



Military Despatches

Vol 54 December 2021

It cost how much?

Ten costly US military failures

Get over it

Isn't it time to forget about the war? No!

Silent Night

The day the guns fell silent

Kurt Knispel

The anti-Nazi NCO who became the top tank ace of World War II

For the military enthusiast



Military Despatches YouTube Channel



Click on any video below to view



Paratrooper Wings Quiz

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

In this quiz we show you 15 different wings and you tell us where they are from.



Military Firearms Quiz

This quiz is all about military firearms. We show you 15 firearms, you tell us what they are.

Army Speak 101

The SADF had their own language. A mixture of English, Afrikaans, slang and techno-speak that few outside the military could hope to understand.

Most armies around the world also had their own slang terms. In this video we look at some of them.



New videos each week

We will be uploading new videos to our YouTube channel each week.

So remember to bookmark the channel and keep an eye out for new content.



Elite Military Units Quiz

Most military forces have an elite unit or regiment or a special forces component.

In this quiz we show you 15 and you tell us who they are and where they are from.



Who said that?

Throughout history military leaders and politicians have had some interesting things to say about war.

We give you 15 quotes, you tell us who made them.

CONTENTS

December 2021



Page 12



Special Forces - New Zealand SAS

Features

6

Ten costly US Military failures

The biggest US Military wastes of money since World War II.

16

Silent Night

On 24 December 1914 the guns along the Western Front fell silent. It was Christmas and the opposing soldiers were determined to celebrate the fact,

24

The origins of Taps

At military funerals, memorials and services you will hear the Last Post being sounded. Yet in America you will hear the sound of 'Taps'. Why is this, and where did Taps originate?

26

Signs that someone served

Want to know if someone is a military veteran? Matt Tennyson looks at some signs that are a dead give-away that someone served in the military.

32

It's a traditional thing

For anyone in the military, spending Christmas on duty or away from home is never great. Yet there are some that at least try and make it easier.

38

Korean War - a few facts

Known as the 'forgotten war', it would go on to claim more than five million casualties. We look at a few facts about the Korean War that you may or may not have known.

36



42

The war is history, get over it

In our modern-day politically correct woke society some believe that it is time to stop 'wasting time' on remembering wars and events from history and move on with more important matters. JOE STANZA tends to disagree.

Quiz

22

Nicknames

The military loves nicknames and slang. Here are a few questions about nicknames. See if you know the answers.

Please remember to subscribe to our channel.

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



Editor's Sitrep

Can you believe that it's December again. What happened to 2021. Will someone just slow time down for a minute or two.

This is our third Christmas under COVID-19 lockdown. At least they haven't banned the sale of alcohol this Christmas. Then again, I'm writing this editorial on the last day of November. So it's still early days. They may go ahead and ban it the week before Christmas.

I remember as a youngster, many years ago, I would often watch a programme on television that was called "Beyond 2000".

The programme would show us all the wonderful inventions and technology that would be around after the year 2000.

Most of the stuff the predicted did not come to pass. My car still runs on petrol (bloody expensive petrol I might add) and it still can't fly. Which is probably not a bad thing. Can you imagine flying taxis.

Yet in many other ways technology has advanced far more than they ever predicted.

Take cell phones for example. In 1994 I came back to South Africa to set up offices for the Eu-

ropean Broadcast Union (EBU), most of whom would be covering the 1994 elections.

South Africa was granted 400 cell phone licences. That means there were only 400 cell phones in the entire country. Of these, 300 were given to the SABC for the elections - and I had one of them.

It was a Siemens S1. It was the size of a brick (and twice the weight), had a battery that would last for about eight hours, and all you could do was make a phone call on it. It was amazing.

These days I have a Samsung S21 Ultra. There is little that you can't do with it. The video and still camera is better than my shoulder-mounted HD video camera which cost more than my car.

Now all we have to do is invent something that will keep the lights on.

Everyone, have yourself an extra special Christmas and a peaceful, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Until next time.

Matt

Hipe!

media

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CONTENTS

Page 80



December in military history

Head-to-Head

46

Special Forces - The Big Three

The British SAS, US Navy SEALs, and the Russian Spetznaz go head-to-head.

Famous Figures

54

Kurt Knispel

Credited as being the most successful tanker of World War II, this anti-Nazi panzer ace was a bit of a rebel. Only his impressive track-record saved him from ending up in a military prison.



Battlefield

58

Fort Eben Emael

The experts said it would be impossible to assault. The German, however, had other ideas.

Forged in Battle

64

Churchill tank

One of the heaviest Allied tanks of World War II, it would serve on nearly every front.

Gaming

74

All I want for Christmas

Ten excellent games to get for Christmas.

Movie Review

78

Stocking fillers

Nine movies that will make the perfect gift for any military veteran.

Book Review

79

Good holiday reads

Six great books for yourself or as a Christmas gift.

Front Cover

A photo-shopped image of Santa abseiling down from a sleight to bring Christmas gifts to the troops in the field.



Ten costly US Military failures

The biggest US Military wastes of money since World War II.

Many South African's tend to wring their hands and wail when they talk about how much our country spends on defence.

"How can we spend 52 billion Rands a year on defence," they cry. "That money can be spent on far more important things." Sure, like bailing out our national airline every few months.

Now to many people this sounds like a large amount of money. Yet there are 47 countries around the world, including five in Africa, that spend more money that we do on defence.

Obviously the country that spend the most money on defence every year is the United States of America. Their 2020 defence budget was a cool 750 trillion dollars.

The staggering amount of money available to the US Armed Forces has resulted in wasteful military spending on a grand scale and some of the worst military spending in history.

As technology changes and improves, new designs in tanks, planes, weapons, and vehicles have to be developed - all of which cost huge amounts. But the military is plagued by bureaucratic inefficiency, redundancy, procurement issues, changing priorities, and a process that simply takes too long.

As a result, the last 30 years

are littered with futuristic, pointless military projects that never saw a day of action. Lasers, stealth ships, high-tech tanks and guns, communications systems, even uniforms - all have been developed at massive costs, and done little to nothing to keep the nation or its armed forces safe.

Rampant military spending isn't a new phenomenon, as numerous European countries during after World War II wasted staggering sums on defences that provided no defence. But when it comes to wasting money, nobody can beat the US from the Cold War until now.

Here are but a few examples of the biggest wastes of money by the US Military.

Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II

The Joint Strike Fighter program was meant to produce a fighter that the Air Force, Marines, and Navy could all use - a fast, stealthy plane that could take off from anywhere, land on anything, and deploy almost any weapon.

Instead, it became a black hole of technical problems, delays, technology that was obsolete before being deployed, and above all, money. It's been estimated that the F-35 has cost a staggering \$1.5 trillion since its inception in 1996. This is more than the GDP of all but 11

countries on earth.

Meanwhile, the plane is plagued by issues, including having trouble landing on aircraft carriers, issues winning dogfights, reliability problems and, ironically, vulnerability to lightning strikes.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Announced just a few weeks after Ronald Reagan's "evil empire" speech, the Strategic Defence Initiative, also known as the Star Wars Project, was meant to be a space-based system of lasers and satellites that would shoot down any Russian intercontinental or submarine-launched nuclear missile headed toward the United States.

What it became was a black hole of theoretical research, pop culture ridicule, political tension, and spent money. A staggering amount of money.

Estimates on the cost of SDI research and development start at \$100 billion, and run as high as \$150 billion. All for a system that was dependent on technology that was never developed past the theoretical stage.

Thankfully, some of the money was spent on basic science research, so it wasn't a total waste.

Ironically the Star Wars Project did have a positive spin-off for the USA - it brought about the fall of the USSR.



AN ISSUE OR TWO: Among many other issues the F-35 Lightning is, ironically, vulnerable to lightning strikes.

The Russians were convinced that the project worked and they spent billions trying to come up with a counter measure. They spent so much money that it bankrupted the Soviet Union.

Rockwell B-1 Lancer

One of the most troubled and controversial programs in Air Force history, the B-1 was first developed in the early '70s as a replacement for the aging B-52. It was cancelled in 1977 after four prototypes were made. It cost a cool one billion dollars to develop.

Then it was revived by President Reagan, and development on it continued to the point where 100 were built, despite numerous problems with the plane's design and operation.

The planes didn't see combat in the Gulf War due to engine issues, and didn't drop a bomb in action until 1998. The planes have proved useful, but hugely expensive, at over a quarter of a billion dollars per plane.

MX Missile

A 1970s nuclear deterrent, the LGM-118 (or MX Missile, as the program was usually called) was a land-based ICBM that could carry up to 10 re-entry vehicles, each armed with a 300-kiloton W87 warhead.

It could deliver a devastating strike to the Soviet Union that could essentially win a nuclear war in one blow.

The program was cancelled and restarted several times due to issues with housing the missiles, before President Reagan approved their deployment in hardened silos.

