely be called a military. Not even paramilitary forces like some of the other countries listed here. Sure, there are ‘soldiers’ at official functions – but these are purely ceremonial and internal order is maintained by the country’s police force.

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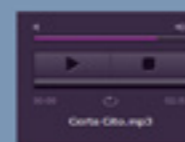
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# Nancy Wake - The White Mouse

*Nurse, journalist and spy, she became the Allies' most decorated servicewoman of World War II, and the Gestapo's most wanted person.*

If a writer had written a script about the exploits of Nancy Grace Augusta Wake, most Hollywood studios would have turned it down, claiming that it was a bit too far-fetched for a movie.

She would have been 32 years old, beautiful, intelligent and charming. Yet she would also have been deadly. A crack shot with a weapon, an expert in fieldcraft, and someone that had once killed an SS sentry with her bare hands to prevent him from raising the alarm during a raid.

As we said, the perfect fictional heroine. Yet there was nothing fictional about Nancy Wake. All of the above was true.

## Early life

Born in Roseneath, Wellington, New Zealand, on 30 August 1912, Wake was the youngest of six children. She was Māori through her great-grandmother Pourewa, believed to be of the Ngāti Māhanga iwi, who was reportedly one of the first Māori women to marry a European.

In 1914, her family moved to Australia and settled at North Sydney.[12] Shortly thereafter, her father, Charles Augustus Wake, returned to New Zealand and her mother, Ella, raised the children.

In Sydney, Wake attended the North Sydney Household Arts (Home Science) School.

At the age of 16, she ran away from home and worked as a nurse. With £200 (1928 currency) she had inherited from an aunt, she journeyed to New York City, then London where she trained herself as a journalist.

In the 1930s, she worked in Paris and later for Hearst newspapers as a European correspondent. She witnessed the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi movement and "saw roving Nazi gangs randomly beating Jewish men and women in the streets" of Vienna.

## The Pat O'Leary Line

In 1937, Wake met wealthy French industrialist Henri Edmond Fiocca (1898–1943), whom she married on 30 November 1939.

She was living in Marseille, France when Germany invaded.

During the war in France, Wake served as an

ambulance driver.

After the fall of France in 1940, she joined the escape network of Captain Ian Garrow, which became the Pat O'Leary Line. In reference to Wake's ability to elude capture, the Gestapo called her the "White Mouse".

The Resistance exercised caution with her missions; her life was in constant danger, with the Gestapo tapping her telephone and intercepting her mail.



In November 1942, Wehrmacht troops occupied Vichy France after the Allies' Operation Torch had started. This gave the Germans and the Gestapo unrestricted access to all parts of Vichy France and made life more dangerous for Wake.

When the network was betrayed that same year she decided to flee France. Her husband, Henri Fiocca, stayed behind. He later was captured, tortured, and executed by the Gestapo.

Wake described her tactics: "A little powder and a little drink on the way, and I'd pass their (German) posts and wink and say, 'Do you want to search me?' God, what a flirtatious little bastard I was."

In early 1943, in the process of getting out of France, Wake was picked up with a whole trainload of people and was arrested in Toulouse, but was released four days later. The head of the O'Leary Line, Albert Guérisset, managed to have her released by claiming she was his mistress and was trying to conceal her infidelity to her husband (all of which was untrue).

She succeeded in crossing the Pyrenees to Spain. Until the war ended, she was unaware of her husband's death, and she subsequently blamed herself for it.

## Special Operations Executive (SOE)

After reaching Britain, Wake joined the Special Operations Executive and was trained in several programs. Vera Atkins,

who was the senior female in the SOE overseeing the agents going into France, recalls her as "a real Australian bombshell. Tremendous vitality, flashing eyes. Everything she did, she did well."

Training reports record that she was "a very good and fast shot" and possessed excellent fieldcraft. She was noted to "put the men to shame by her cheerful spirit and strength of character."

Wake had very strong feelings about women and warfare. "I don't see why we women should just wave our men a proud goodbye and then knit them balaclavas," she once said.

On 29–30 April 1944 as part of the three-person "Freelance" team headed by John Hind Farmer (code name "Hubert"), Wake parachuted into Auvergne province, France.

Resistance leader Henri Tardivat discovered Wake tangled in a tree. He remarked, "I hope that all the trees in France bear such beautiful fruit this year," to which she replied, "Don't give me that French shit." Denis Rake, a radio operator, was the third member of the team.

The team was to be a liaison between London and the local maquis group headed by Émile Coulaudon (Gaspard). The team's initial relationship with Gaspard was frosty.

He wanted money and arms from the allies but was not cooperative until the French Forces of the Interior in London, the umbrella organization for the

disparate resistance groups in France, instructed him to cooperate.

SOE began sending in large amounts of arms, equipment, and money. Wake's duties were pinpointing locations at which the material and money were parachuted in, collecting it, and allocating it among the maquis, including pay to individual soldiers.

Wake carried with her a list of the targets the maquis were to destroy before the invasion of France by the Allies (which would take place on 6 June).

The destruction of communication lines and other facilities throughout France would hinder the German response to the invasion.

The reach of the maquis exceeded their grasp. On 20 May, Coulaudon declared a general mobilization of resistance fighters, collecting in total about 7,000 men divided into three groups.

His objective was to demonstrate that the resistance was able to liberate areas from the Germans with its own forces.

On 2 June, the Germans launched a probing attack on Coulaudon's base at Mont Mouchet; on 10 June the Germans launched a larger attack, and on 20 June encircled Coulaudon's positions and forced the resistance fighters to flee after taking heavy casualties.

Wake and the members of her team accompanied groups of maquis in a three-day 150 kilometre retreat westward to the village of Saint-Santin.



During the flight from the Germans, Rake, the radio operator, had left his radio and codes behind and the SOE team needed to be in contact with London.

The nearest SOE radio and operator were in Châteauroux, Wake said she borrowed a bicycle and rode it to Châteauroux, found a radio near there, updated London on the situation, and then bicycled back to Saint-Santin, traveling 500 kilometres in 72 hours. Fortunately for her, there were few Germans in the areas through which she bicycled.

With Henri Tardivat. After her bicycle ride, the Freelance team, with another recently arrived operator named Roger, a 19-year-old American marine, returned to Allier Department to join the resistance group of Henri Tardivat (who had discovered her tangled in a tree after she was dropped in).

In July two more Americans, Reeve Schley and John deKoven Alsop, joined their team as instructors. Neither spoke much French and Schley was nearly blind if not wearing his thick-lensed eyeglasses, but he impressed the maquisards with his immaculately tailored military uniform.

Both proved to be effective instructors. Wake said that she and Tardivat initiated a series of attacks on German convoys and fought off an attack on their camp by the Germans in which seven French maquisards were killed.

Her principal job, however,



**HEROINE:** Nancy Wake (second from right) poses with a group of Maqui resistance fighters.

continued to be to organize the reception and distribution of arms and material for the resistance groups which was parachuted into Allier nearly every other night.

Wake participated in a raid that destroyed the Gestapo headquarters in Montluçon, killing 38 Germans.

At one point Wake said she discovered that the men were using three girls as prostitutes and mistreating them. She coerced the maquis to release the women, to whom she provided a wash and new clothes.

Nancy Wake set two of the girls free, but she suspected that a third was a German spy. After interrogating and exposing her, Wake ordered the resistance group to shoot the informer.

They did not have the heart to kill her in cold blood, but when Wake insisted that she would perform the execution, they capitulated. Nancy Wake claimed that the spy girl spat and stripped naked in front

of her before facing the firing squad. Wake showed no regrets for the execution.

Wake also said that she killed an SS sentry with her bare hands to prevent him from raising the alarm during a raid. During a 1990s television interview, when asked what had happened to the sentry who spotted her, Wake simply drew her finger across her throat.

“They’d taught this judo-chop stuff with the flat of the hand at SOE, and I practised away at it. But this was the only time I used it – whack – and it killed him all right. I was really surprised.”

After the invasion of southern France by American military forces on 15 August, the Resistance groups harried the retreating Germans.

Her friend Tardivat was badly wounded and would lose a leg to amputation. During a victory celebration in Vichy, Wake learnt of the death of her husband. In mid-September, she

and other members of the Freelance team, their job completed, returned to Great Britain.

**Post-war**

Immediately after the war, Wake was awarded the George Medal,[36] the United States Medal of Freedom, the Médaille de la Résistance, and thrice, the Croix de Guerre.

She worked for the intelligence department at the British Air Ministry, attached to embassies in Paris and Prague.

Wake stood as a Liberal candidate in the 1949 Australian federal election for the Sydney seat of Barton, running against Dr. Herbert Evatt, then deputy prime minister, attorney general, and minister for external affairs in the Ben Chifley Labor government.

While Chifley lost government to Robert Menzies, Wake recorded a 13 percent swing against Evatt, with Evatt retaining the seat with 53.2 per cent of the vote on a two-party preferred basis.

Wake ran against Evatt again at the 1951 federal election. By this time, Evatt was deputy leader of the opposition. The result was extremely close; however, Evatt retained the seat with a margin of fewer than 250 votes.

Evatt slightly increased his margin at subsequent elections before relocating to the safer seat of Hunter by 1958.

Wake left Australia just after the 1951 election and moved back to England. She worked as an intelligence officer in the department of the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff at the Air Ministry in Whitehall.

She resigned in 1957 after marrying an RAF officer, John Forward, in December of that year. They relocated to Australia in the early 1960s. Maintaining her interest in politics, Wake was endorsed as a Liberal candidate at the 1966 federal election for the Sydney seat of Kingsford Smith.

Despite recording a swing of 6.9 per cent against the sitting Labor member Daniel Curtin, Wake was again unsuccessful. Around 1985, Wake and John Forward left Sydney to retire to Port Macquarie.

In 1985, Wake published her autobiography, *The White Mouse*. Later, after 40 years of marriage, her second husband John Forward died at Port Macquarie on 19 August 1997. The couple had no children.

She sold her medals to fund herself, saying, “There was no point in keeping them, I’ll probably go to hell and they’d melt anyway.”

In 2001, Wake left Australia for the last time and emigrated to London. She became a resident at the Stafford Hotel in St. James’ Place, near Piccadilly, formerly a British and American forces club during the war.

She had been introduced to her first “bloody good drink” there by the general manager at the time, Louis Burdet. He also had worked for the Resistance in Marseille.

In the mornings she would usually be found in the hotel bar, sipping her first gin and tonic of the day and telling war stories. She was welcomed at the hotel, celebrating her ninetieth birthday

there. The hotel owners absorbed most of the costs of her stay.

In 2003, Wake chose to move to the Royal Star and Garter Home for Disabled Ex-Service Men and Women, in Richmond, London, where she remained until her death.

Wake died on 7 August 2011, aged 98, at Kingston Hospital after being admitted with a chest infection. She had requested that her ashes be scattered at Montluçon in central France.

Her ashes were scattered near the village of Verneix, which is near Montluçon, on 11 March 2013.

Her obituary was included in (and inspired the title for) *The Socialite Who Killed A Nazi With Her Bare Hands: And 144 Other Fascinating People Who Died This Year*, a collection of New York Times obituaries published in 2012.

**Honours**

Wake was appointed a Chevalier (knight) of the Legion of Honour in 1970 and was promoted to Officer of the Legion of Honour in 1988.

Shortly after the war, she was recommended for decorations in Australia but was turned down. Decades later, Australia offered to award her medals but she refused, saying: “The last time there was a suggestion of that I told the government they could stick their medals where the monkey stuck his nuts. The thing is if they gave me a medal now, it wouldn’t be love so I don’t want anything from them.”

# M4 Sherman Tank

*Although nicknamed the 'Tommycooker', 'Ronson' and 'The Burning Grave', the M4 Sherman was the most widely used medium tank by the United States and Western Allies in World War II. It proved to be reliable, relatively cheap to produce, and available in great numbers.*

**W**hen the Germans invaded France in May 1940 the consequent tank actions were closely observed by various US Army agencies.

From their observations the Americans learned that the next generation of medium tanks had to have at least a 75 mm gun as their main armament, but this presented them with problems as their next

tank generation, already being produced in prototype form, was armed with only a 37 mm gun of the type already seen to be obsolete.

The new design became the Medium Tank M3, and was rushed into mass production in a factory meant for the earlier M2.

While the Medium Tank

M3 was being rushed into production, a new design of medium tank with a turret-mounted 75 mm main gun was being pushed through the drawing board stages.

To save time this was to use the same basic hull and suspension as the M3, but the upper hull was revised to accommodate the gun turret.

The first example of the new tank was rolled out in September 1941 as the Medium Tank T6 and proved to be a very good design.

The upper hull was cast, and this not only provided added protection but sped up production, at that time a definite asset.

The new weapon was rushed into production as the Medium Tank M4, with a 75 mm main gun and co-axial 7.62 mm ma-



chine-gun, 7.62 mm bow gun and 12.7 mm gun for anti-aircraft defence.

This baseline model had minimum and maximum armour thickness's of 15 mm and 76 mm respectively.

It proved to be an excellent fighting platform and went on to be one of the war-winning weapons of the Allies, being constructed in thousands.

By the time the production lines stopped rolling in 1945 well over 40,000 had been made, and the type was built in a bewildering array of marks, sub-marks and variants of all kinds.

It would take a magazine on its own to even attempt a complete listing of all the numerous versions, but suffice to say that once in service the M4 series was fitted with different, more powerful engines, up-gunned to even more powerful 75 mm, 76 mm, and even 105mm main weapons, and developed into numerous 'specials' such as engineer tanks, assault tanks, tank destroyers, flamethrowers, bridging tanks, recovery vehicles, rocket launchers, self-propelled artillery carriers, anti-mine vehicles and so on, which were produced from scratch or improvised in the field.

Gradually the M4 series became the T-34 of the Western Allies. The British army purchased large numbers of M4s or took them over as part of the Lend-Lease programme.

To the British the M4 was the General Sherman (or simply Sherman) and they too added their variations to the long list of M4 specials. ne of the best

known of these was the 1944 Sherman Firefly, which had a 17-pdr main gun.

The first Shermans went into action with the British at El Alamein in October 1942.

Thereafter the Sherman was the most numerous tank in British army service for the rest of World War II.

### Drawbacks

The M4 had many drawbacks and was far from being the ideal battle tank. It was often left behind in firepower as the German tank guns increased in power and calibre, and the armour thickness's and arrangement were frequently found wanting.

Indeed many field improvisations had to be used to beef up the armour, these including the simple expedient of using stacked sandbags.

The silhouette was too high for comfort and the interior arrangements far from perfect.

Another problem frequently encountered was that with so many variants in use spares were often not available and engine interchangeability was frequently impossible, causing considerable logistical troubles.

One of the main problems with the M4 was that it made use of gasoline engines. Petrol is far more flammable than diesel, which most other tanks used.

This meant that the M4 would often ignite and burst into flames went it received a direct hit, offering the crew little chance to bail out.

Because of its propensity to catch fire, the Sherman soon

gained several nicknames.

The Germans nicknamed the M4 the 'Tommycooker'. Tommy was the German nickname for a British soldier.

The British nicknamed it the 'Ronson'. The Ronson was a popular cigarette lighter than, in their ads, guaranteed to "light up the first time, every time."

Even the Free Poles had a nickname for the M4. They called it "The Burning Grave".

It was in the summer of 1944, in the fields and hedgerows of Normandy, that the M4 Sherman would face its biggest challenge against far superior German armour.

First up was the German Panzer V, also known as the Panther. It is considered one of the best tanks of World War II for its excellent firepower and protection, although its reliability was less impressive.

It used the 7.5 cm KwK 42 L/70 main gun and its armour was up to 100 mm thick. With a speed of 55 km/h it was also much faster than the Sherman.

The Germans has as many as 4,800 Panthers deployed.

Even more impressive was the *Panzerkampfwagen VI Tiger Ausf. E* often shortened to Tiger.

The Tiger I gave the German Army its first armoured fighting vehicle that mounted the 8.8 cm KwK 36 gun (not to be confused with the 8.8 cm Flak 36), a main gun that could knock out any armoured target.

The Sherman's 75mm and 76mm guns just could not pierce the mighty Tiger tank's frontal armour even at short range while the latter could

## M4 Sherman Tank



- Designer: U.S. Army Ordnance Department
- Designed: 1940
- Manufacturer: American Locomotive Company, Baldwin Locomotive Works, Detroit Tank Arsenal, and various others
- Weight: 30.3–38.1 tonnes
- Length: 5.84 metres
- Width: 2.62 metres
- Height: 2.74 metres
- Crew: 5 (commander, gunner, loader, driver, assistant driver/bow gunner)
- Armour: 12.7 mm minimum, up to a maximum of 177.8 mm
- Main armament: 75 mm gun M3 (90–104 rounds), or 76 mm gun M1A1, M1A1C, or M1A2 (71 rounds), or 105 mm howitzer M4 (66 rounds)
- Secondary armament: .50 calibre Browning M2HB machine gun (300–600 rounds), 2×.30 calibre Browning M1919A4 machine guns (6,000–6,750 rounds)
- Engine: Continental R975 -C1 or -C4 9 cylinder radial gasoline engine, 350 or 400 hp (261 or 298 kW) at 2,400 rpm
- Transmission: Spicer manual synchromesh transmission, 5 forward and 1 reverse gears
- Suspension: Vertical volute spring suspension (VVSS) or horizontal volute spring suspension (HVSS)
- Fuel capacity: 522 litres
- Operational range: 161 kilometres on road
- Speed: 35 km/h on road

vanquish the Shermans with impunity from greater distances.

Another drawback was that, unlike the German tanks and the Soviet-built T-34 medium tank, the Sherman made a far more visible target in combat because of its height.

After August 1944, produc-

tion of the Tiger I was phased out in favour of the Tiger II. Named the *Panzerkampfwagen Tiger Ausf. B*, it was also known as the *Königstiger* or King Tiger.

Armed with the 8.8 cm KwK 43 L/71 and up to 185 mm of armour, it was a formidable weapon.

The Germans fielded up to 1,835 Tiger and King Tiger tanks. The problem for them was that they were up against some 40,000 Allied Shermans.

It also helped that the Allied air forces enjoyed a huge aerial superiority over the virtually beaten German Luftwaffe. Working in tandem with well-coordinated Allied infantry, artillery, and air forces, the plentiful and trusty Shermans were able to vanquish most German armoured formations simply by ganging up on them in overwhelming numbers when all else failed.

### Post World War II

While the U.S. Army replaced the M4 in 1957, it still remained in service with a number of other countries. In fact 42 other countries used the M4.

Post World War II the M4 saw action in Korea, the Middle East, Greece, India-Pakistan, South America and Africa. The last time the M4 was used in action was during the Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1983.

While it may never have been the best tank of the war, the M4 Sherman was the most widely used medium tank by the United States and Western Allies. It proved to be reliable, relatively cheap to produce, and available in great numbers.

It was, for the Western Allies, the tank that helped defeat Germany. Besides that, it was a weapon that was forged in battle.

*With the Germans retreating from Poland ahead of the Soviet advance, the Polish underground resistance, led by the Home Army, launched an operation to liberate Warsaw. What followed was one of the most tragic betrayals of the war.*

**A**t precisely 17h00 on 1 August sirens will begin to wail in Warsaw, Poland. People will stop and stand with their head bowed solemnly. Cars will stop and people will get out and stand next to the vehicle. At various places flares are set off.

After a minute people will resume whatever they were doing and get on with their lives. This is how Warsaw remembers one of the central events in its history - the Uprising of 1944.

**Background**

By the Summer of 1944 the tides of war were turning against the Germans. The Americans and the British had landed in Normandy, and the Red Army was rapidly advancing from the East. And the Russian were approaching Warsaw, the capital of Poland.

The Poles had been waiting for their opportunity since the Nazi's first occupied Warsaw.

On 1 August 1944 General 'Bor' Komorowski finally ordered the *Armia Krajowa* (AK), the Home Army, to rise up and claim Warsaw back from the Nazis.

The Nazis had held the city for four years. Now it was time to take it back.

At 17h00 on 1 August between 25,000 and 50,000 soldiers and civilian volunteers (including women and children) took up arms and began an assault on key strategical positions throughout the city.

Only about 10% of them were armed at the start, but they quickly helped themselves to captured German weapons.

The timing of the operation seemed perfect. The Germans were retreating

and the Red Army was approaching the outskirts of Warsaw.

The Germans were taken by surprise and in the first few days the Home Army won several bloody skirmishes. The red and white of the Polish national flag flew over the Old Town.

The mood was triumphant in those areas liberated by the Home Army. Varsovians, as those from Warsaw are known, held concerts, had poetry reading, and generally celebrated their newly earned freedom. Unbeknown to them it was to be the city's last taste of freedom for forty-four years.

**Betrayal**

General Komorowski knew from the outset that the Home Army had no chance of ever holding Warsaw against the Germans, and it had never been part of the plan.

All they needed to do was displace the German troops stationed in the city and hold the town for several days before the Russians arrived.

For some time the Polish service of Radio Moscow had been appealing for Warsaw to rise up.

On 25 July, the Union of Polish Patriots, in a broadcast from Moscow, stated: "The Polish Army of Polish Patriots ... calls on the thousands of brothers thirsting to fight, to smash the foe before he can recover from his defeat ... Every Polish homestead must become a stronghold in the struggle against the invaders ... Not a moment is to be lost."

On 29 July 1944 Radio Station Kosciuszko located in Moscow emitted a few times its "Appeal to Warsaw" and called to "Fight The Germans!": "No doubt Warsaw already hears the guns of



**WARSAW BURNS:** A German Ju-87 'Stuka' bombs the Old Town of Warsaw.

the battle which is soon to bring her liberation. ... The Polish Army now entering Polish territory, trained in the Soviet Union, is now joined to the People's Army to form the Corps of the Polish Armed Forces, the armed arm of our nation in its struggle for independence. Its ranks will be joined tomorrow by the sons of Warsaw. They will all together, with the Allied Army pursue the enemy westwards, wipe out the Hitlerite vermin from Polish land and strike a mortal blow at the beast of Prussian Imperialism."

While the Germans may have initially been taken by surprise, they soon reacted. When German *Reichsführer* of the SS Heinrich Himmler heard about the uprising he decreed that the whole city and its population should be destroyed as an example to the rest of Europe.

"The city must completely disappear from the surface of the earth and serve only as a transport station for the Wehrmacht.

No stone can remain standing. Every building must be razed to its foundation," Himmler told an SS officers conference on 17 October 1944.

The Germans brought in heavy reinforcements and the full force of their firepower: tanks, rocket launchers, and air raids were just some of the hazards the ill-equipped Poles had to contend with. The city became a giant war zone and civilians were not spared.

What was supposed to have been a coup lasting two or three days turned into a bloody and bitter struggle that lasted for 63 days.

But wait! Where was the Red Army? Why had they not come to the rescue of the doomed Poles? They were sitting on the sidelines, watching the events unfold.

**Betrayal**

The Red Army had reached the Vistula River. All they had to do was cross the river, and

Warsaw was theirs for the taking.

Yet when they reached the Vistula, they halted on the orders of none other than Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. They sat and watched while the Germans regained control of the city.

But what was the reason for this inaction? It was simple. Stalin hated the Poles almost as much as he hated the Germans.

Stalin considered the Poles his arch-enemy. And it all stemmed back to the Soviet-Polish War between 1919 and 1921. It was a war in which the Bolsheviks were humiliated and the Poles were able to claim all disputed territories from the Russians, including Lwow (now Lviv, in the Ukraine) and Wilno (now Vilnius, in Lithuania).

It was during the same war that Stalin was almost court-martial led for his inadequacies a military commander.

Now that the Germans were doing such a good job of destroying his bitter enemies, Stalin certainly didn't want to stop them. Moreover, with the last of Poland's home-based soldiers and leaders destroyed, he would be free to work his will over the ruined country.

Moreover, kindly 'Uncle Joe' deliberately obstructed the rest of the Allies from dispatching aid to the insurgents - refusing even to allow the Americans and the Brits to use precious air bases that were now under Soviet control.

**The Wola Massacre**

The Uprising reached its peak on 4 August when the Home Army soldiers managed to establish front lines in the west-

ernmost boroughs of Wola and Ochota.

It was at this stage, however, that German reinforcements began to arrive. On the same day SS General Erich von dem Bach was appointed commander of all the forces employed against the Uprising.

As the Germans advanced, special SS, police and Wehrmacht groups went from house to house, shooting the inhabitants regardless of age or gender and burning their bodies. Estimates of civilians killed in Wola and Ochota range from 20,000 to as high as 100,000.

The main perpetrators were Oskar Dirlewanger and Bronislav Kaminski, whose forces committed the cruelest atrocities.

The actions against the civilian population were designed to crush the Poles' will to fight and put the uprising to an end without having to commit to heavy city fighting. All it did was stiffen the Pole's will to fight.

Until mid-September, the Germans shot all captured resistance fighters on the spot, but from the end of September, some of the captured Polish soldiers were treated as POWs.

## Airdrops

From 4 August the Western Allies began supporting the Uprising with airdrops of munitions and other supplies.

The flights were carried out by the 1568th Polish Special Duties Flight of the Polish Air Force, No. 148 and No. 178 RAF Squadrons, and No. 31 and No. 34 Squadrons of the South African Air Force.