The program suffered massive delays and cost overruns, and the missiles themselves were hard to maintain and expensive to build. The MX ended up costing over \$25 billion to make just 114 missiles.

The last were taken out of service in 2003 - and the Cold War they were meant to win lasted just a few years after they were deployed.

Project Nike

Cold War paranoia over waves of Soviet bombers blasting the US into nuclear oblivion led to a staggering engineering and military project, code-named Nike.

It was a plan to build anti-aircraft missile batteries all over the country, concentrating on cities, military targets, and industrial bases.

The missiles were placed in batteries of two or three, with corresponding radars, barracks, underground storage bunkers, elevators, and maintenance facilities.

Nike Ajax Missiles were replaced by Nike Hercules Missiles, which were replaced by Nike Zeus missiles. All the while, the Soviet Union was phasing bombers out, making the missiles useless.

Nike was ended in the mid 70s, and no missile was ever fired at an enemy. The cost of the program was enormous, at least \$20 billion, and probably much more.

Nike sites today mostly sit abandoned, with many of them posing severe environmental hazards.

Future Combat System

Work began on the Future Combat System (FCS) in 1999, with the intention of building an integrated set of manned and unmanned combat vehicles that would dominate the 21st century battlefield.

Then the 2001 September 11th attacks happened, and military priorities changed com-

pletely, requiring a redesign of the FCS.

Ballooning costs, technical problems, and the budgetary drain of the Iraq War sent the bill for the program sky high.

When it was finally cancelled in 2009, \$19 billion had been spent - and just eight prototype vehicles were built at slightly more than two billion dollars each. Way to go.

Zumwalt Class Destroyer

Likely the most sophisticated warship in existence, the Zumwalt-class destroyer is also one of the most expensive.

A stealth-guided missile destroyer intended to replace current US destroyers, many of which are three decades old, the DD(X) program that birthed the Zumwalt was so plagued with cost overruns that the initial order of 32 ships was cut to 10, then three.

Therefore, each ship costs over \$3 billion - so expensive that Navy officers are reluctant to use them in combat.

Boeing-Sikorsky RAH-66 Comanche

The Comanche was developed as a one-chopper-fits-all replacement for the Huey, Cobra, and Kiowa helicopters the Army had been using for decades.

Meant to be stealthy, fast, and able to execute a number of different missions, instead was a baulky and risky white elephant that literally had trouble getting off the ground.

As one test pilot remarked,

“The RAH-66 was a nightmare. It had all the flying characteristics of a concrete block.”

Two prototypes were built, and the program was cancelled in 2004 - with almost \$7 billion spent.

M247 Sergeant York

Designed as a counterpart to mobile Soviet self-propelled anti-aircraft guns (SPAAG), the M247 was meant to deploy two 40mm cannons on a radar controlled turret.

The procurement process was plagued with arguments over what design to go with, and what cannons to use. Once a design was chosen, it had severe problems with its radar, including an inability to discern enemy helicopters from trees.

To save money, off-the-shelf parts were used, including World War Two era Bofors guns. But design and construction pressed on.

When the tank was finally unveiled, the fire control radar mistook a reviewing stand for a target, sending observers scrambling for cover, lest they be shot to pieces.

The M247 was finally cancelled after only 50 had been made, and most were bombed as targets.

All told, the US spent over \$6 billion on four different experimental SPAAG systems, none of which worked.

Army Combat Uniform

The US Army spent \$5 billion to develop and produce a uniform featuring a camouflage

pattern that could be used in any environment.

The result, the ACU unveiled in 2004, was so unpopular and ineffective that soldiers in combat environments simply stopped wearing it.

The Army had to buy uniforms from private contractors, while sinking more money into developing a new pattern.

New uniforms were finally approved in 2014 - but used a design the Army had actually been considering before the ACU.

Space Based Infrared System

The US Air Force designated \$643 million of their 2019 budget for a program called the “Next Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared” to replace the Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS).

Spokesman Major Will Russell said that the new program was designated to ensure a “survivable missile warning capability by the mid-2020s to counter adversary advances.”

For years the Air Force has spent around \$1.7 billion on each of its SBIRS satellites which are intended to detect threats with infrared technology and send early warnings to the US defence. Though the program has not been completely overhauled, it has considerably reduced costs.

And, as a Christmas bonus, let’s take a look at a few other countries that spent vast amounts of money on projects

that didn’t quite meet the grade. And let’s start with France prior to World War II.

Maginot Line

The trauma of the Great War led France to develop a defensive strategy, hoping to build strong enough defences to shore up an army weakened by a low birth rate.

The Maginot Line was designed to make the French/German border so impregnable that troops and tanks could be stationed on the Belgian border, where Germany had attacked France in 1914.

It could also be used as a basis for a counter-attack, and to hold the Germans off while France mobilized.

Secretly, the French also hoped that by funnelling an attack into Belgium, it would draw England into the conflict - exactly like 1914.

The cost of the Line was staggering - 7 billion Francs, or about a third of France’s entire military budget.

The problem with the Maginot Line was that all the guns and defences faced forwards. The Germans simply went around the line, punching through the undefended Ardennes Forest in southern Belgium, and attacking the Maginot Line from the rear.

The poorly-led French Army was defeated in just six weeks.

Hitler’s Atlantic Wall

Considering how easily the Germans had dealt with the Maginot Line, you would have

thought they knew better. Yet this was not the case.

Soon after Nazi Germany conquered France, Adolf Hitler ordered the building of fortification all along the Atlantic coast to protect it from Allied landings.

Fuehrer Directive 40 called for 15,000 individual emplacements to be manned by over a quarter of a million Germans and foreign conscripts - all in less than a year.

The cost of the Atlantic Wall was staggering, certainly in lives (much of the work was done by slave labour), but also in material and money. 1.2 millions tons of steel, enough to build 20,000 tanks, was used, along with 17 million cubic meters of concrete.

The total cost was the equivalent of \$200 billion in today’s money, a cost that Germany could barely afford.

Famed General Erwin Rommel declared the Wall to be a farce in 1943, and he was right - it was breached in less than a day, with the vast majority of the emplacements either never finished or never used.

Albanian Bunkers

The tiny nation of Albania spent a crushing amount of money on a project that never fired a shot.

Albanian strongman Enver Hoxha was obsessed with defending his nation from what he saw as threats on both sides, from both the West and East.

So he ordered the building of bunkers that could be defended

by civilian reservists.

750,000 of the round concrete domes were eventually built, popping up everywhere from empty fields and farms, to tourist-friendly beaches, graveyards, and the middle of streets.

A quarter of Albania’s budget went to its military, and the vast majority of that to the bunkers. Meanwhile, the country had a massive housing shortage, and crumbling roads.

When Hoxha died in 1990, the bunker program was stopped - leaving the country with hundreds of thousands of useless eyesores.

Airbus A400M Atlas

The A400M was meant to replace the variety of aging transports in Europe’s air forces. Instead, it was plagued with delays, technical issues, and a bloated budget.

The plane was delayed so badly that England, France, and Germany all had to explore buying or leasing existing cargo planes from the US.

It was nearly scrapped several times, and Britain’s Minister for Defence Procurement declared “The A400M is a complete, absolute wanking disaster, and we should be ashamed of ourselves. I have never seen such a waste of public funds in the defence field in the past 40 years.”

The first Atlas finally entered service in 2013 - and was grounded when one of the 11 built planes crashed. The program has already cost at least \$10 billion.

Special Forces - New Zealand SAS

Part thirty-one of a series that looks at Special Forces around the world. This month features the New Zealand Special Air Service

The New Zealand Special Air Service, abbreviated as 1 NZSAS Regt, was formed on 7 July 1955 and is the special forces unit of the New Zealand Army, closely modelled on the British Special Air Service (SAS).

It traces its origins to the Second World War and the famous Long Range Desert Group that New Zealanders served with.

The New Zealand Government states that NZSAS is the “premier combat unit of the New Zealand Defence Force” and it has been operationally deployed to locations including the Pacific region, Afghanistan, and the jungles of South-East Asia.

Individual members of the NZSAS have received honours and awards, most notably the Victoria Cross for New Zealand awarded to Corporal Willie Apiata. In 2004, the unit was awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation for its contribution in Afghanistan.

The NZSAS was accorded regimental status in 2013. It has the responsibility of conducting counter-terrorism and overseas special operations and performing the disposal of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive hazards for military and civilian authorities.

History

The NZSAS can trace its roots back to the famous Long Range Desert Group, a British/Commonwealth army unit

which fought in the North African desert in World War II. New Zealanders also served in the original Special Air Service force during World War II.

In February 1955, it was decided by the New Zealand Government that a squadron based on the British Special Air Service should be formed as part of the New Zealand Army, as an effective and economic contribution to the Far East Strategic Reserve and the British counter-insurgency effort in Malaya.