**RESISTANCE:** Members of the Polish Home Army. Many of them are wearing captured German uniforms.

The Soviet Union did not allow the Western Allies to use its airports for the airdrops for several weeks, so the planes had to use bases in the United Kingdom and Italy which reduced their carrying weight and number of sorties. The Allies' specific request for the use of landing strips made on 20 August was denied by Stalin on 22 August.

Stalin referred to the Polish resistance as "a handful of criminals" and stated that the Uprising was inspired by "enemies of the Soviet Union".

Thus, by denying landing rights to Allied aircraft on Soviet-controlled territory the Soviets vastly limited effectiveness of Allied assistance to the Uprising, and even fired at Allied airplanes which carried supplies from Italy and strayed into Soviet-controlled airspace.

American support was also limited. After Stalin's objections to supporting the uprising, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill telegraphed U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 25 August and

proposed sending planes in defiance of Stalin, to "see what happens".

American wanted Russia to declare war on Japan. Unwilling to upset Stalin before the Yalta Conference on 26 August, Roosevelt was not willing to upset Stalin in any way. And Stalin knew it.

Finally on 18 September the Soviets allowed a USAAF flight of 107 B-17 Flying Fortresses of the Eighth Air Force's 3rd Division to re-fuel and reload at Soviet airfields used in Operation Frantic, but it was too little too late.

The planes dropped 100 tons of supplies but only 20 were recovered by the resistance due to the wide area over which they were spread. The vast majority of supplies fell into German-held areas.

## The inevitable end

There was no way that the Home Army could compete with the reinforced German troops.

The Polish insurgents were forced into hiding, often into

the sewers, from where they continued to orchestrate and co-ordinate attacks.

The Home Army lacked supplies of any kind. They were almost out of ammunition and food was almost non-existent. Every animal in the city had been eaten - even the vermin.

Moreover, the Germans were in control of the water and power supplies.

As the battle for the city raged on, with Varsovians dying at a rate of 2,000 a day, it became only a matter of time before the rebels were forced to capitulate. They finally did so on October 2nd, 63 days after the Uprising began.

In the two month struggle 18,000 Home Army soldiers died and 12,000 were wounded with the survivors either sent to German POW camps or managing to go into hiding. A staggering 250,000 civilians were killed during the Upris-

ing. Meanwhile the German suffered 10,000 fatalities with nearly as many again wounded.

## The aftermath

For 63 days the people of Warsaw had struggled and suffered. Yet that was only the beginning of their suffering.

The Germans were the first to punish Warsaw and its people for daring to defend its freedom. Hitler ordered the city to be all but wiped off the face of the earth and special units were brought in to systematically detonate any building of the remotest importance to Polish culture.

The city was effectively destroyed block by block, and when the Russians finally crossed the Vistula to liberate the city, they inherited only ruins.

Later, in the years directly following the War, as the Poles tried to rebuild their shattered

country under Communist leadership, it was forbidden to talk of the brave soldiers of the Uprising.

The movement was denounced as illegal and every effort was made to slander those involved. Keen to behead Polish society of its heroes and intelligentsia Stalin sent many of the surviving members of the AK to Siberia for lengthy spells of hard labour, whilst he executed those whom he perceived as particularly dangerous.

On 1 August I will come to attention and bow my head and observe a minute's silence.

When I became a member of the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTH), I took an oath that "we will remember them". And surely those brave souls that took part in the Warsaw Uprising should be remembered. I suggest that other veterans do the same.

# Springbok



The SA Legion is a national organisation, part of a world-wide family that addresses the needs of ex-service personnel and their dependents by way of housing, pensions, employment and general welfare. It is apolitical, non-sectarian, non-racial, non-sexist and non-partisan.

The Springbok is the official journal of the South African Legion. Read the December 2021 issue of Spring-



*Sent to the Eastern Front, unable to speak either German or Russian, unable to hit a target 10 metres away, Matt 'Get me out of here' O'Brien arrives at the Gates of Hell.*

Back in the April 2021 issue of Military Dispatches I reviewed a game named Call to Arms. It was a pretty good game and I gave it a score of 7/10.

Why I mention this is because you will need to own a copy of Call to Arms if you want to play the game that I'm reviewing in this edition of the magazine.

It's an RTS/RTT (Real Time Strategy/Real Time Tactics) game titled Call to Arms - Gates of Hell: Ostfront and it's a DLC for Call to Arms. It features the Eastern Front and its "Great Patriotic War" fought between the USSR and Germany. This will take you from June 1941 until the end of the war in May 1945.

The game offers a choice of game modes including Single player, dynamic campaign, PvE, PvP and co-op.

With its instantly switchable views, there's something for every type of player. First person gunner views for all vehicles, third person views for vehicles and infantry, classic top-down direct control of a single unit or classic RTS top-down; they are all available and instantly switchable.

Conquest (dynamic campaign) mode offers singleplayer and co-op modes to play with

your friends. Both modes allow you to compose your own army group, research new units and strategically advance in different paths to dominate the battlefield. The dynamic campaign can range from short to unlimited campaign lengths.

PvP/PvE offers a wide variety of maps from 1v1 to 4v4, and the use of "Doctrines". These allow you to choose your own special units that fit your individual play style. The stage of the war (Early/Mid/Late) can be selected, to experience the evolution of equipment and vehicles as the conflict progressed.

Call to Arms - Gates of Hell: Ostfront offers:

- 12 historical single player missions that can also be played in co-op with friends.
- 30 PvE and PvP maps
- PvE Dynamic campaigns in which you develop your own army and fight an ever-changing war across a big collection of maps
- PvP multiplayer offers doctrines to specialize your armies
- Instantly switchable 3rd person/ direct control view mode for infantry
- Instantly switchable 1st person/ 3rd person / direct control view mode for vehicles

- Over 250 vehicles and 100 heavy weapons at your disposal
- Air support mechanics and off-map artillery support
- Realistically armoured vehicles with accurate armour layouts, historical ammo loadouts and fully modelled internal components
- The most realistic armour penetration and ammunition mechanics of any RTS currently out there
- Land mines, magnetic mines, obstacle-laying, fox-hole-building, bayonets, smokescreens, medics and countless other game mechanics

Authentic sound design and visuals

A full in-game editor plus modding/ workshop support

I've already put a number of hours into playing the single player campaign, and I must admit that I'm enjoying it. Currently I'm playing as the Germans, but next time around I'll play as the Russians.

The game is realistic and you will need to have your wits about you if you plan to succeed.

In many games that I've played I've found the AI (Artificial Intelligence) to be anything but intelligent. In fact at times it can



be really dumb. This is not the case with Gates of Hell.

Another thing that has impressed me with the game is the quality of the sound effects. In many games nearly everything sounds the same. This is not the case with this game. You can hear the difference between a German MP-40 and a Russian PPSH.

I enjoy being able to switch from controlling your army to playing as a single person or vehicle.

And I must confess that I love the sound of a Tiger tank's V-12 Maybach engine. Or how about the eerie yet mesmerising sound of a battery of Katyusha rocket launchers, the Stalin Organ, letting loose with a salvo of rockets.

The maps not only looking good, they're realistic and based on actual terrain. And terrain plays a huge part in how you approach a mission.

Tanks are great on the vast semi-arid grassland of the

steppes. Yet in the tight confines of towns and cities they are vulnerable to ambush.

One thing you will need when you play this game is patience - lots of patience. When you start off you are going to make mistakes and you are going to get slaughtered.

Yet if you learn from those mistakes you will find the right tactics to advance in the game.

A new DLC has been added and it is called Call to Arms - Gates of Hell: Talvisota. It costs R120 and introduces Finland to the battlefield. It covers three separate conflicts - Winter War, Continuation War and Lapland War.

One of the really great things about the game is that it has a large modding community and you will find hundreds of mods available on the Steam Workshop.

Some of the mods are excellent. The Valour mod, for instance, introduces new countries into the game. They are USA,

Japan, France, Poland, Britain, Hungary and Italy.

If you like your war games realistic, then Call to Arms - Gates of Hell: Ostfront is a good choice.



Publisher - Digitalmindsoft

Genre - RTS/RTT

Score - 8.5/10

Price - R279.00



## Movie Review

# A Bridge too Far

Released: 1977

Running time: 176 minutes

Director: Richard Attenborough

Directed by Richard Attenborough, *A Bridge Too Far* is a 1977 British-American war film based on the 1974 book of the same name by Cornelius Ryan.

The film tells the story of Operation Market Garden, a bold plan by the Allies during World War II to break through German lines and seize several bridges in the occupied Netherlands, including one at Arnhem, with the main objective of outflanking German defences in order to end the war by Christmas of 1944.

The name for the film comes from an unconfirmed comment attributed to British Lieutenant-General Frederick Browning, deputy commander of the First Allied Airborne Army, who told Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, the operation's architect, before the operation: "I think we may be going a bridge too far", in reference to the intention of seizing the Arnhem bridgehead over the Rhine river.

The plan sees 35,000 men being flown 480 kilometres from air bases in England and dropped behind enemy lines in the Netherlands. Two divisions of U.S. paratroopers, the 82nd and 101st Airborne, are responsible for securing the road and bridges as far as Nijmegen. A British division, the 1st Airborne, under Major-General Roy Urquhart, is to land near Arnhem and hold both sides of the bridge there, backed by a

brigade of Polish paratroopers under General Stanisław Sosabowski. XXX Armoured Corps are to push up the road over the bridges captured by the American paratroopers and reach Arnhem two days after the drop.

Speed is the vital factor. Arnhem's is the crucial bridge, the last means of escape for the German forces in the Netherlands and an excellent route to Germany for Allied forces. The road to it, however, is only a single highway linking the various key bridges - trucks and tanks have to squeeze to the shoulder to pass. The road is also elevated, causing anything moving on the road to stand out.

The British are told that resistance at Arnhem will consist entirely of "Hitler Youth or old men on bicycles". They are wrong. The 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions have been withdrawn from the front and placed near Arnhem for rest and refitting.

The ground forces are held up when Son bridge is blown up by the Germans just before the 101st Airborne secures it.

Meant to capture and hold the bridges at Arnhem for just two days, the British paratroopers hold out for nine days before the outgunned troops are captured or forced to withdraw.

ant-General Frederick "Boy" Browning

- James Caan - Staff Sergeant Eddie Dohun
- Michael Caine - Lieutenant-Colonel J.O.E. Vandeleur
- Sean Connery - Major General Roy Urquhart
- Edward Fox - Lt. Gen. Brian Horrocks
- Elliott Gould - Col. Robert Stout
- Gene Hackman - Maj. Gen. Stanisław Sosabowski
- Anthony Hopkins - Lt. Col. John Frost
- Hardy Krüger - Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Karl Ludwig
- Ryan O'Neal - Brig. Gen. James Gavin

### Cast

- Dirk Bogarde - Lieutenant-



Click on the poster to watch a trailer of the series.

# Pilgrim Days

**P**ilgrim Days - From Vietnam to the SAS by Alastair MacKenzie is a really good read.

If there was ever anyone who went a little further, a little beyond, it was Alastair MacKenzie.

In a career spanning 30 years, MacKenzie served uniquely with the New Zealand Army in Vietnam, the British Parachute Regiment, the British Special Air Service (SAS), the South African Defence Force's famed ParaBats, the Sultan of Oman's Special Forces and a host of private security agencies and defence contractors.

MacKenzie lived the soldier's life to the full as he journeyed 'the Golden Road

to Samarkand'.

This extraordinary new work from the author of Special Force: The Untold Story of 22nd Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) vividly documents, in a detail that stuns, the experience of infantry combat in Vietnam, life with the Paras, the tempo of selection for UK Special Forces, covert SAS operations in South Armagh and SAS Counter Terrorist training on the UK mainland, vehicle-mounted Pathfinder Brigade insertions into Angola and maritime counter-terrorism work in Oman.

This is a good read and a fine collection to any library of military works.



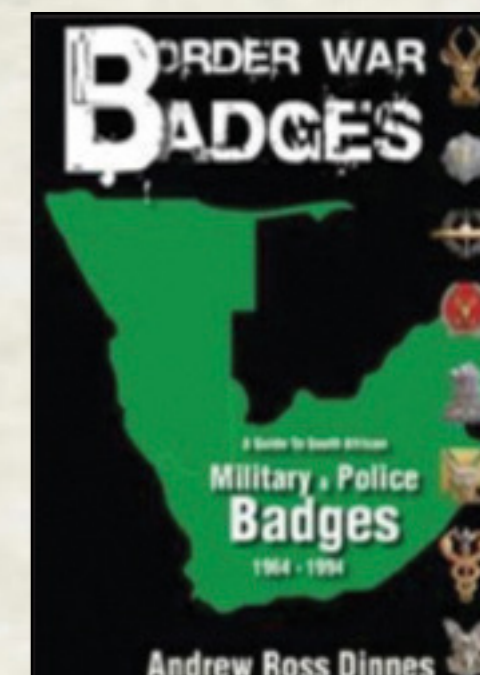
Paperback - 224 pages  
Cost - R550



Weekend Warriors  
R350



Gunship over Angola  
R260



Border War Badges  
R400

All books are available from [Bush War Books](#)

# This month in military history

Some of the significant military events that happened in July. Highlighted in blue are the names of those members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) that lost their lives during the month of August.

## 1 August

- **1798** - The British fleet under Lord Nelson defeats the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile, at Aboukir Bay, Egypt, thus thwarting Napoleon's conquest of the Middle East. Napoleon Bonaparte and his forces are left stranded in Egypt.
- **1900** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War General Ian Hamilton, commanding a force of about 6,000 men with twenty-six field guns, is sent to capture Commando Nek and Silkaatsnek, between Brits and Pretoria, and to cover Baden-Powell's retreat to Pretoria.
- **1901** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War the British parliament votes an additional £12,500 00 for munitions.
- **1901** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War Sir G. Lagden, formerly Resident Commissioner in Basutoland, is appointed by the British as the Commissioner of Native Affairs in the Transvaal and the 'Orange River Colony'.
- **1938** - Air Force Base Waterkloof is founded with two hangars, a runway and No's 1 and 2 Fighter-bomber Squadrons and No 3 Communication Squadron, mainly equipped with Hawker Hartebeest Aircraft. Lt. Col.

H.G. Willmot is first permanent Officer Commanding.

- **1944** - The Warsaw Uprising began as the Polish Home Army, numbering about 40,000 Polish patriots, began shooting at German troops in the streets. The Nazis then sent eight divisions to battle the Poles, who had hoped for, but did not receive, assistance from the Allies. Two months later, the rebellion was quashed.
- **1946** - Andrei Vlasov, Russian general (who fought for both the Red Army and the German Wehrmacht) is executed at age 45.
- **1957** - The United States and Canada form the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).
- **1975** - An order is issued withdrawing the remaining South African Police from Rhodesia.
- **1979** - Lieutenant Sidney Edward Watts from 1 South West Africa Squadron SWATF was killed when his private Cessna 182 aircraft crashed at Eros Airport outside Windhoek during Squadron night flying exercises. He was 28.
- **1981** - Private Rocco Bernard Du Plooy from 2 Squadron was accidentally killed while on official duty but the exact cause of his

death is unknown. He was 17.

- **1982** - The Kenyan Air Force disbands following an attempted coup by non-commissioned officers in which 159 died.
- **1987** - Corporal Marius Albertus van Zyl from Infantry School was killed in a private motor vehicle accident at Oudshoorn while on weekend pass. He was 20.
- **1988** - Seaman Willem Schalk van der Merwe from SAS Rand was killed in a military bus accident in Durban. He was 19.
- **1990** - ANC and its armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) suspends armed actions after twenty-nine years.
- **1990** - Two members of the Cape Regiment were killed in a military vehicle accident at Hammersdale. The casualties were: Rifleman Johannes Jacobus Lourens (27). Rifleman Cupido Johannes Mentoor (21).
- **1992** - Corporal Michael Paul Bankenberg from Group 39 was shot dead by a fellow soldier in Queens-town. He was 21. The soldier who did the shooting then committed suicide. He was 21.
- **1993** - Two members from 3 SAI were killed when their

Mamba Armoured Personnel Carrier overturned near Table Mountain outside Pietermaritzburg. The casualties were: Lance Corporal L. P. Petersen (19). Lance Corporal Johnathan Mervin Thomas (20).

- **1996** - Mohammed Farah Aidid, who has controlled much of Somalia during its civil war, dies of wounds suffered during a skirmish with another faction.

## 2 August

- **1900** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War Lord Roberts sends his Chief of Staff, Lord Kitchener, to take overall command of the forces engaged against Gen. De Wet.
- **1934** - Paul von Hindenburg, German WW1 general and President of Germany (1925-34), dies of lung cancer at 86.
- **1956** - Having held talks on the escalating crisis over control of the Suez Canal with France and the US, Britain mobilises its forces.
- **1965** - Assistant Veldkornet N.R. Pullen from the 42 Army Air Reconnaissance Squadron was killed when his Cessna 185A crashed near Derby while on a routine low level reconnaissance training flight. He was 20.
- **1976** - French officials disclose that France is to supply South Africa with two destroyer escorts.
- **1982** - Lance Corporal Matheus Bambi from 32

Battalion was Killed in Action during a contact with enemy forces in Southern Angola. He was 27.

- **1983** - Rifleman Schaullum Lennox Silverton from Regiment Christiaan Beyers was Killed in Action in a landmine explosion in the Kaokoveld. He was 21.
- **1989** - Private Jacobus Petrus Du Plessis from Quartermaster General was shot dead while on duty at the Karl Kling Building in Pretoria. He was 18.
- **1989** - Rifleman Rudolph Ernst Thiel from 1 Reconnaissance Regiment was accidentally killed in the Duku-Duku Forest Training area near Mtubatuba when his Unimog overturned on a gravel road during a training exercise. He was 19.
- **1990** - The Iraqi army invaded Kuwait amid claims that Kuwait threatened Iraq's economic existence by overproducing oil and driving prices down on the world market. An Iraqi military government was then installed in Kuwait which was annexed by Iraq on the claim that Kuwait was historically part of Iraq. This resulted in Desert Shield, the massive Allied military buildup, and later the 100-hour war against Iraq, Desert Storm.
- **1999** - At least twelve people are killed in rebel attacks on

a police station, airport and the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in and around Katima Mulilo.

- **2007** - Holden Roberto, Angolan founder and leader of the FNLA, dies at 84.

## 3 August

- **1900** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War, in a breach of neutrality, Colonel Stowe, Consul-General of the USA, allows a British Intelligence officer, carrying important papers from Milner to Kitchener, to hide from Danie Theron in his railway carriage.
- **1900** - War correspondent Ernie Pyle (1900-1945) was born in Dana, Indiana. His syndicated column offered sympathetic insights into the experiences of common soldiers during World War II. He received a Pulitzer Prize for his reports of the bombing of London in 1940 and later war reports from Africa, Sicily, Italy and France. He was killed by machine-gun fire near Okinawa in the South Pacific on April 18, 1945.



**Jonas Savimbi**



- **1900** - President Paul Kruger and Commandant General Louis Botha issued a proclamation in Pretoria which promised to pay those Burghers who remained active with their Commandos for damage done to their farms by the British troops.
- **1911** - An Italian, Commander Piazza, is the world's first pilot to fly a military mission he flies reconnaissance missions over Tripoli.
- **1934** - Jonas Savimbi, former leader of Unita, was born on this day in Munhango, Angola.
- **1940** - Italy begins occupation of British Somaliland.
- **1956** - An event unique in the SAAF history takes place. The SAAF squadron that was placed at the disposal of the United Nations Organisation during the Korean War, is presented with the prestigious United States presidential unit citation, awarded for 'extraordinary heroism against the armed enemy of the United Nations from November 1951 to April 1952'.
- **1974** - Lieutenant Henri Cornelius Lotz from 41 Squadron was killed when his AM-3C Bosbok crashed near Johannesburg. He was 25.
- **1978** - Captain Anthony Howard Brinkworth from 24 Squadron was Reported Missing when his Buccaneer SMk.50, flown by Captain Dries Marais, suffered a double flame-out and crashed into the sea 28 miles off Green Point near Scottburgh and exploded on impact with the water. He was 27.
- **1979** - President Francisco Macías Nguema of Equatorial Guinea is overthrown in a military coup by his nephew Colonel Teodoro Obiang Ngueme Mbasogo.
- **1980** - Two members from 32 Battalion were Killed in Action in Southern Angola when they triggered a booby trap inside an enemy bunker during Operation Vastrap. They were: Corporal Michael Christian Coetzee (26). Corporal Daniel Heinrich Grobler (20).
- **1983** - Rifleman Adriaan Jacobus Booysen Thirion from the Boksburg Commando was killed in an accidental mortar bomb explosion during operations in Southern Angola. He was 25.
- **1985** - Rifleman Mark John Littrell from 1 Parachute Battalion Died of Wounds accidentally sustained while based in the Northern Operational Area. He was 19.
- **1986** - Three members from Durban Regiment were killed when their Buffel Troop Carrier overturned in Durban. The casualties were: Lance Corporal Robert Dennis Sterling (26). Rifleman Trevor Reginald William Holland (24). Rifleman Eric Cornelius Koekemoer (21).
- **2004** - General Muhamed

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General Muhamed

Lamari, head of Algeria's army, resigns for health reasons.

The Military Council for Justice and Democracy overthrows President Taya of Mauritania in a coup, while he is in Saudi Arabia for the funeral of King Fahd.

#### 4 August

A Portuguese attempt at an invasion against the Moors of Morocco is thwarted at the Battle of Alcazar-el-Kebir. King Sebastian of Portugal, the King of Fez and the Moorish pretender to the throne of Fez, are all killed.

During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War the Battle of Elands River (Brakfontein), near present-day Swartruggens, that lasted several days, starts.

During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War Lord Methuen, British general, destroys the village of Schweizer-Reneke, leaving only the church standing.

The French fleet bombards Casablanca, northwest Morocco, following anti-foreign outbreaks.

Germany invades Belgium and when London's ultimatum to Berlin to withdraw expires at midnight, Britain declares war on Germany.

Italy invades British Somaliland and occupies some towns in Sudan and Kenya. General Godwin-Austin and his small

garrison of British troops was unable to stop the Duke d'Acota's 25,000 soldiers who swarmed across the border.

Military conscription became compulsory for all White men in South Africa over the age of 16. Deferment to complete schooling or a university degree was granted, but hardly any White men were exempt from conscription.

Signaler Victor Donald Devenish from 23 Squadron, 2 Signals Regiment was accidentally killed in a Military Vehicle Accident at Binga in Rhodesia while deployed there during Ops Falcon (Clandestine Electronic Warfare Deployment). He was 18.

Corporal Barend Phillippus Hendrikus Du Plessis from the South African Air Force died in H.F. Verwoerd Hospital in Pretoria from injuries sustained in a private motor cycle accident. He was 21.

Captain Thomas Sankara seizes power in a military coup in Burkina Faso.

Private Francois du Preez Smit from the Provost School was killed in a military vehicle accident at the Far North Command Headquarters Unit in Pietersburg. He was 18.

Staff Sergeant Marius Horn from 5 SAI was accidentally killed near Eshowe. He was 27.

Lance Corporal

Craig Adrian Maguire from the Army Battle School died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained in the Army Battle School training area. He was 21

The first 200 members of a West African peacekeeping force arrive in Liberia in an effort to stop more than two months of fighting between government forces and rebels, and allow food and medicine to enter Monrovia.

#### 5 August

A peace treaty with Tripoli, which follows treaties with Algeria and Tunis, brings an end to the Barbary Wars.

The Alabama, an American Civil War raider, captures the Northern bark, Sea Bride, outside Table Bay. The Alabama was built during the American Civil War to prey on the mercantile shipping of the Northern states. Her captain and officers were Southerners, her crew British. The Malays composed the well-known folksong *Daar Kom Die Alabama* with reference to this ship.

The British navy defeats the Ottomans at the naval battle off Port Said, Egypt.

PW Botha, the Minister of Defence, says that South Africa has become

self-sufficient in the manufacture of arms. The country is considering exporting weapons.

Rifleman Johannes Jacobus Christoffel Stols from 3 SAI Support Company attached to 52 Battalion, was Killed in Action when his Buffel Troop Carrier detonated a boosted TMA-3 Cheese Mine while on patrol near Ogongo. He was 20.

The United States sends a Marine company into Monrovia, Liberia's capital, to evacuate US citizens because of a rebel threat to arrest Americans in order to provoke foreign intervention in the civil war.

Gunner Riaan Jakob Rautenbach from 61 Mechanised Battalion was accidentally killed when a 120mm Mortar Tube exploded after firing an over-boosted mortar bomb during training at Omuthiya. He was 20.

Four members from the Intelligence School in Kimberley were killed when their SAMIL 50 vehicle overturned approximately



**Hugo Bierman**

5 km from the Unit Headquarters. The casualties were: Lance Corporal Alan Bernard Clarke (18). Lance Corporal Jacob Johannes de Jager (18). Lance Corporal Jacques Delpont (18). Lance Corporal Jacobus Frans Hamman (18).

- **1998** - Otto Kretschmer, German U-boat commander, dies at 86.