Major Frank Rennie was appointed to form and command the unit, with

the decision having been made to recruit mainly from the general public around a cadre of Regular Force personnel.

Over 800 applied, from which 182, including 138 civilians (though 101 had previous military experience) were selected for training beginning in June 1955. In late 1957, soon after the squadron's return to New Zealand from Malaya, the unit was disbanded, having been operationally replaced by an infantry battalion.

The NZSAS was re-established in October 1959, with the unit celebrating its 50th Jubilee from 3–12 June 2005.

The NZSAS were granted the Freedom of the Borough of Thames on 27 September 1967.

As part of changes to the NZDF's command structure, the 1st New Zealand Special Air Service Regiment was transferred to the command of the new Special Operations Command on 1 July 2015.

Unit location

When the unit was first established in 1955, prior to the departure to Malaya all training was conducted at Waiouru Military Camp.

Upon re-establishment of the Squadron in October 1959, it was based at Papakura Military Camp, until the unit was relocated to Hobsonville Air Force Base in the mid-1990s, however the NZSAS Counter-Terrorism and demolitions training facilities remained at Papakura and Ardmore Military Camps.

In 2001–2002 a new facility for the unit was built at Papakura Military Camp. The facility was named ‘Rennie Lines’, after the founding NZSAS Commanding Officer Major Frank Rennie and officially opened on 14 December 2002.

The Battle Training Facility (BTF) was officially opened on 8 April 2016 in the Ardmore Military Training Area for counter-terrorist training to replace facilities over 30 years old.

Designation

On 1 May 1955, after the Cabinet had giv-

en its approval the ‘New Zealand Special Air Service Squadron’ was formally established.

From 24 August 1963 the unit was renamed to ‘1 Ranger Squadron New Zealand Special Air Service’, in recognition of the ‘Forest Rangers’ who fought in the New Zealand Wars being one of New Zealand's first Special Forces units.

The unit reverted to ‘1st New Zealand Special Air Service Squadron’ on 1 April 1978. From 1 January 1985 the unit was known as ‘1st New Zealand Special Air Services Group’ until its re-designation as a Regiment before February 2013.

Dress distinctions

When the unit was established in 1955, approval was given for members to wear a maroon beret. The maroon beret was chosen as it was the then colour of the British Special Air Service beret.

However, the British changed their beret colour to ecru (sandy-coloured) in late 1957, the same colour as had been worn by the SAS during the early stages of World War II.

On 19 December 1985, approval was granted by the (then) New Zealand chief of general staff, Major General John Mace, who had previously deployed to Malaya with the original NZSAS Squadron, for the NZSAS to switch from maroon to the sandy-coloured beret worn by other Commonwealth Special Air Service units.

A parade was held on 21 March 1986 to formally hand the new beret over to the unit.

To show the close association between the NZSAS and



the British Special Air Service, members of NZSAS are authorised to wear black rank on all orders of dress except mess dress and to wear black web belts whenever web belts are ordered to be worn.

Organisation

As at February 2013, the main elements of the 1st New Zealand Special Air Service Regiment were:

- Headquarters
- A Squadron – Special Air Service Squadron
- B Squadron – Special Air Service Squadron
- D Squadron – Commando Squadron
- E Squadron – Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron
- Support Squadron

A and B Squadrons – Special Air Service

The two NZSAS Sabre Squadrons are combat units capable of conducting a wide range of Special Operations tasks. Each squadron is divided into four troops. The four troops specialise in four different areas: Amphibious, Air, Mobility and Mountain operations.

After completing the full NZSAS Regiment selection course, NZSAS candidates go on to undertake an intensive training cycle to build core skills.

Those who complete the training cycle are accepted into the NZSAS and wear the sand beret with NZSAS badge and blue NZSAS stable belt. NZSAS operators then conduct further training to learn advanced special operations skills.

Female Engagement Team

In 2017, the NZSAS established a six woman Female Engagement Team (FET) to provide support on operations with FET members able to engage with local women and adolescents in situations in which engagement with NZSAS male soldiers would be culturally unacceptable.

The first FET selection course was held in November 2017 over three days with physical and mental assessments, and in January 2018, five successful candidates commenced a four month training course including gender issues, cultural knowledge and how to “move, shoot, communicate and medicate” to be able to work alongside Sabre Squadron soldiers.

D Squadron – Commando

The Commando Squadron (formerly Counter Terrorist Tactical Assault Group until 5 December 2009) was formed in 2005 in a bid to provide a dedicated counter terrorist capability within 1 NZSAS and the New Zealand Defence Force.

The squadron consists of an undisclosed number of Counter Terrorist operators. Members of the Commando Squadron wear the sand beret with the Commando badge and stable belt. The Commando Squadron has the role of responding to domestic terrorist and special recovery incidents in New Zealand.

The Commando Squadron is based full-time alongside the badged squadrons at the Papakura Military Camp in Auckland and are under the command of the Commanding



New Zealand Special Air Service

Officer, 1 NZSAS. The Commando Squadron uses the Battle Training Facility at the Ardmore Military Camp to conduct their Close Quarter Battle urban, dynamic entry and room clearing drills as well as their marksman skills.

E Squadron – Explosive Ordnance Disposal

The 1st New Zealand Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Squadron is a specialist task unit within the NZSAS Regiment. It was established in August 2005 as an independent Force Troops Squadron, before coming under Operational Command of 1 NZSAS Regiment in July 2009.

It provides support to the New Zealand police to “render safe” chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and improvised explosive devices, commercial explosives and military munitions, domestically as well as overseas where New Zealand troops are operating.

Personnel who serve in the squadron wear the sand beret



GO, GO, GO! Members of the NZSAS carry out house clearing during a training exercise.

with the EOD Squadron badge and stable belt. The Squadron badge includes the motto “Into Harm’s Way”. The Squadron is based at Trentham Military Camp, with Troops located in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

Support Squadron

The Support Squadron is responsible for meeting the support needs of the NZSAS Regiment and includes logistics, intelligence, medical, administration and communications personnel.

Personnel are given specific trade training upon joining the Regiment as well as having the opportunity to complete other specialist courses such as parachuting. Qualified Support Squadron personnel wear the sand beret with their corps badge.

Selection

To join the NZSAS Regiment, New Zealand Army, Navy, or Air Force personnel must pass a selection course, with the course varying depending on the role they seek within the

Regiment.

In 2011 the selection course was also opened to civilians; they spend two days preparing for the selection course learning military skills considered necessary to compete safely against military applicants. In 2007, a four part documentary NZSAS: First Among Equals was produced on the selection course and training.

Special Air Service / Commando

The SAS selection standard remains the same, with the full course aiming to identify “self-disciplined individuals who are capable of working effectively as part of a small group under stressful conditions for long periods of time”.

However, the earlier phases of the selection course have been opened up to candidates who wish to join the Regiment as a Commando. This is described as advancing through a series of ‘gates’.

- Gate 1: After four days the first gate is reached which allows a candidate to be considered for a role as a Com-

mando. This phase involves completing “1 NZSAS Regt fitness testing and mixed terrain navigation”.

- Gate 2: Gate 2 is reached after nine days and is the conclusion of the selection course. This phase involves completing “close country navigation and other activities” and those who get to this point are considered for SAS training. Those who are selected go on to complete an intensive period of training to build core special forces skills. On average 10–15% of candidates pass both selection and cycle training.
- Commando and SAS commissioned Officer candidates also undergo an additional two days of selection to test their suitability to solve problems when tired and under pressure.

Support / Explosive Ordnance Disposal

All support and EOD personnel who wish to join the NZSAS Regiment must complete a ten-day ‘Special Operations Forces Induction Course’.

This involves completing a revised version of the first two days of NZSAS Selection. Given the nature of their roles, support and EOD candidates are given more time to complete the activities than NZSAS and Commando candidates and are provided with normal sleep and food intake.

The course also “provides familiarisation with specialist weapons and equipment, and educates personnel on the ethos and values of the Unit”.

Weapons used by NZSAS



Glock 17



M4 Carbine



HK MP5



Benelli M3



Barrett MRAD

Operational Deployment

Since its formation in 1955 the NZSAS has been deployed in many operational theatres. These include:

- Malaya 1955–57
- Thailand 1962
- Borneo 1965–66
- Vietnam 1968–71
- Bougainville 1997–98
- Kuwait 1998
- East Timor 1999–2001
- Afghanistan 2001–2012

Other info

Victoria Cross

Only one member of the NZSAS has been awarded the Victoria Cross for New Zealand.