### 6 August

- **1891** - British Field Marshall William Joseph Slim is born on this day.
- **1900** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War the Battle of Elands River takes place. British Gen. Carrington retreats to the Marico River and Zeerust, Western Transvaal, pursued for part of the way by Boer forces. He burns his baggage train and surplus supplies and retires towards Mafeking.
- **1916** - Admiral Hugo (Hendrik) Bierman, former Chief of the Navy and Chief of the SADF, is born in Johannesburg.
- **1945** - The first Atomic Bomb was dropped over the center of Hiroshima at 08h15, by the American B-29 bomber Enola Gay. The bomb detonated about 850 metres above ground, killing over 105,000 persons and destroying the city. Another estimated 100,000 persons later died as a result of radiation effects.

- **1980** - Rifleman Petrus Ja-

cob from 35 Battalion was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 19.

- **1980** - Rifleman Neels Jacobus Reynolds from 41 Battalion was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 18.
- **1986** - Lance Corporal Jacobus Andries Cornelius Nel from the Intelligence School in Kimberley died in the Universitas Hospital after being critically injured on 05 August 1986 when his SAMIL 50 vehicle overturned 5km from the Unit Headquarters. He was 18.
- **1997** - The SA Air Force announces that Mirages will be phased out because of a cut to the defence budget.

### 7 August

- **1795** - The Battle of Muizenberg takes place during the Napoleonic War when British troops disembark at Muizenberg and move towards Cape Town, notwithstanding brave defence by Lieut. P.W. Marnitz and Capt. C. Kemper after De Lille vacated his position.
- **1876** - International spy Mata Hari (1876-1917) was born (as Margaret Gertrude Zelle) in Leewarden, Netherlands. Arrested by the French in 1917 as a German spy, she was tried, convicted and sentenced to death. At

her execution, she refused a blindfold and instead threw a kiss to the French firing squad.

- **1900** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War the Battle of Tygerpoort (Venterskroon) takes place between the British under Lord Methuen and the Boers under De Wet. De Wet, with the aid of Capt. Danie Theron and fourteen of his men, escapes and Methuen falls back to regroup.
- **1901** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War Lord Kitchen publishes his most famous of what the Boers call his 'paper bombs', proclaiming that all officers of the 'late Republics still engaged in fighting and all members of their governments will be permanently banished from South Africa unless they surrender before 15 September.
- **1901** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War the Battle of Fort Mpisane, the final big battle of this war fought in the Lowveld, takes place.
- **1901** - During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War Commandant Manie Maritz attacks Vanrhynsdorp in the Cape Province. Many vehicles, including three laden supply wagons, are taken from the British.
- **1942** - The U.S. 1st Marine Division lands on the islands of Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the Solomon Islands. It is the first American amphibious landing of the war.

- **1963** - The United States (US) informed the United Nations (UN) that it would suspend sales of arms to South Africa. The Security Council adopted Resolution 181 calling upon all states to cease the sale and shipment of arms, ammunition and military vehicles to South Africa. The arms embargo was made mandatory on 4 November, 1977.
- **1964** - Following an attack on two U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin off North Vietnam, the U.S. Congress approved the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, granting President Lyndon B. Johnson authority "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."
- **1970** - Fighting along the Egyptian-Israeli border is brought to a halt as a new 90-day cease-fire takes effect.
- **1973** - Three members from 2 SAI were killed while undergoing Driver and Maintenance training when their Bedford truck collided with an Eland Armoured Car on a narrow bridge on the Walvis Bay to Windhoek road and overturned. The casualties were: Rifleman Kenneth Frampton Beghin (18). Rifleman Christos Constatinou (18). Rifleman Ralph George Leggett (18).
- **1981** - Lance Corporal Jan Mathys de Beer from Air Force Base Waterkloof died

in the H.F. Verwoerd Hospital in Pretoria after being critically injured in a private motor vehicle accident. He was 21.

- **1983** - Two members from 202 Battalion SWATF were Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents. The casualties were: Rifleman S. Kavarata (21). Rifleman A.H. Katanga (22).
- **1984** - Rifleman Johannes Hendrik Strydom from the Infantry School died from a gunshot wound sustained as a result of an accidental discharge of a fellow soldier's rifle while at the De Brug Training Area. He was 19.
- **1987** - Two members from 121 Battalion were killed when their Buffel Troop Carrier overturned at Ngwavuma near Pongola. They were: Rifleman Sikhumbuzo Eric Mbambo (21). Rifleman Alpheus Dumdum Mbambo (24).
- **1988** - Angola, Cuba and South Africa agreed to a formal ceasefire. Under the terms of the ceasefire and later treaty, Cuba was to withdraw its forces from Angola, and South Africa was to grant Namibia independence and withdraw its forces and elections were to be held in Angola. The treaty was signed on 22 December 1988.

• **1989** - Rifleman Jacques Stefan Barkhuizen from Infantry School was killed in a private motor vehicle accident at Hopetown while on route to a tug of war competition. He was 19.

- **1990** - Just five days after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, President George Bush ordered Desert Shield, a massive military buildup to prevent further Iraqi advances.
- **1991** - Commandant Frederick Marthinus Ferreira from Eastern Province Command was killed when his military vehicle was involved in a head-on collision with a civilian vehicle at Grahams-town. He was 51.
- **1998** - Terrorist bombs detonate within minutes of each other outside US embassies in buildings in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania killing more than 250 people and wounding approximately 5,000.

### 8 August

- **1802** - Tjaart van der Walt, frontier farmer and field commandant who played an important role in the third



George H. Bush

frontier war against the combined force of the Xhosa and Khoi-Khoi, is killed in a skirmish in the Kouga mountains, district Humansdorp.

- **1945** - Soviet Russia declared war on Japan and sent troops into Japanese-held Manchuria.
- **1960** - Dag Hammarskjöld, UN secretary-general, instructs Belgium to withdraw its troops from the Congo.
- **1963** - During Operation CAPEX (Cape Exercise), a joint training exercise involving elements of Britain's Royal Navy and both the SA Navy and Air Force, a 35 Squadron Avro MR. Mk 3 Shackleton struck high ground before crashing into the Wemmershook mountain range just outside the town of Worcester, some 96 km east of its destination. All thirteen crew members on board were killed. The casualties were: Captain Thomas Howard Sivertsen (34). Captain Jaques Guillaume Labuschagne (29). 2nd Lieutenant George James Smith (21). Lieutenant Abraham Gert Willem Coetzee (24). 2nd Lieutenant Charles Alwyn du Plooy (19). Candidate Officer Derrick Ian Strauss (19). Warrant Officer II Sydney Shields Scully (46). Flight Sergeant David Hope Sheasby (27). Lance Corporal Charl Paul Viljoen (28). Lance Corporal Marthienus Christoffel Vorster (23).

Lance Corporal Michel Adolf Brodreiss (21). Lance Corporal Matthys Johannes Taljaard (27). Air Mechanic Johannes Chamberlain (20).

- **1988** - South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha announces agreement has been reached for a cease-fire in the Angolan conflict between South Africa, Angola and Cuba. This ends twenty years of bush warfare. The treaty is formally signed at Ruacana in late August.
- **1945** - The second Atomic bombing of Japan occurred as an American B-29 bomber headed for the city of Kokura, but because of poor visibility then chose a secondary target, Nagasaki. About noon, the bomb detonated killing an estimated 70,000 persons and destroying about half the city.
- **1967** - Biafran troops, under the command of Colonel Ojukwu, have crossed the Niger River into Nigeria's Mid-Western State and are heading towards Benin City. Nigeria's leader General Yakubu Gowon, promoted since his reinstatement of Federal rule, is planning an offensive against the Biafran capital Enugu.
- **1975** - The French government has decided to supply no further continental (ground or air) armaments to South Africa. This political decision does not affect naval armaments or existing contracts.
- **1981** - Two members from

5 Reconnaissance Regiment were Killed in Action while carrying out pseudo operations in enemy territory. They were: Rifleman Mahlomola Samuel Mokoena (25). Lance Corporal I van Maleta (23).

- **1983** - Rifleman M. Frans from 5 Reconnaissance Regiment was Killed in Action while carrying out operations against enemy forces. He was 22.
- **1983** - Two members from 40 Squadron were killed when their Atlas MB326M Impala Mk I crashed near Centurion. The casualties were: Lieutenant Leon Jacobs (22). Lance Corporal Pieter Johannes Terburgh (21).
- **1984** - Rifleman Stephanus Badenhorst from 1 Parachute Battalion died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained at the De Brug Training Area during COIN OPS Training. He was 19.
- **1985** - Bombardier Hendrik Petrus Uys from the School of Artillery was killed in a military vehicle accident near Potchefstroom. He was 20.
- **1985** - Rifleman Edwin Williams from 8 SAI died from a gunshot wound resulting from the accidental discharge of a fellow soldier's rifle while he was stationed at Ondangwa. He was 23.
- **1986** - Rifleman M.C. Joao from 32 Battalion was burnt to death at Buffalo when his house caught fire and burnt

down during the night. He was 32.

- **2004** - Several military officers and civilians are arrested in Mauritania for plotting a coup.

### 10 August

- **1900** - British General Carrington reaches Mafeking and narrowly avoids being court-martialled for his inexplicable flight from Elands River (Brakfontein). He later explains his actions to Lord Roberts in Pretoria but a furious Roberts transfers him back to Bulawayo in Rhodesia.
- **1945** - Japan offers to surrender in World War 2 if Emperor Hirohito is permitted to keep his throne.
- **1961** - First use of the Agent Orange in Vietnam by the U.S. Army.
- **1972** - Naval Headquarters at Simon's Town announce that the second series of joint British South African exercises off the Cape Coast will begin on 14 August 1972 and will continue for seven days.
- **1973** - Leading Seaman Hendrik van der Merwe from SAS Protea was killed in a military vehicle accident. He was 27.
- **1978** - Two members from 5 SAI attached to "B" Company, 2nd Platoon, 54 Battalion SWATF, were killed after suffering multiple shrapnel wounds in an accidental Rifle Grenade explosion. The casualties were: Lance Cor-

poral Karl Paul Viljoen (22). Rifleman Johannes Gerber le Roux (18).

- **1983** - With support from Libya in their long-running civil war, Chadian insurgents overrun the outpost of Faya-Largeau in northern Chad.
- **1985** - Two members from Sector 30 SWATF were killed when their Buffel Troop Carrier overturned at Welinitschia. The casualties were: Corporal Albert Johan Kotze (19). Rifleman Johannes Frederik Louw (20).

### 11 August

- **1940** - A week before Mussolini orders General Rodolfo Graziani to invade Egypt from Libya, the British RAF raids airfields and Italian military bases.
- **1977** - Rifleman Michael Gerrard Lemmer from 2 SAI was accidentally killed during a training exercise near Otjiwarongo. He left the confines of the Temporary Base (TB) during the night and on returning, was shot dead by the Bren Gunner who mistook him for an insurgent. He was 18.
- **1982** - The South African government has released details of a South African Defence Force (SADF) raid into Southern Angola. Between two and three hundred South West African People's

Organisation (SWAPO) fighters are believed to have been killed, with upwards of another hundred injured at a forward base in the Cambeno Valley. A significant amount of equipment and material was taken and destroyed, including rations originally obtained from the UN High Commission for Refugees.

- **1990** - Egyptian and Moroccan troops land in Saudi Arabia to prevent Iraqi invasion.
- **1993** - UN forces kill seven Somali gunmen who shot at a surveillance helicopter, as militias of warlord Mohammed Farah Aidid intensify an offensive against peacekeepers.
- **1998** - Congolese rebels fighting President Laurent Kabila say they are closing in on the capital, while the government rounds up Tut-sis, suspected of supporting the rebellion.



**Emperor Hitohito**

**12 August**

- **1900** - The rearguard of the Boer forces under De Wet fights a running battle with Lord Methuen's British force. Methuen seizes wagons and prisoners abandoned by the Republicans, as well as one of the Armstrong guns captured at Stormberg.
- **1918** - Wing Commander Guy Penrose Gibson, VC, DSO & Bar, DFC & Bar, was the first Commanding Officer of the Royal Air Force's No. 617 Squadron, which he led in the "Dam Busters" raid in 1943, was born on this day.
- **1960** - UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and UN troops enter rebel province of Katanga in Zaire.
- **1968** - Over 5,000 soldiers supported by tanks, armoured cars and air force units begin manoeuvres in an exercise code named Operation Subasa designed to test the ability of South African defence forces to deal with terrorist activities.
- **1970** - Rifleman Christopher Coetzee from 2 Parachute Regiment was killed in a private motor vehicle accident. He was 21.
- **1975** - Able Seaman Hugo Johan Jacobus Bus from SAS Kimberley accidentally drowned at East London when the boat in which he was a passenger, capsized near Stoney Point during a Naval beach landing exercise. He was 23.

- **1978** - Three members from 1 Parachute Battalion were Killed in Action after walking into an enemy ambush in Southern Angola while in hot pursuit of a SWAPO/PLAN insurgent group approximately 45 men strong. The casualties were: Lance Corporal Pierre Johannes Du Bois (19). Rifleman Johannes Barend Greyling (20). Rifleman Cornelis Frederik van der Nest (20).
- **1981** - Two members from 6 SAI were Killed in Action during a contact with enemy forces in Southern Angola near the Cut-line. They were: Corporal Marthinus Johannes van Staden (19). Rifleman Jacob Jacobus Blom (19).
- **1981** - Four rockets exploded in Voortrekkerhoogte (renamed Thaba Tshwane on 19 May 1998), a large military base in Verwoerdburg (now Centurion) close to Pretoria. The African National Congress (ANC) accepted responsibility.
- **1993** - US marines open fire on 3,000 Somali demonstrators protesting against the US presence in the country.

**13 August**

- **1900** - During the Battle of Elands River, one of Col. Hore's men, having sneaked through the besieger's lines, reaches the British lines near Mafeking and confirms that the Australians and Rhodesians are still holding out. Lord Roberts orders Kitch-

ener to divert three brigades from the hunt on De Wet to relieve Col. Hore.

- **1926** - Communist revolutionary and President of Cuba, Fidel Castro, was born on this day.
- **1967** - Umkhonto we Sizwe's (MK) Luthuli Detachment in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) guerrillas engaged Rhodesian forces in Wankie (now Hwange) Game Reserve, near the border of Zambia and Botswana. The operation became known as the Wankie Campaign.
- **1973** - Captain Dietlof Ziegfried Weyers from 2 SAI died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained while stationed at Walvis Bay. He was 31.
- **1975** - Lance Corporal Machiel Casparus Eksteen Potgieter was accidentally shot dead after being struck by a bullet resulting from the accidental discharge of a 7.62 MAG machine-gun. He was 18.
- **1980** - Rifleman Johan Calitz from 3 SAI Died of Wounds received while on patrol in the Okatopi area when his Section was ambushed by approximately 50 PLAN insurgents. He was 20.
- **1981** - Two members from SWATF were killed while returning to Sector 50 Headquarters when the privately owned civilian aircraft in which they were flying as passengers, crashed shortly

after take-off from Gobabis. The casualties were: Colonel Jacobus Cornelius Theron (63). Lieutenant Josef Johannes Fourie (41).

- **1983** - Rifleman Gavin Viljoen from 7 SAI was killed in a Military Vehicle Accident near Phalaborwa. He was 19.
- **1984** - Two members from the South African Cape Corps were killed when their Buffel Troop carrier overturned at Eersterivier. The casualties were: Rifleman Jannie van Wyk (18). Rifleman Jan Johannes Jacobus Wildschutt (20).
- **1988** - Lance Corporal Arthur Mark Fletcher from 5 SAI died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained due to an accidental discharge of a fellow soldier's rifle while undergoing training at Henley Dam. He was 18.
- **1988** - Special Constable Andreas Ipinge from the South West Africa Police Counter-Insurgency Wing: Ops K (Koevoet) was Killed in Action during a contact with PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 26.
- **1997** - Heavy fighting rages in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, between forces of the president and those of a former military ruler.
- **1998** - Rebels fighting Congolese President Laurent Kabila capture a power transformer in western Congo, sending the capital, Kin-

shasa, into darkness.

**14 August**

- **1870** - David Farragut, American Admiral who coined the phrase "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!", dies at 69.
- **1896** - English World War I fighter pilot Albert Ball VC, DSO & Two Bars, MC was born on this day. At the time of his death he was the United Kingdom's leading flying ace, with 44 victories.
- **1900** - End of the 'first De Wet hunt'. De Wet's entire force crosses the unoccupied Olifants Nek Pass near Rustenburg and camps on the banks of the Hex River. He has achieved all his objectives: captured a train, inflicted losses on the enemy, increased his own numbers and managed to rest some of his burghers, while occupying the attention of 50,000 British troops.
- **1945** - Following the two Atomic Bomb drops and believing that continuation of the war would only result in further loss of Japanese lives, delegates of Emperor Hirohito accepted Allied surrender terms originally issued at Potsdam on 26 July 1945, with the exception that the Japanese Emperor's sovereignty would be maintained. Japanese Emperor Hirohito, who had

never spoken on radio, then recorded an announcement admitting Japan's surrender, without actually using the word. The announcement was broadcast via radio to the Japanese people at noon the next day. The formal surrender ceremony occurred later, on 2 September 1945, on board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

- **1960** - UN peace-keeping forces finally replace Belgian troops in the Republic of Congo.
- **1974** - A sharp increase in South African defence expenditure is announced.
- **1980** - Three members from 6 SAI were Killed in Action when their patrol was ambushed by a numerically superior force of SWAPO/PLAN insurgents near Eenhana. The casualties were: Corporal Daniel Johannes Deyzel (20). Lance Corporal Avril Jewaskiewitz (19). Rifleman Christoffel Jacobus Mijburgh (20).



**Carlos the Jackal**

- **1981** - Corporal Cecil Charles McAlister from Regiment Schoonspruit, was Killed in Action during an attack on their TB by SWAPO/PLAN insurgents near Opuwa in the Kaokoveld. He was 27.
- **1981** - Lance Corporal Wynand Spies from 5 Reconnaissance Regiment was Reported Missing in Action during operations in Southern Angola while acting as part of a 3-man rearguard protecting the evacuation of two wounded personnel after an attack. He was shot and presumably killed during this rear-guard action but owing to extremely heavy and concentrated enemy fire, his body could not be recovered. After prolonged political negotiations, his remains were eventually returned to South Africa three years later. He was 20.
- **1986** - Sergeant Johannes Petrus Coetzer from 911 Battalion SWATF was killed in a private motor vehicle accident near Keetmanshoop. He was 22.
- **2004** - Germany apologises for the massacre of some 65,000 Hereros in South-West Africa (Namibia) by their soldiers during the 1904 rebellion, but rules out compensation.

### 15 August

- **1769** - French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was born on the island of Corsica. Originally an of-

ficer in King Louis' Army, he rose to become Emperor amid the political chaos that followed the French Revolution.

- **1865** - Comdt Louw Wepener (53) is killed in combat during an attack on Moshesh at Thaba Bosigo in the Free State.
- **1973** - Leading Seaman Ivan William Kearns from SAS Protea died from injuries received in a military vehicle accident near Bredasdorp on 10 August 1973. He was 26.
- **1973** - Rifleman Mark Cornelius van Heerden from 1 SAI died at Potchefstroom after contracting meningitis while on his way to participate in a military exercise in Gazankulu. He was 18.
- **1979** - Sergeant Barend Cornelius Roux from the Regiment De Wet, attached to 53 Battalion was Killed in Action in Southern Angola when his patrol was ambushed by a numerically superior force of SWAPO/PLAN insurgents just North of Oshigambo. He was 26.
- **1981** - Rifleman Melato Chamba from 201 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action when his patrol was ambushed by a numerically superior enemy force in Southern Angola. He was 24.
- **1988** - Rifleman Brink Stander from 1 SAI was killed in a private motor vehicle accident on the Brandfort to Bloemfontein Road while he was on a weekend

pass. He was 31.

- **1994** - Carlos the Jackal, freelance terrorist, is arrested in Sudan and flown to Paris for trial. He is eventually sentenced to life in prison by a Paris court for the 1975 murders of two French secret agents and an alleged informer.

### 16 August

- **1777** - During the American Revolutionary War, the Battle of Bennington, Vermont, occurred as militiamen from Vermont, aided by Massachusetts troops, wiped out a detachment of 800 German-Hessians sent by British General Burgoyne to seize horses.
- **1780** - The Battle of Camden in South Carolina occurred during the American Revolutionary War. The battle was a big defeat for the Americans as forces under General Gates were defeated by troops of British General Charles Cornwallis, resulting in 900 Americans killed and 1,000 captured.
- **1888** - Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia (1888-1935), British adventurer, soldier, and author, is born in Tremadoc, Wales.
- **1917** - In a renewed thrust of the Allied offensive launched at the end of July in the Flanders region of Belgium - known as the Third Battle of Ypres, or simply as Passchendaele, for the village that saw the

- heaviest fighting - British troops capture the village of Langemarck from the Germans.
- **1901** - General De la Rey protests the British mistreatment of women and children.
- **1942** - US Army Air Force planes see action for the first time in North Africa, bombing German military positions from their base in Egypt.
- **1959** - William "Bull" F Halsey, US vice-admiral (WW II Pacific), dies.
- **1979** - Rifleman Erasmus Albertus Venter from 4 SAI was killed during Operation Safraan after a fellow soldier picked up an unexploded SAAF Impala DEFA 30 mm High Explosive cannon projectile and between the two of them, attempted to take the shell apart with a Swiss Army knife. During this process, the cannon projectile exploded, killing him instantly. He was 20.
- **1980** - Lance Corporal Hendrik Jacobus van der Walt from 16 Maintenance Unit was killed at Luhebu in South West Africa when the military vehicle he was driving, overturned. He was 18.
- **1981** - Rifleman B Jacob from 101 Battalion SWATF was critically wounded on 14 August 1981 during a contact with PLAN insurgents in the Koakoveld. He succumbed to his wounds in hospital on 16 August 1981. He was 22.

- **1982** - Rifleman William Edwin van Heerden from 201 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents near the Cut-Line. He was 19.
- **1986** - Lance Corporal Andre Hercoll Erasmus from the Cape Regiment was Killed in Action after suffering shrapnel wounds during a SWAPO/PLAN stand-off attack on Ruacana. He was 20.
- **1986** - Candidate Officer Christopher Hugh Snyman from 101 Air Commando Squadron was killed when his private aircraft flew into High Tension wires and crashed near Hoedspruit. He was 37.
- **1988** - Staff Sergeant Gideon van Rooyen from 2 Special Service Battalion was killed instantly when his Armoured Car overturned at the Rooisloot Training Area, crushing him in the turret hatch. He was 26.
- **1991** - Rifleman Mark William Hein from 8 SAI was accidentally shot dead while on duty in Tokoza Township by a fellow soldier who was playing around with his loaded rifle. He was 18.
- **2003** - Ugandan military ruler Idi Amin, 78, who presided over an eight-year reign of terror from 1971-1979, where an estimated

300,000 people were killed and tortured to death, dies of multiple organ failure.

### 17 August

- **1901** - The ZAR Executive Council instructs Commandant-General Louis Botha to investigate and, if necessary, to punish Assistant Commandant-General Tobias Smuts for the burning of Bremersdorp, because his actions were not according to the 'customs of civilized warfare'.
- **1940** - The Italian invasion of British Somaliland, which began on August 4, is complete. The Royal Navy successfully evacuated British troops via the port of Berbera. There is now little to stop the Italians controlling the southern entrance to the Red Sea. Meanwhile the 5th Indian Division, newly arrived in East Africa, is deployed along the Sudan-Abyssinia and Sudan-Eritrea border as part of the Sudan Defence Force, and a revolt is started in Abyssinia by



Rudolf Hess

those loyal to the Emperor, Haile Selassie.

- **1943** - During World War II in Europe, the Allies completed the conquest of the island of Sicily after just 38 days. This gave the Allies control of the Mediterranean and also led to the downfall of Benito Mussolini and Italy's eventual withdrawal from the war. However, the Germans managed to evacuate 39,569 troops, 47 tanks, 94 heavy guns, over 9,000 vehicles and 2,000 tons of ammunition back to the Italian mainland from Sicily.
- **1962** - The South African Minister of Defence, J.J. Fouché, announces that the striking power of the Defence Force has been increased twenty-fold as compared with two years earlier, while that of Navy is to be increased ten-fold in the next few years.
- **1962** - Two members from 17 Squadron were killed when their Alouette II Helicopter flew into High Tension Cables in Du Toit's Kloof and crashed in flames. The crew were: Lieutenant Keith Lynford Martin (22). Sergeant Andrew Robert Foote (39).
- **1963** - Captain Richard William Davies from 40 Squadron was killed when his AT-6 Harvard, Serial No. 7322 struck High Tension Cables and crashed near Benoni. He was 27.
- **1977** - Lance Corporal

George Allen Deacon from 2 Field Engineer Regiment was killed in an accidental explosion at Okalongo. He was 19.

- **1977** - Two members, one from 5 Squadron and the other from 8 Squadron were killed when their Atlas MB326M Impala Mk I crashed at Riemvasmaak Bombing Range near Upington while carrying out a night bombing exercise. The crew were: Major James McFarlane Wilson Kerr (30). Major Barry Leonard Moody (38).
- **1981** - Two members from 4 Field Regiment were killed in Military Vehicle accident at Oshivello. The casualties were: Lance Bombardier Henri Victor Louis Olver (19). Gunner Dirk Jacobus Loubser (20).
- **1988** - Special Constable Filimon Ndevaumba from the South West Africa Police Counter-Insurgency Wing: Ops-K (Koevoet) was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 29.
- **1990** - Two members from Eastern Transvaal Command were killed when their Samil 20 vehicle overturned at Pafuri. The casualties were: Rifleman Agus Mlahlekm Khoza (28). Rifleman Mphakati Isaiah Mkhombo (age unknown).
- **1991** - Major Harper Martin Geldenhuys from 32 Battal-

ion was accidentally killed at Pomfret while making a video of a C-47 Dakota as it was taking off from the runway. He was standing on the end of the runway and as the aircraft passed overhead, the aircraft tail wheel struck him on the head, killing him instantly. He was 26.