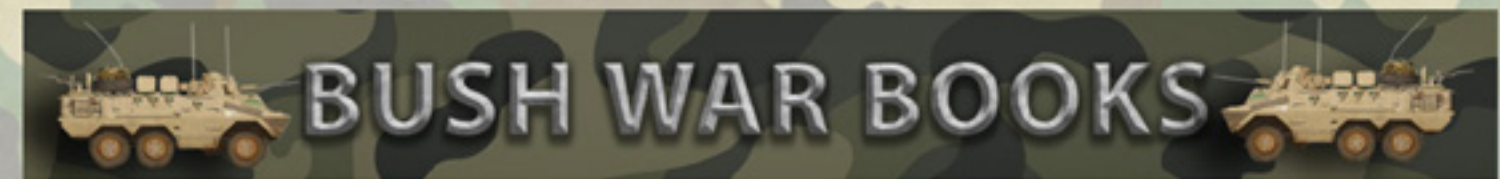
It was announced on 2 July 2007 that Corporal Willie Apata of the NZSAS had been awarded the Victoria Cross for New Zealand for carrying a severely injured comrade 70 metres “under heavy fire” from machine-guns, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) and grenades after their vehicle was destroyed in an ambush and then joined the rest of his comrades in a counter-attack.

Motto and March

The Unit motto is “Who Dares Wins”, the same motto used by the British SAS.

The Unit march is “[The Liberty Bell](#)”, an American military march composed by John Philip Sousa.

Click on the underlined blue link above and listen to the song. Many of you will immediately recognise the tune that is used as the opening theme to “Monty Python’s Flying Circus”



Bush War Books has probably one of the finest collections of military titles available. Especially on the South African Border War.

Click [here](#) to visit their website.

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

Silent Night

The First World War had been raging for nine months and countless lives had already been lost. Yet on 24 December 1914 the guns along the Western Front fell silent. It was the first Christmas of the war and the opposing soldiers were determined to celebrate the fact. It was a gesture that was not appreciated by the top brass on both sides.

It was called the 'Great War' or 'The War to end all Wars'. It had begun in April 1914 and by the time it ended in November 1918 more than 10 million lives would be lost. Yet in 1939, a mere 21 years later, the world was at war once

again. This new conflict would become known as World War II and the 'Great War' of 1914-18 would be renamed World War I.

By December 1914 the war had become static. An elaborate trench system had been constructed by both the Germans and the Allies. In some places troops faced each other with less than 100m of 'no-man's

land' between them. December 1914 would also see the first Christmas of the war.

A few months earlier Pope Benedict XV had begged the warring governments to declare a truce for Christmas, "that the guns may fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang." The Germans gave it serious consideration but the British

angrily denounced the Pope. On 24 December 1914, Christmas Eve, German troops in the region of Ypres, Belgium, began decorating the area around their trenches by placing candles on trees. The British troops watched with a mixture of confusion and more than a little suspicion.

Then the Germans began to sing *Stille Nacht*. While





FIRE: British guns fire at a German position. During the Battle of the Somme 1,738,000 shells were fired at the Germans. During this battle the British took over 60,000 casualties on the first day of the battle.

the words may have been unfamiliar the British troops could recognise the tune of *Silent Night*. The British troops responded by singing English carols.

The two sides began shouting Christmas greetings to each other. Many of the Germans had worked or studied in Britain and could speak English fluently.

There were calls for the two sides to meet in no-man's land. Tentatively, in ones and twos, troops began leaving the trenches on both sides. Normally if you showed the slightest part of your body above a trench it would be hit by a bullet within seconds. Now people were climbing out of trenches, exposing themselves to the other side.

It must have been a strange feeling for those involved. Earlier that day they had been trying to kill each other, as they had for the past nine months.

Now they were standing face to face with the enemy, shaking hands and greeting one another. Troops began to exchange small gifts such as whisky, jam, cigarettes, cigars and chocolate. The artillery in the region fell silent that night and, for the rest of the night, an eerie silence fell over the Western Front.

Mourning the dead

Early on Christmas morning troops began meeting in no-man's land again. Both sides took the opportunity to bury the many dead that lay in no-man's land. Proper burials were held and in many instances soldiers from both sides mourned the dead together and paid their respects.

In more than one sector informal football matches were arranged in no-man's land.

In many sectors, the truce lasted through Christmas night, but in some areas, it continued

until New Year's Day.

While the troops at the front may have been enjoying the break, the higher commands on both sides, especially the British, were furious. They ordered the artillery to open fire and gave orders for attacks to take place. After all, this was a war.

British commanders Sir John French and Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien vowed that no such truce would be allowed again, although both had left command before Christmas 1915. In all of the following years of the war, artillery bombardments were ordered on Christmas Eve to ensure that there were no further lulls in the combat.

Troops were also rotated through various sectors of the front to prevent them from becoming overly familiar with the enemy.



THANK YOU FRITZ: British and German soldiers met in no-man's land, exchanged greetings and gifts, and in some sectors even organised a game of soccer.

Celebrated and retold

The Christmas truce of 1914 has been celebrated and retold in songs (such as *Christmas 1914* by Mike Harding; *Christmas in the Trenches* by John McCutcheon; *Belleau Wood* by Garth Brooks; *Pipes of Peace* by Paul McCartney) film (*Joyeux Noel* and *Oh What a Lovely War*) and has also been the subject of a number of books.

In the final episode of *Blackadder Goes Forth*, the protagonists discuss events of the past that led them to their current situation, including the Christmas Truce. Captain Edmund Blackadder (Rowan Atkinson) was apparently still sore over being ruled offside during a football game with the Germans. He also cynically muses that "Both sides advanced further during one Christmas piss-up than they did in the next two-and-a-half years of war."

During the final episode Blackadder tries to fake insanity to get himself sent back to

England. It doesn't work.

As they are about to go over the top, Private Baldrick tells Blackadder he has a plan to get them out.

"At the signal, company will advance! Well, I'm afraid it'll have to wait," Blackadder says.

"Whatever it was, I'm sure it was better than my plan to get out of this by pretending to be mad. I mean, who would have noticed another madman around here? Good luck, everyone. Charge!!!"

On 7 November 2006, Irish singer Chris de Burgh paid £14,400 at Bonham's auction house for an original 10 page letter from an unknown British soldier that records events and incidents with the Germans on that night describing "the most memorable Christmas I've ever spent".

The letter begins:

This will be the most memorable Christmas I've ever spent or likely to spend: since about tea time yesterday I don't

think there's been a shot fired on either side up to now. Last night turned a very clear frost moonlight night, so soon after dusk we had some decent fires going and had a few carols and songs. The Germans commenced by placing lights all along the edge of their trenches and coming over to us-wishing us a Happy Christmas etc.

They also gave us a few songs etc. so we had quite a social party. Several of them can speak English very well so we had a few conversations. Some of our chaps went over to their lines. I think they've all come back bar one from 'E' Co. They no doubt kept him as a souvenir. In spite of our fires etc. it was terribly cold and a job to sleep between look out duties, which are two hours in every six.

First thing this morning it was very foggy. So we stood to arms a little longer than usual. A few of us that were lucky could go to Holy Communion early this morning. It was celebrated in a ruined farm about 500 yds behind us.

I unfortunately couldn't go. There must be something in the spirit of Christmas as to day we are all on top of our trenches running about. Whereas other days we have to keep our heads well down. We had breakfast about 8.0 which went down alright especially some cocoa we made. We also had some of the post this morning.

I had a parcel from B. G's Lace Dept containing a sweater, smokes, under clothes etc. We also had a card from the

On 21 November 2005, the last remaining Allied veteran of the truce, Alfred Anderson died in Newtyle, Scotland at the age of 109.

Queen, which I am sending back to you to look after please. After breakfast we had a game of football at the back of our trenches! We've had a few Germans over to see us this morning. They also sent a party over to bury a sniper we shot in the week. He was about a 100 yds from our trench. A few of our fellows went out and helped to bury him.

About 10.30 we had a short church parade the morning service etc. held in the trench. How we did sing. 'O come all ye faithful. And While shepherds watched their flocks by night' were the hymns we had. At present we are cooking our Christmas Dinner! so will finish this letter later.

Dinner is over! and well we enjoyed it. Our dinner party started off with fried bacon and dip-bread: followed by hot Xmas Pudding. I had a mascot in my piece.

Next item on the menu was muscatels and almonds, oranges, bananas, chocolate etc followed by cocoa and smokes. You can guess we thought of the dinners at home.

Just before dinner I had the pleasure of shaking hands with several Germans: a party of them came 1/2 way over to us so several of us went out to them. I exchanged one of my balaclavas for a hat. I've also got a



HELLO: Descendants of Great War veterans, in contemporary uniform, shake hands at the 2008 unveiling of a memorial to the truce.

button off one of their tunics. We also exchanged smokes etc. and had a decent chat. They say they won't fire tomorrow if we don't so I suppose we shall get a bit of a holiday-perhaps. After exchanging autographs and them wishing us a Happy New Year we departed and came back and had our dinner. We can hardly believe that we've been firing at them for the last week or two-it all seems so strange. At present its freezing hard and everything is

covered with ice... There are plenty of huge shell holes in front of our trenches, also pieces of shrapnel to be found. I never expected to shake hands with Germans between the firing lines on Christmas Day and I don't suppose you thought of us doing so. So after a fashion we've enjoyed? our Christmas. Hoping you spend a happy time also George Boy as well. How we thought of England during the day. Kind regards to all the neighbours.