### 18 August

- **1914** - Germany declares war on Russia while President Woodrow Wilson issues his Proclamation of Neutrality.
- **1957** - The first two Avro Shackleton Mk III anti-submarine aircraft arrive in South Africa.
- **1979** - Rifleman Glen Colin Coppard from 4 SAI was Killed in Action in a landmine explosion when he stepped on the device while assisting with a wounded soldier. He was 20.
- **1979** - Three members from 3 SAI were Killed in Action in Southern Angola when they triggered a Soviet POMZ-2M anti-personnel picket mine during clearing operations inside an enemy base. The casualties were: Corporal Johannes Petrus Maritz (20). Lance Corporal Frank Nienaber (21). Rifleman Joseph Benjamin Ruben Jordaan (20).
- **1981** - Rifleman Gavin Dickenson Elliott from 5 SAI died from multiple shrapnel wounds accidentally sustained when a 90mm High

Explosive Shell exploded. He was 22.

- **1982** - Two members from 44 Parachute Pathfinder Company and one member from 5 Reconnaissance Regiment were Reported Missing approximately 40 miles inside Matabeleland during Operation Drama, a clandestine mission in Zimbabwe. All three men have no known grave and remain unaccounted for. The casualties were: Staff Sergeant Peter David Berry (33). Sergeant Robert Trevor Beech (27). Sergeant John Andrew Wessels (24).
- **1982** - Private Wynand van Rhyn from the South African Medical Corps, attached to 2 Military Hospital, Wynberg was Reported Missing when he failed to return after going hiking alone on Table Mountain. His body was later located by other hikers the following day and recovered. It appeared that he had lost his way and in the dark, fallen and broken his leg and had subsequently died from shock and exposure during the night. He was 19.
- **1993** - Sergeant M. Dube from 5 Reconnaissance Regiment was accidentally killed when his parachute failed to deploy while carrying out a freefall parachute jump. He was 35.
- **1998** - Congolese rebels send President Laurent Kabila's troops fleeing as they advance to within 200

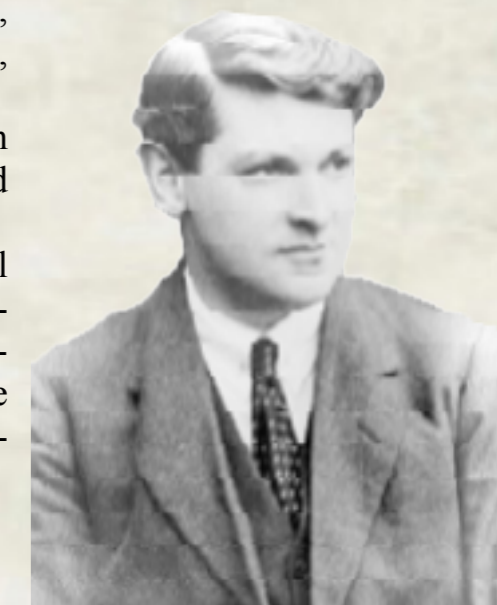
km of the capital, now deprived of electricity.

### 19 August

- **1901** - At Graaff-Reinet, P.J. Fourie, J. van Rensburg and L.F.S. Pfeiffer are executed by a British firing squad for treason and the murder of British troops.
- **1940** - First flight of the B-25 Mitchell medium bomber.
- **1942** - Dieppe Raid. An Allied force of 7,000 men carry out a large daytime raid against German positions at the French seaport of Dieppe. Aided by tanks and aircraft, the commando force—made up of approximately 5,000 Canadians, 2,000 British soldiers, and a handful of American and Free French troops—gained a foothold on the beach in the face of a furious German defense. During nine hours of fighting, the Allies failed to destroy more than a handful of their targets and suffered the death of 3,600 men. More than 100 aircraft, a destroyer, 33 landing craft, and 30 tanks were also lost.
- **1944** - The 6th Division entered Florence, Italy and was active there until 1945.
- **1968** - Nigeria's Federal troops have launched a major offensive against multiple targets in Biafra. Despite claims of 2,000 people be-

ing massacred, the leader of the Nigerian military government, General Yakubu Gowon, has stated that his troops are 'behaving correctly.'

- **1976** - Lance Corporal Carlos Alberto Correia Pinto Ribeiro from 1 Reconnaissance Regiment was Reported Missing in South Eastern Angola during a contact with enemy forces between Luenge and Coutada de Mucusso. He was driving a Unimog loaded with a ton or more of High Explosive. The South African Force was ambushed while the company was returning to Buffalo. His vehicle was hit by a Soviet RPG-7 Anti-Tank Rocket causing the explosive cargo to detonate. He has no known grave and remains unaccounted for. For administrative purposes, he was officially declared dead in 1983. He was 25.
- **1982** - Rifleman R. Moses from 101 Battalion SWATF was killed in a military ve-



**Michael Collins**

hicle accident in Northern Owamboland. He was 24.

- **1984** - Corporal Albert Ryan from 32 Battalion died of injuries sustained in a private motor vehicle accident at Port Shepstone. He was 25.
- **1987** - Rudolf Hess, German Nazi official (Deputy Fuhrer who dramatically escaped to Britain in 1941, sentenced to life in Spandau Prison), commits suicide at 93.
- **1988** - Lance Corporal Raymond Victor Jagga, an Ops Medic from the Central Medical Command was assigned to F Squadron School of Armour and attached to 61 Mechanised Brigade. He was Killed in Action when his Ratel was struck by two rockets. He was 19.
- **1988** - Gunner Jaco Petrus van der Merwe from 10 Artillery Brigade was Reported Missing after he went swimming in the Cunene river and disappeared. It is thought that he was taken by a crocodile. He has no known grave and remains unaccounted for. He was 20.
- **1993** - Lance Corporal Douglas Gardiner Scott from 1 Special Service Battalion was killed when two Rooikat armoured cars were involved in a collision and overturned at Deduza. He was 18.

## 20 August

- **1955** - Simultaneous attacks by Algerian rebels against French targets in the Constantine district of Algeria

have resulted in over 500 deaths and 200 wounded. At the same time nationalists have taken to the streets in Morocco. The attacks and demonstrations mark the second anniversary of the French deposition of the Sultan of Morocco, Siyyidi Mohammed V ibn Youssef, in favour of Muhammad Ben Aarafa.

- **1968** - Approximately 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops and 5,000 tanks invade Czechoslovakia to crush the "Prague Spring"—a brief period of liberalization in the communist country.
- **1975** - Trooper Leon William Bessinger from the Prince Alfred's Guard was killed in a military vehicle accident near Peddie in the Eastern Cape. He was 26.
- **1977** - Two members from 40 Squadron were killed when their AT-6 Harvard crashed while carrying out a routine general flying sortie. The aircraft went into a spin from which the pilot was unable to recover and the aircraft crashed near Delmas. The casualties were: Captain Keith Neil Smith (27). 2nd Lieutenant Paul Christopher Sarbutt (24).
- **1978** - Private Jacobus Johannes Etienne Bothma from the Defence Headquarters Personnel Unit died from a gunshot wound to the neck, accidentally sustained in a shooting incident while he was on duty in Pretoria. He was rushed to 1 Military

Hospital but succumbed to his injuries the same day. He was 19.

- **1988** - Lance Corporal Brian Albert Hoy from Regiment Noord Transvaal was accidentally killed after being crushed in the Commanders turret when his Ratel overturned approximately 40km South of Ruacana. He was 26.
- **1995** - Liberia's main warring factions signed a peace accord calling for a ceasefire after more than five years of civil war and the start of democratic rule in one year.
- **1998** - US military forces attack a chemical plant in Sudan and what they describe as a terrorist camp in Afghanistan. Said to be linked with terrorists, the attacks are in response to the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania 13 days earlier.
- **1998** - Zimbabwe intervenes in the Democratic Republic of Congo to support the regime against a rebellion. The last Zimbabwean soldiers withdraw at the end of 2002. Troops from Angola, Namibia, Chad, and Sudan also intervened to support the Kinshasa regime.

## 21 August

- **1863** - During the American Civil War, William Quantrill led 450 irregular Confederate raiders on a pre-dawn terrorist raid of Lawrence, Kansas, leaving 150 civil-

ians dead, 30 wounded and much of the town a smoking ruin. In 1862, Quantrill had been denied a Confederate commission by the Confederate Secretary of War, who labeled Quantrill's notions of war as 'barbarism.'

- **1900** - The Battle of Bergendal, near Vanwyksvlei, starts. Gen. Joachim Fourie's men force the 11th Hussars to retreat at 20.00, with 7 killed, 3 missing, presumed dead, and 26 wounded.
- **1918** - The Second Battle of the Somme begins.
- **1912** - Lord Roberts, commander-in-chief of the British forces during the 3rd Anglo-Boer War, congratulates Gen. Louis Botha on his appointment as honorary general in the British army.
- **1939** - The Soviet Union and Germany sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, a 10-year non-aggression treaty, with a secret addendum, to partition Poland.
- **1940** - Leon Trotsky, Russian Marxist revolutionary, political theorist and founder of the Red Army, assassinated at 62 by an ice-pick wielding Ramón Mercader.
- **1965** - Air Mechanic James Roland Bolzern from 3 Satellite Radar Station died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained in a shooting incident at Mafeking. He was 24.
- **1973** - Four members from 85 Advanced Flying School were killed when an Atlas MB326M Impala Mk I was

involved in a mid-air collision with another Atlas MB326M Impala Mk I during a training exercise near Pietersburg. The casualties were: Captain Christiaan Lemmer Smith (29). 2nd Lieutenant David Lanian James Snadden (22). Captain Frans Reitz van Zyl (29). 2nd Lieutenant Clifford Yates (23).

- **1976** - Rifleman Dale Robert Whitter from 2 SAI died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained at the Farm "Woodholme No. 202". He was 18.
- **1978** - Rifleman Jacobus Alwyn van der Berg from the Kaffrarian Rifles died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained at Oshakati due to the accidental discharge of a fellow soldiers rifle. He was 25.
- **1980** - The United States and Somalia sign an agreement giving US naval and air forces access to military facilities in the East African country in return for American military aid.
- **1981** - Rifleman Jan Jacobus Minnie from the Infantry School was accidentally killed when he inadvertently used a dud high explosive mortar bomb as a hammer, causing the device to explode, killing him instantly. He was 18.
- **1986** - Staff Sergeant Jo-

hannes Petrus van Niekerk from Sector 20 Headquarters Intelligence Section died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained at Rundu. He was 32.

- **1987** - Rifleman C.A. Augusto from 32 Battalion died from causes unknown while stationed at Buffalo. He was 27.
- **1994** - The last French troops pull out of Rwanda, ending their controversial humanitarian mission.
- **1998** - Angolan troops enter the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) war on Laurent Kabila's side.

## 22 August

- **1864** - The first Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field is signed by 12 countries. The international treaty, known as the Geneva Convention, also guarantees the neutrality of members of the Red Cross and is honoured in South Africa.



**Eugene Bullard**

- **1922** - Michael Collins, Irish nationalist leader, killed in ambush by anti-treaty forces during the Irish Civil War at 31.
- **1934** - General Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf Jr (1934-2012) was born on this day. While serving as Commander-in-chief, United States Central Command, he led all coalition forces in the Gulf War in 1990/1991.
- **1979** - Rifleman Barend Gabriel Bester from 1 SAI died of wounds in 3 Military Hospital in Bloemfontein after being struck in the chest by a piece of shrapnel in an accidental hand grenade explosion at the General De Wet Training Range. He was 19.
- **1980** - Two members from 4 SAI were Killed in Action when their Section was ambushed by SWAPO/PLAN insurgents between Eenhana and Oshigambo whilst sweeping the road for landmines. The casualties were: Rifleman Pieter Jacobus De Beer (19). Rifleman Andries Petrus Wiese (19).
- **1984** - Private Udo Louis Gevers from the South African Intelligence Corps attached to Sector 20 Headquarters was killed when his Buffel Troop Carrier overturned in Kavangoland. He was 20.

### 23 August

- **1901** - A group of eight surrendered Boer prisoners of war are shot by the Bush-

veld Carbineers and a German missionary, Reverend C.A. Daniel Heese murdered, because he may have witnessed the atrocity.