The last living veteran of World War I was Florence Green, a British citizen who served in the Allied armed forces, and who died 4 February 2012, aged 110. The last combat veteran was Claude Choules who served in the British Royal Navy and died 5 May 2011, aged 110.

With much love from Boy.

On 11 November 2008, the first official Truce memorial was unveiled in Frelinghein, France, the site of a Christmas Truce football game in 1914.

On 21 November 2005, the last remaining Allied veteran of the truce, Alfred Anderson died in Newtyle, Scotland at the age of 109.

Counting the cost

Nearly 8.5 million soldiers lost their lives during World War I. Germany suffered the highest loss with 1,773,700 followed by Russia with 1,700,000. France suffered 1,357,800 casualties and the British Empire, which included Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa, suffered 908,371. The United States of America, who entered the war in 1916, lost 116,516 men.

During World War II the casualty figures were even higher. More than 30 million

soldiers died, as did millions of civilians. The Russians alone lost more than 13 million troops.

Let us remember the spirit of the Christmas Truce and pray that our generation and generations to come never have to experience a war and that we never have to calculate the cost of World War III.

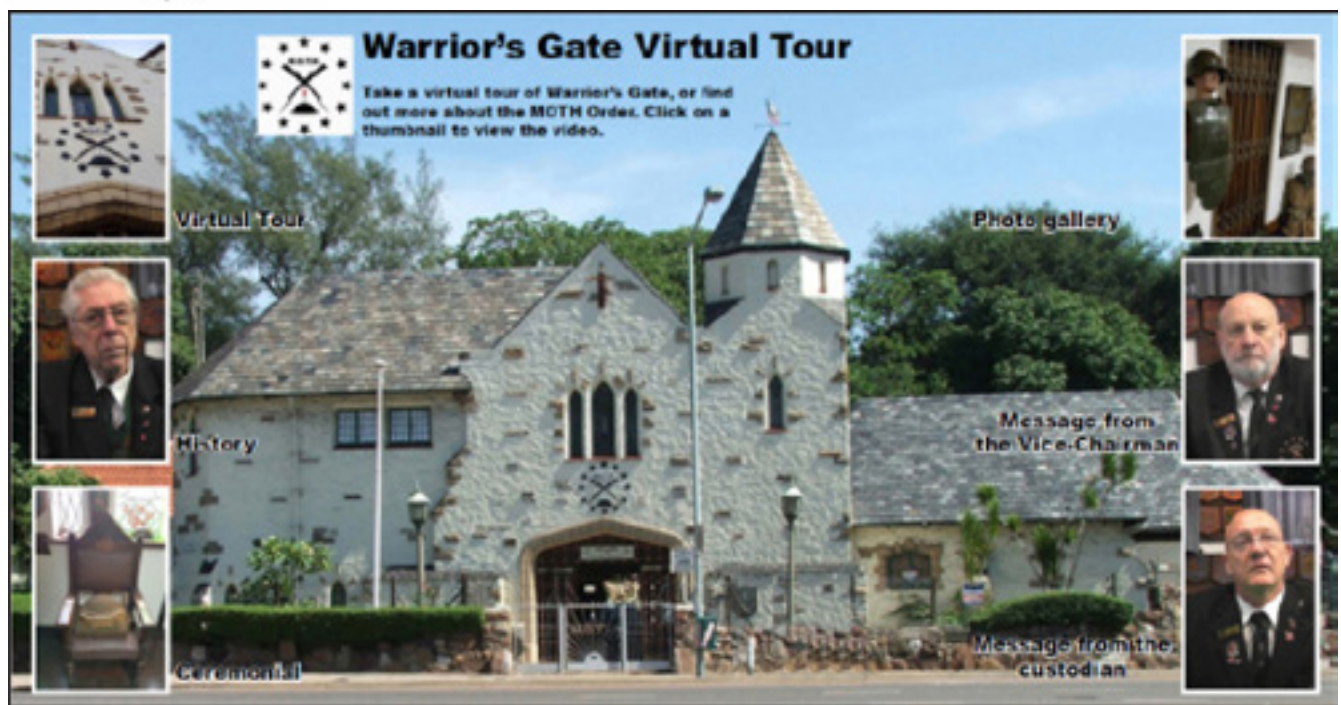
In closing I would like to quote the words of the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTH) Credo, as it is very fitting.

*They shall grow not old,
As we who are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun,
And in the morning,
We will remember them.*



Memorable Order of Tin Hats

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



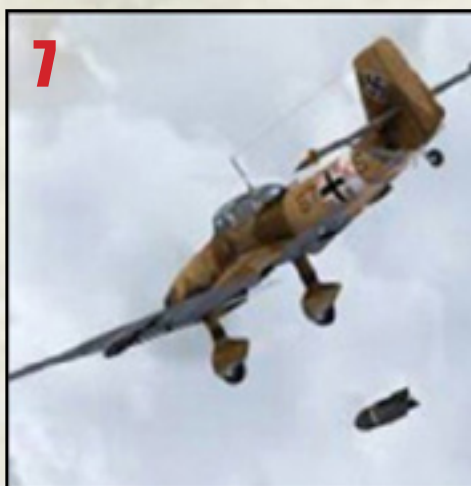


Nicknames

The military loves nicknames and slang. Here are a few questions about nicknames. See if you know the answers.

Answers on page 102.

1. What nickname was given to the M3 Stuart tank?
2. Which World War II German fighter ace had the nickname 'Dolfo'?
3. By what nickname was US Civil War General Thomas J. Jackson better known?
4. Which World War II American tank was known as the 'Ronson' by the British and the 'Tommycooker' by the Germans?
5. Who earned the nickname 'Butcher of the Somme'?
6. Which German weapon did American GI's nickname 'Screaming Mimi'?
7. What aircraft was better known as the 'Stuka'?
8. Who was known as 'Blood-n-Guts'?
9. Which American unit is nickname 'Screaming Eagles'?
10. What as the nickname given to the leading fighter ace of World War II, Erich Hartmann?
11. What was the BM-13 Katyusha better known as?
12. What was the nickname given to the America M3 sub-machine gun?
13. Which former British officer and mercenary leader was nicknamed 'Mad Mike'?
14. Which South African fighter ace was nicknamed 'Sailor'?
15. What was the nickname given to members of the South African Corps of Signals?
16. What nickname did the Russians give to Finish sniper Simo Häyhä?
17. What did the Allies call the German Stielhandgranate.
18. What was a 'Chicago Typewriter'?
19. What was the nickname given to the Royal Air Force 617 Squadron?
20. What nickname was given to the South African Val-kri 127 mm multiple rocket launcher?
21. To Allies he was known as the 'Red Baron'. But what nickname did the Germans give Manfred von Richthofen?
22. By what name were the British Home Guard known during World War II?
23. What was the nickname given to the British Parachute Regiment?
24. Who or what was a 'Noddy Car'?
25. What derogatory nickname did German General Erich von Manstein give to Adolf Hitler?
26. Which American general had the nickname 'Stormin' Norman'.



The military does Christmas

Throughout time those that have served in the military have often spent Christmas away from their home, family and loved ones. Yet it doesn't mean that they don't celebrate the fact.

Christmas is usually a time for being home with family, friends and loved ones. Yet for those in the military this is not always possible.

Many soldiers may find themselves on duty on Christmas Day, or they may be on deployment far from home. There is always a possibility that they many caught up in a war. Wars do not stop and take a break just because it's Christmas (except on rare occasions such as in December 1914).

Yet that doesn't mean that those in the military don't celebrate the fact that it is Christmas. Over the years many units and regiments have developed their own Christmas traditions. One way of celebrating is through the medium of song.

In this article we will look at just a few songs and videos that have become popular with those serving in the military. Click on the blue underlined links to view a video of the song.

Stop The Cavalry

Set in the trenches of the First World War, Stop The Cavalry by British singer Jona Lewie, was released in 1980 and is now heard as a Christmas song.

Lewie said that the song was never intended as a Christmas hit, and that it was a protest song.

Christmas 1915

Celtic Thunder is an Irish singing group and stage show known for its eclectic, theatrical style show.

Their song Christmas 1915 is based on the famous Christmas truce during World War I.

Baba Yetu

This song was composed as the theme song for the 2005 video game Civilization IV. It is the Lord's Prayer in Swahili.

It has since become a popular song, especially over Christmas. Here it is performed by the United States Navy Band.

So This Is Christmas

Made popular by Céline Dion, this is a version done by the Trinidad Armed Forces.

All I Want For Christmas

When the Royal Navy amphibious assault ship HMS Ocean was on deployment in the Middle East over Christmas 2011, the crew decided to make a video.

It was uploaded to YouTube and since then has been viewed more than five million times.

I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday

Not to be outdone, the Royal Navy Type 23 'Duke' class frigate HMS Argyll made their own video while on deployment in the Far East over Christmas 2018.

White Christmas

This evergreen Christmas favourite was one of Bing Crosby's signature songs.

Here it is performed by the US Navy Band.

Bluegrass Christmas Medley

The popular US Army Band performs a medley of Christmas hits in a bluegrass style.

We Are The World

Released in 1985 to raise money for charities, We Are The World was performed by USA for Africa, a group made up of some of America's top singers and musicians. In 2014 the Norwegian Army did their own cover version of the song.

It was clear that none of them should give up their military careers.

Battle Hymn Of The Republic

This song is popular throughout the year, including Christmas. Here it is performed by the US Army Field Band.

Last Christmas

Last Christmas was a hit song for British duo Wham. This is a cover version by the National Guard of the Russian Federation (Rosgvardia), better known as the Russian National Guard.

Trust you enjoyed these.

The origin of 'Taps'

At military funerals, memorials and services you will hear the Last Post being sounded. Yet in America you will hear the sound of 'Taps'. Why is this, and where did Taps originate?

The sound of a lone bugler playing the Last Post has become one of the most distinctive sounds in the world. Eerie and evocative, it exists beyond all the usual barriers of nation, religion, race and class, charged with the memory of generations of the fallen. But it wasn't always like this.

The Last Post was first published in the 1790s, just one of the two dozen or so bugle calls sounded daily in British Army camps. The soldier's day started with the call of Reveille, and came to a close with the First Post.

This indicated that the duty officer was commencing his inspection of the sentry-posts on the perimeter of the camp. The inspection would take about 30 minutes, and at the end there would be sounded the Last Post, the name referring simply to the fact that the final sentry-post had been inspected.

During the 1850s when a soldier died in a foreign land, there was often no music available to accompany him on his final journey. The regimental bugler would sound the Last Post over the grave.

The symbolism was simple and highly effective. The Last Post now signalled the end not merely of the day but of this earthly life.

As the practice developed it was then followed by few moments of silent prayer and by the sounding of Reveille, the first call of the day, to signify the man's rebirth into eternal life.

In America, the Last Post is not played at military funerals, memorials and services. Instead they play a tune known as 'Taps'.

It all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land.

During the night, Captain El-

licombe heard the moan of a soldier who lay mortally wounded on the field.

Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention.

Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment. When the captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead.

The captain lit a lantern. Suddenly, he caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, he had enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial despite his enemy status.

His request was partially granted. The captain had asked if he could have a group of

Army band members play a funeral dirge for the son at the funeral.

That request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. Out of respect for the

father, they did say they could give him only one musician.

The captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of his dead son's uniform. This wish was granted. This music was the haunting melody we now know as "Taps" that is used at all military funerals.

A very touching and moving story, except for one small thing. There was no dead son, Confederate or otherwise; no lone bugler sounding out the dead boy's last composition.

There is no record of any man named Robert Ellicombe holding a commission as captain in the Army of the Potomac during the Peninsula Campaign.

The only thing remotely true about the story above is the fact that Taps' was composed in July 1862 at Harrison's Landing in Virginia.

The tune is a variation of an earlier bugle call known as the "Scott Tattoo", which was used in the U.S. from 1835 until 1860, and was arranged in its present form by the Union Army Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield, an American Civil War general and Medal of Honour recipient who commanded the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division in the V Army Corps of the Army of the Potomac.

It was while at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, in July 1862 that he wrote the song to replace a previous French bugle call used to signal "lights out".

Butterfield's bugler, Oliver Wilcox Norton, was the first to sound the new call. Within months "Taps" was used by

both Union and Confederate forces. It was officially recognized by the United States Army in 1874.

"Taps" concludes many military funerals conducted with honours at Arlington National Cemetery and elsewhere in the United States.

The tune is also sounded at many memorial services in Arlington's Memorial Amphitheatre and at grave sites throughout the cemetery. It is also regularly played at the American Cemetery in Normandy, France, to commemorate the sacrifice made, at & around that site, by United States servicemen in WWII, during the allied effort to liberate Europe from the Nazis.

Captain John C. Tidball, West Point Class of 1848, started the custom of playing "Taps" at military funerals. In early July 1862 at Harrison's Landing, a corporal of Tidball's Battery A, 2nd U.S. Artillery, died.

He was, Tidball recalled later, "a most excellent man". Tidball wished to bury him with full military honours, but, for military reasons, he was refused permission to fire seven rifles three times - a 21-shot salute - over the grave.

Tidball later wrote, "The thought suggested itself to me to sound taps instead, which I did. The idea was taken up by others, until in a short time it was adopted by the entire army and is now looked upon as the most appropriate and touching part of a military funeral."

As Tidball proudly proclaimed, "Battery A has the honour of having introduced this custom into the service, and

it is worthy of historical note."

It became a standard component to U.S. military funerals in 1891.

"Taps" is sounded during each of the military wreath ceremonies conducted at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier every year, including the ones held on Memorial Day. The ceremonies are viewed by many people, including veterans, school groups, and foreign officials. "Taps" also is sounded nightly in military installations at non-deployed locations to indicate that it is "lights out", and often by Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to mark the end of an evening event such as a campfire.

"Taps" is a bugle call - a signal, not a song. As such, there is no associated lyric. Many bugle calls had words associated with them as a mnemonic device but these are not lyrics. A Horace Lorenzo Trim wrote a set of words intended to accompany the music.

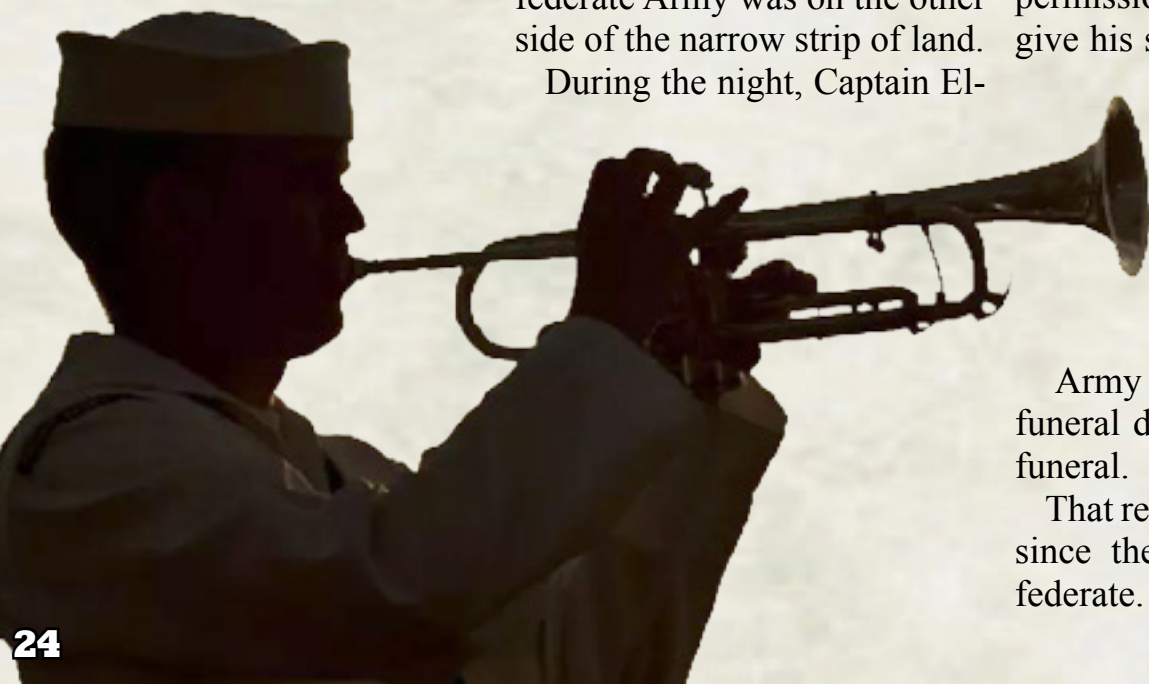
If there is no bugler or trumpeter available then the first verse of the song is normally sung *a capella*.

First verse of Taps

Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lake, from the hills,
from the sky;
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.



Click on the button to listen to 'Taps'.



Signs that someone served in the military

Want to know if someone is a military veteran? Matt Tennyson looks at some signs that are a dead give-away that someone served in the military.

National service began in 1968 when it was decided that all white South African males would be required to do a period of compulsory military service.

Note carefully the use of the word compulsory. It was not a request, it was an instruction and it was backed up by an act of parliament.