- **1974** - Two members from the School of Artillery were killed in a private motor vehicle accident on the Potchefstroom to Johannesburg road while on weekend pass when their vehicle was involved in a head-on collision with another vehicle while overtaking. The casualties were: Lance Bombardier Michael David Loxton (18). Gunner Joseph Spedding Baggott (18).
- **1976** - Rifleman Reinhard Walter Klingenberg from Infantry School was killed in a private motor vehicle accident at Three Sisters while on Weekend Pass. He was 19.
- **1976** - Two members from 1 Reconnaissance Commando were Killed in Action during a patrol near the Okavango river when the Wolf vehicle in which they were traveling detonated a landmine and overturned killing Sergeant Soeiro instantly and crushing Staff Sergeant Roxo underneath. The casualties in this incident were: Staff Sergeant Francisco Daniel Roxo HC (43). Sergeant Ponciano Gomes Silva Soeiro (35).
- **1978** - Eight members from 1 Special Service Battalion, one member from 2 Special Service Battalion and one member from the South Af-

rican Medical Corps were Killed in Action during the early hours of the morning when the Bungalow in which they were sleeping at Katima Mulilo received a direct hit from a Soviet GRAD-P 122mm High Explosive Katyusha Rocket. The casualties were: Trooper Kevin John Biggs (18). Private Willem Hendrik Christoffel Britz (18). Trooper Hendrik Willem De Lange (18). Trooper Dennis Michael Elworthy (20). Trooper Gerhardus Petrus Erasmus (18). Trooper Laurie Johannes Lesch (19). Trooper Jan Jurgens Rotschutte (20). Trooper Gideon Johannes Smit (18). Trooper Willem Stephanus Smuts (19). Trooper Abraham Daniel van der Merwe (18).

- **1980** - Rifleman Helgard Brink Colling from SWA SPES (SWATF) was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 19.
- **1981** - Rifleman Antonio Catamba from 32 Battalion died from a gunshot wound sustained during a shooting incident at Buffalo. He was 42.
- **1994** - Eugene Bullard, the only black pilot in World War I, is posthumously commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force.

### 24 August

- **1814** - During the War of

1812, Washington, D.C., was invaded by British forces that burned the Capitol, the White House and most other public buildings along with a number of private homes. The burning was in retaliation for the earlier American burning of York (Toronto).

- **1951** - The Mau Mau rebellion starts in Kenya.
- **1973** - Private Waldemar Adriaan Nelson from the Technical Service Corps was accidentally killed in a military vehicle accident in Bloemfontein. He was 19.
- **1980** - Lance Corporal Daniel Langman from 41 Battalion was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 26.
- **1981** - Rifleman Adao Joaquim from 32 Battalion was accidentally killed by friendly fire during a contact with enemy forces in Southern Angola. He was 26.
- **1981** - Two members from 1 SAI were Killed in Action during the attack on "Target Yankee" in Southern Angola during Ops Protea. The casualties in this incident were: Rifleman Florence Cornelius Smit (18). Rifleman Martinus Godfrey Stapelberg (19).
- **1986** - Sapper Leon Bryan Kuyler from 1 Construction Regiment died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained in a shooting incident at the Unit while he was

on Guard Duty. He was 20.

- **1986** - Lance Corporal Conrad du Bois Nelson from the Intelligence School in Kimberley succumbed to injuries in the Universitas Hospital after being critically injured on 05 August 1986 when his SAMIL vehicle overturned 5km from the Unit Headquarters. He was 18.
- **1987** - Rifleman Maliphathwe Godfrey Ndela from 21 Battalion was killed in a military vehicle accident in Soweto. He was 21.
- **1988** - Gunner William Faul van Niekerk from the Witwatersrand Command Intelligence Section was killed in a military vehicle accident at Doornkop. He was 19.
- 1991 - Two members from 113 Battalion were killed when their water tanker vehicle overturned at Tzaneen. The casualties were: Lance Corporal John Sidney Shisari (26). Rifleman Milleon Bullus Khoza (31).

### 25 August

- **1911** - Võ Nguyên Giáp (1911-2013) was born on this day. Giáp was a general in the Vietnam People's Army and a politician. He is considered one of the greatest military strategists of the 20th century.
- **1966** - Candidate Officer G.A.K. Howson from 41 Squadron was killed when

his Cessna 185D crashed near Krugersdorp while on a low level reconnaissance flight. He was 23.

- **1976** - Sergeant José Correia Pinto Ribeiro from 1 Reconnaissance Commando was killed in a military vehicle accident while evacuating battle casualties to a hospital in South West Africa. He was 27.
- **1978** - Rifleman Johannes Hendrik De Jager from 5 SAI was killed in a private motor vehicle accident 5km outside Ladysmith on the Colenso Road. He was 19.
- **1981** - One member from 17 Squadron and one member from 87 Helicopter Flying School were Killed in Action when their Alouette III Helicopter Gunship was shot down by enemy 14,5mm anti-aircraft fire about 500m from the target area while providing close-air support operations over Mongua in Southern Angola just prior to the launch of Ops Protea in Angola. The crew were: Lieutenant Johannes Gys-



**Roger Bushell**



bertus Roos (24). Sergeant Clifton Stacey (21).

- **1981** - Captain Louis Harmse from 1 SAI was Killed in Action during Ops Protea in Southern Angola during enemy bunker clearing operations. He was 27.
- **1981** - Lance Bombardier Hendrik Abraham Johannes Grobler from 4 Artillery Regiment was Killed in Action in Southern Angola during Ops Protea. He was 20.
- **1988** - Trooper Owen Leon Wolfaardt from 1 Special Service Battalion was killed when his armoured car overturned during an exercise at the General de Wet Training Area. He was 20.
- **1988** - Special Constable Tsaanda Mbunguha from the South West Africa Police Counter-Insurgency Wing: Ops-K (Koevoet) was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 27.
- **1989** - Signaller Andre' Rousseau from 2 Signals Regiment died in the Klerksdorp Hospital from injuries received in a motor vehicle accident at Sannieshof. He was 20.
- **1991** - Rifleman Ambros Nijanyana Sekonjela from 21 Battalion was Killed in Action after being shot dead by persons unknown at Mandelaview during a riot-related incident while he was on foot patrol in Katlehong. He was 21.

## 26 August

- **1944** - French General Charles de Gaulle enters Paris, which had formally been liberated the day before. As he entered the Place de l'Hotel, French collaborationists took a few sniper shots at him.
- **1966** - The People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), the armed wing of SWAPO, fought in a battle against South African occupying forces at Omugulugwombashe in northern South West Africa (Namibia).
- **1974** - A Defence Bill is passed in South Africa laying down penalties for any person or organization inciting anyone to avoid military service.
- **1976** - Two members of Bravo Group were killed when their Unimog overturned near Rundu. They were: Rifleman Harry Albert Bekker (19). Rifleman Andries Jacobus Pretorius (19).
- **1978** - Lance Corporal Francois Louw from the South African Cape Corps was killed in a Military Vehicle Accident at Ruacana. He was 21.
- **2011** - John McAleese, British SAS Trooper, Team leader during 1980 Iranian Embassy Siege, dies aged 62.

## 27 August

- **1914** - German Togo is occupied by British and French troops.
- **1916** - Romania declares war

on Austria-Hungary, formally entering World War I. Romanian troops cross the border of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into the much-contested province of Transylvania.

- **1945** - US troops land in Japan after Japanese surrender.
- **1965** - Air Mechanic Johann Andre' Venter from Central Flying School Dunnottar was killed when his AT-6 Harvard crashed on the farm "Rusplaas" near Piet Retief while on a routine low level navigation exercise. He was 17.
- **1969** - Israeli commando force penetrates deep into Egyptian territory to stage mortar attack on regional army headquarters in Nile Valley of Upper Egypt.
- **1974** - 2nd Lieutenant Albertus Stephanus Gouws from 4 Squadron was killed when his Atlas MB326M Impala Mk I crashed near Potchefstroom while on a routing training exercise. He was 21.
- **1975** - Rifleman Gert Antonie Senekal from 2 SAI was Killed in Action during the attack to capture the town of Pereira D'Eca (Ongiva) in Southern Angola during Ops Savannah. He was 19.
- **1977** - Ordinary Seaman (Diver) Barry Juan Moolman from SAS Donkin accidentally drowned during a diving training exercise at Port Elizabeth. He was 27.
- **1979** - Rifleman Frans Lilungwe from Sector 70 Headquarters SWATF was killed

in a military vehicle accident. He was 23.

- **1979** - Louis Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma, British naval officer and statesman, last Viceroy of India (1947), is assassinated by an IRA bomb on his boat in Ireland at 79.
- **1981** - Two members from 5 SAI were Killed in Action during a contact with enemy forces near Ongiva in Southern Angola during Ops Protea. The casualties were: Rifleman David Nicolas Janse van Rensburg (20). Rifleman Etienne Marius Snyman (19).
- **1983** - two members attached to 54 Battalion were killed in action. The casualties were: Rifleman Joseph Wayne Muller (20). Rifleman David Prins (24).
- **1985** - Rifleman Jan Buijense from the North West Command Maintenance Unit died from a gunshot wound accidentally sustained at Potchefstroom as a result of an accidental discharge of a fellow soldiers rifle. He was 21.
- **1988** - Lance Corporal Gary Lamb from 1 SAI, attached

to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group was shot dead by a fellow soldier during an argument while they were stationed at Lohatla. He was 19.

- **1990** - Rifleman Jose' Joaquim from 201 Battalion SWATF was killed in a military vehicle accident. He was 24.
- **1992** - Former commander of the Simon's Town naval base Dieter Gerhard is released from prison where he has been serving a life sentence since 1983 after being convicted of acting as an agent for the Soviet Union. He is deported to Switzerland.
- **1993** - Colonel Pieter Jacobus Bakkes from the South African Military Health Service died from cancer in 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria. He was 49.

## 28 August

- **1940** - The South African Air Force flying out from Kenya bombs Italian bases in Somaliland.
- **1941** - SS General Franz Jaeckeln marched more than 23,000 Hungarian Jews to bomb craters at Kamenets Podolsk, ordered them to un-

dress, and riddled them with machine gun fire. Those who didn't die from the spray of bullets were buried alive under the weight of corpses that piled atop them. All told, more than 600,000 Jews had been murdered in Ukraine by war's end.

- **1974** - Rifleman Albino Moreira Christello from 11 Commando Regiment was killed in a Military Vehicle Accident 140km East of Rundu. He was 18.
- **1980** - Two members from 41 Battalion were Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. They were: Rifleman Jacob Fredericks (18). Rifleman Joseph van Rensburg (19).
- **1981** - A member from 6 SAI and a member from the South African Medical Corps were both Killed in Action while on patrol in Southern Angola. The casualties were: Lance Corporal Petrus Kruger (20). Lance Corporal Mark Anthony Plateel (19).
- **1981** - Rifleman Domingos Paulo from 32 Battalion died from a gunshot wound sustained in a shooting accident



**Battle of Alam al-Halfa**



# Phonetic Alphabet World War II

1. SA80
2. Steyr AUG
3. FAMAS F1
4. Norinco Type 86S
5. Steyr ACR
6. A-91
7. IWI Tavor TAR-21
8. QBZ-95
9. FN P90
10. SAR 21
11. Vektor CR-21
12. S&T Daewoo K11 DAW
13. FN F2000
14. ADS amphibious rifle
15. Desert Tech MDRX



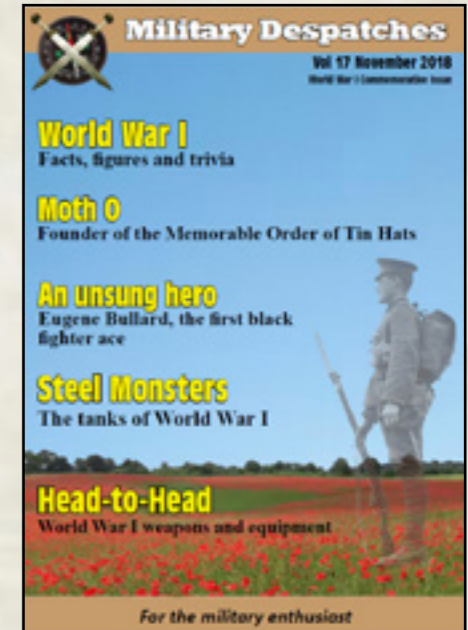
## Useful links

Every month we feature a few useful links to military websites, newsletters and online magazines. Stuff that we think our readers will appreciate.

Here are two of our favourites. The first one is Nongqai, the unofficial police newsletter for veterans of the former South African Police Force and for those interested in Police History. The second is Jimmy's Own, the official newsletter of the South African Signals Association. Click on the magazine covers to go to the respective websites.



# Military Despatches Website



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*Steve Jobs*

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