Every white male who was a South Africa citizen or had permanent residence was required to register with the South African Defence Force in the year that he turned sixteen. Once you had completed your schooling or decided to leave school, the South African Defence Force required your services.

Initially, national service was for a period of eight months. This was later increased to one year and then to two years.

The initial full-time service was followed by twelve years service in the citizen force, divided into six two-year cycles. In each cycle a maximum of 120 days service was performed, of which no more than 90 days could be imposed during one year. A total, therefore, of 720 days.

After completion of service in the citizen force, there followed a further five years in the active citizen force reserve. During this period there was no

formal service obligation, other than what could be imposed by the Minister of Defence in the light of SA Defence Force operational requirements.

After five years in the active citizen force reserve, members were liable for service in the commando force until their 55th year, with a maximum service obligation of 12 days a year.

It can clearly be seen that the SADF didn't mess around. They wanted a fairly hefty chunk of your life and you were given no choice in the matter. You either reported for national service at the time and place specified on your call up papers or you faced prosecution and detention for up to 36 months.

Then there were those that served in the Permanent Force. These were men, and women, that had decided to make the South African Defence Force their career.

Shortly before September 1993 a decision was taken at cabinet level to do away with national service. Those that were currently busy with national service were told "Thank you, but you can go home now."

Many people that served in the South African Defence Force between 1966 and 1989 were involved in the Border War, and a lot of them saw combat action.

Today the youngest men that did national service would now be in the late 40s. Those that took part in the Border War would be in their 50s, 60s and 70s.

And even though most of these veterans served a long time ago, many of them still display mannerisms that were ingrained in them during the time they served in the military.

These signs are not unique to those that served in the South African Defence Force. During my time as a conflict journalist I had the opportunity to meet people that had served in other military forces such as Britain, America, Israel, France, Germany and more.

What was interesting to note that most of them had mannerisms that gave away the fact that they had served in the military at some stage - no matter which country they were from.

Nine times out of ten someone who was a soldier will recognise another person that served in the military, without a word being spoken.

For those that never served in the military, these signs may not be so easy to recognise. There are, however, a few things that you can look for which will usually be a good indication. Here are some of them you should be able to spot.



NAP TIME: Most soldiers will develop the knack to sleep anywhere at any time.

Ability to sleep anywhere

If you're the type of person that finds it essential to get eight hours sleep a night, then the military is probably not the right option for you.

Soldiers often have to go without sleep for long periods of time. So they will grab any opportunity to get even a few minutes sleep.

They will also develop the ability anywhere. When in the field, beds are not a luxury afforded to soldiers. So any piece of floor or ground will serve as a place to sleep. Even long after they have left the military they will be able to lie down on the lounge carpet and be asleep in minutes.

Grant did his national service during 1978 and 1979. He served in the South African Signals Corps and spent nearly a year in the operational area.

"I was a radio operator and spent nine months at a place called Okalongo," Grant says.

"There were three of us signallers and it was our job to man the radios in the ops room. We would take it in turns working a nine hour shift. This meant that you spent nine hours on duty and then 18 hours off. This meant that we didn't have to work the same shift all the time.

"Our accommodation consisted of a hole dug into the ground which was covered by the roof of a tent. We didn't have beds or mattresses. You put your sleeping bag on the floor, climbed into it, and slept.

"When I did the night shift from midnight to 10h00 I would sit in the chair in front of the radios, put the headset on, put my chin on my chest, and sleep like a baby for about four or five hours.

"It's funny, but when I went home on my seven-day pass, I couldn't sleep comfortably in my own bed. The first night I woke up after about three hours with backache. I grabbed my pillow, lay down on the floor,

and slept like a baby for the rest of the night. To this day I have no problem with sleeping on the floor, although I must admit that I prefer a comfortable bed these days."

Masters of the iron

Creased or crumpled uniforms are not acceptable in the military, unless they are creases intentionally ironed into trousers and shirts.

This is especially true during basic training or on any parades. Soldiers know from experience how to use an iron.

Dave spent nine years as a member of the permanent force and, even 35 years after leaving the military, he still prefers his clothes ironed in a specific way.

"I was 17 when I joined the army and before that I had never even used an iron," Dave recalls. "But I learnt to become a master at ironing very quickly."

"The first time I tried to iron my shirt it was a disaster. I had no choice but to learn how to iron, and learn quickly. The army doesn't accept any excuses. Even now I still iron my own clothes."

Distinctive gait

Soldiers don't walk anywhere - they march. The average marching speed is 120 steps per minute and each step is about 76 cm in length. The back is kept straight as is the head. When the left foot is forward, the right arm is swung forward at the same time, and vice-versa.

Johan did two years national service and was a member of the citizen force for ten years after that. His wife pointed out

something that he finds most interesting.

“My wife always complains that I never walk, I march,” says Johan. “She also asked me why I always step off with my left foot first.”

“To be honest I had never thought about it. I realised that she was right. Whenever I am standing still and start to walk, I always step off on my left foot. Maybe it’s normal and everybody does that. But I think that it’s maybe because in the army, when you march, you always step off with the left foot first.”

Colin spent 16 years in the permanent force and ended his career as a sergeant major. He also has very strong thoughts

about marching.

“I can’t stand people that dawdle or slouch when they are walking,” Colin says. “It irritates the hell out of me. I want to walk right over them.”

Colin also pointed out another habit that he finds impossible to shake.

“Whenever I’m walking together with an old army mate we always seem to fall into step. It’s not something that we consciously do, it just tends to happen.”

Military time

Ask a former military man or woman what time something is happening, they will normally give you the answer in military time.

If, for example, something is happening at three o’clock they will not say 3.00 pm or three o’clock or at three this afternoon. They will tell you

that it is happening at 15h00. And

that is pronounced as fifteen hundred hours.

That’s

they way time is given in the military and many, if not most, former military members will use that method of giving time.

Stand easy

Soldiers standing at attention will often be given the command, “Stand at ease!”

This is not an instruction to relax, but rather a command to move from standing at attention with

the feet together and the arms at the sides to one with the feet shoulder width apart and the hands clasped behind the back.

The command given to adopt a more relaxed posture is “Stand easy”.

It is basically the same posture as stand at ease, but the back and head are more relaxed. Plenty of former military people will instinctively stand easy when they are standing relaxing.

Robert is a member of his church choir and he finds that he always stand in this position when singing.

“There’s about 20 of us, male and female, in the choir. When we sing most of the choir will stand with their hands at their sides or clasped in front of them. I always stand with my hands clasped behind my back. Force of habit, I guess.”

Always first to finish eating

In the military there is no such thing as a long, leisurely meal. Soldiers tend to eat as quickly as possible.

This was usually because the quicker you ate, the more time you had to do other things.

Martin recalls that it all started during basic training.

“We had to stand room inspection every morning,” he says. “Not only did all your personal kit have to be cleaned, polished or ironed, but beds had to be made perfectly and the entire room, including the toilets, had to shine.”

“If you did bother to go for breakfast, then you wolfed your food down as quickly as possible so you could get back to the bungalow to finish preparing



KNIFE HAND: Soldiers have a tendency to point using the entire hand and not just a single finger.

for inspection.

“Later on when I did Junior Leader’s Course we would get 45 minutes for lunch. We still stood inspection every morning which, as far as I’m concerned, were even stricter than during basics. So breakfast was always a rush.

“I was always tired because we would often get to bed late. This was because there was so much to do for inspection the next morning. So at lunch time I would try and finish my lunch in 15 minutes. Then I would go outside and lie under the trees and take a 20-25 minute nap.

“To this day it’s a habit that I still have. I eat far quicker than anyone else in my family. This is especially true when it comes to breakfast. My wife is forever telling me to eat slower.”

Using military jargon

The military has always had its own language, with jargon and slang that is unique.

For instance someone that served in the SADF will never suffer from diarrhoea, they will have gypo-guts.

Those that served in the navy will never use a toilet, they use

the ‘heads’. They will also refer to a kitchen as a galley.

You will often hear them using terms such as “copy that” or they will say “negative” rather than no.

Someone that is keen or enthusiastic is known as someone that is “GV”. It can be frustrating for those not familiar with the jargon or slang.

Foul language

Most soldiers swear - a lot. They will often continue to use colourful language even once they’ve left the military.

Craig admits that before he went into the army he rarely used bad language.

“Damn or bloody was probably the strongest words I had ever used in my life,” Craig says. “Then when I was called up for national service I soon found that within a few weeks I was ‘effing and blinding with the best of them.”

“It’s not like we swore just for the sake of using bad language. It was more of a habit and just about everyone did it. I even heard our unit padre use a four-letter word on the odd occasion.

“When I finished national service it took me a good few months to get out of the habit of swearing. I can tell you that my language didn’t go down to well with the church youth group that I was involved with.

“I’ve now been married for some time and have two children in their late teens. I never swear in front of them or in front of my wife. I do, however, belong to a military veterans organisation and we meet once a month. After the meeting we have a few drinks and it’s not long before I’m once again using language that would make your average sailor blush.”

Saluting

In almost every military, saluting is the accepted method of paying respect to a senior officer.

During basic training recruits are taught to salute everything that moves and, if it doesn’t move, salute it anyway - just in case.

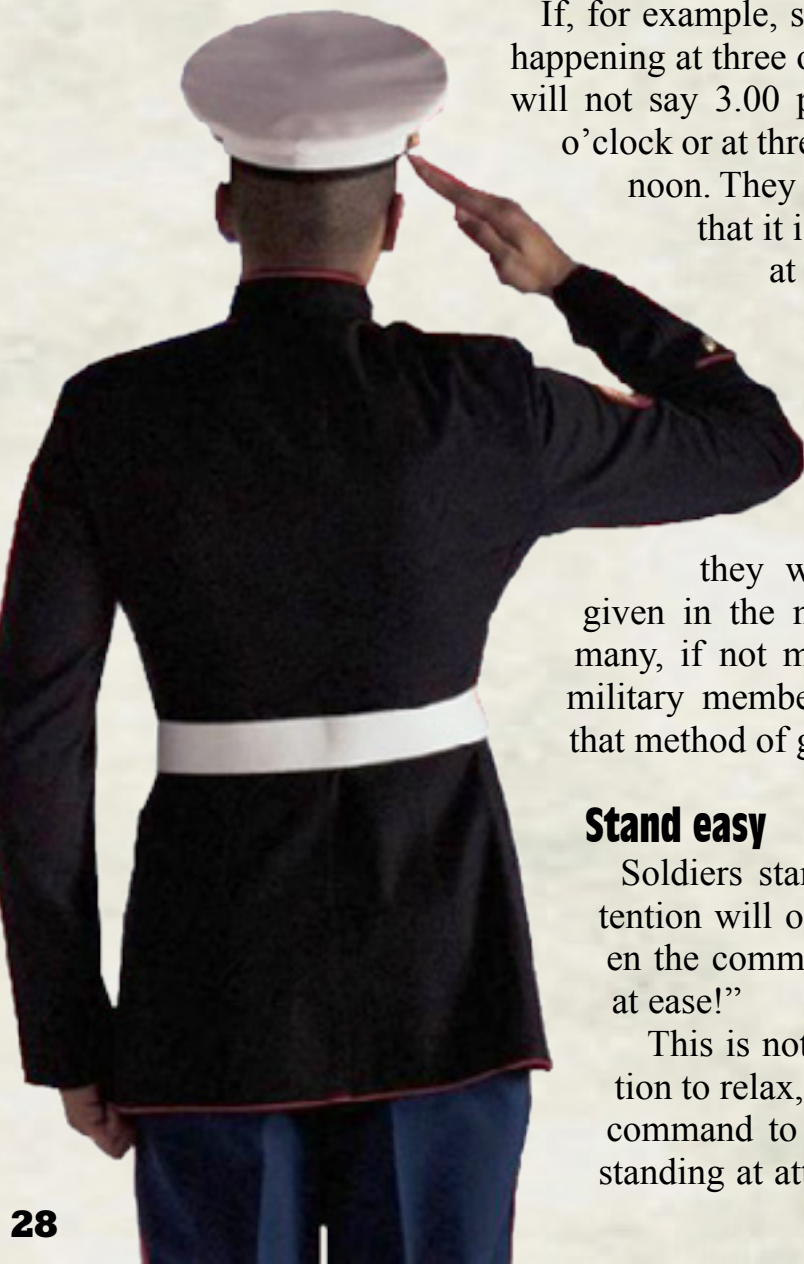
Many military veterans will still use the salute as a form of greeting, even long after they have left the military.

“I still get together with a few of the guys that I served with in the army,” says Frank. “We always salute each other. It’s not a real salute of course. It’s more just raising the hand to the forehead.”

Knife hand

Soldiers will hardly ever point at someone or something by using a single finger. They point using the entire hand. This is known as a knife hand and it serves a number of purposes.

It can be used to emphasis a



point, to indicate direction, or to point at a specific person or object.

Instructors will often use the knife hand as a form of intimidation with recruits undergoing training.

Peter did his basic training in the infantry and according to him his basic training corporal was a master at using the knife hand.

"If you did something wrong our corporal would call you to attention," Peter remembers. "Then he would come and stand in front of you with his face only centimetres from yours. He would shove his pointed fingers a few centimetres from your face, but without ever touching you, and then tell you your fortune in a very loud voice. And heaven help you if you tried to move back even a millimetre. It used to scare the crap out of me."

Dirty old men

When back in base, soldiers are required to be washed, clean shaved, and wear clean, ironed clothes and polished boots.

Yet when out in the field, fresh clothes and water to wash are a luxury not always available.

This is probably why many of those that served in the field have no problem with wearing the same clothes for two or three days.

Andy spent nearly a year on the border during his two years of national service. He explains further.

"Our company base was situated a few kilometres from the actual Angolan border," he says.

"We had no running water in our camp. We had a water tanker and it had to drive about 30



POWER SHOWER: Israeli Army troops take the opportunity to grab a quick shower while in the field.

kilometres to the police station and fill up. This was done every morning.

"Our showers were set up in the one corner of the camp and had wooden pallets for a floor and it was surrounded by canvas. Eight guys could shower at a time. The water for the shower was supplied from a large metal tank which was filled from the water tanker. Of course we would always have to take cold showers. You would only be allowed to shower for a certain amount of time because if the water ran out, you had to wait until the next morning."

That wasn't to much of a problem when they were in base but, as Andy explains, it was a different story when they were out on patrol.

"When it came to patrols we had a set routine. We would go out on patrol for eight days and then return to our base for four days," Gary says.

"When you went out on patrol you would have to carry everything needed for eight days

with you. The three main priorities were water, ammunition and rations.

"Most of us would carry eight one litre water bottles. That water was used for drinking and cooking. There wasn't enough to bother with things like washing. Anyway, you've never used soap, shampoo or even toothpaste when out on patrol because you could smell it from a good distance. Most of us, myself included, would wear the same shirt, pants, socks and underpants for the entire eight days. Maybe, if there was room in your kit, you would take a change of underwear and socks.

"So when we arrived back at base after an eight day patrol we were unshaven and smelt a bit high. The first thing we would do is have a good shower and wash our hair. Then we would have to shave. After that we would wash our clothes, by hand of course.

"That, of course, was many years ago. But I still have no problem with wearing the same pair of jeans and tee-shirt for two

days in a row. My wife goes nuts when I do and tells me to put on clean clothes. I try and tell her that they are still clean enough to wear and she gets all upset."

No explanation

In the military, when you are told to do something it is an order. It doesn't come with an explanation. At best you may be given a briefing, but that's it.

In the military you don't get to ask why something has to be done. You just get on with it. It's not something that is open to debate.

When asked or told to do something, ex-soldiers will seldom ask for an explanation as to why it has to be done. They will normally just get on with the job. They don't require you to explain why. At most they may ask you for a briefing as to how you want the job done.

Quick showers

When a soldier takes a shower they will normally do it as quickly as possible. It is not common practice to take a long, leisurely shower. You jump into the shower, wash, rinse yourself off, and get out. And it's often something they will continue to do, even when they are no longer in the military.

"When I shower it takes me less than five minutes, and that includes washing my hair," says Conrad. "When my wife or daughter take a shower they spend at least 20 minutes in the shower. If they take a shower before me then there is no hot water left. And neither of them can explain why it takes them so long."

Short hair

In the majority of armed forces, soldiers are required to keep their hair short and many armies have regulations as to exactly how the hair has to be cut.

Many former soldiers will still keep their hair relatively short, even years after they have left the military.

Mark was 17 when he joined the permanent force and he served for just over seven years.

"I joined the army straight after finishing school. So I never really had the chance to grow my hair," says Mark.

"I left the army in 1982 and in the 37 years since then I've never grown my hair long. I get my hair cut at least once a month. If it gets too long it really irritates me.

"I'm a member of a veteran's organisation and we have a meeting once a month and about 30 people attend. We also have our own pub and it's open every Friday night. A few months ago it struck me that not one person there has long hair. I don't know if it's because all of them served in the military, but it does make you think."

Stand in line

Anyone that served in the military is no stranger to standing in line. You stand in line to get issued with kit. You stand in line to be paid. You stand in line to be served meals. And you don't moan about it. It's just something that you learn to accept.

"I have no problem standing in a queue," says Cobus. He spent ten years in the military.

"My wife, on the other hand, is another story. When we go shopping she gets really irritated

if we have to queue for too long. The longer we have to wait, the more irritable she gets. She even gets mad at me because of the fact that I'm not irritated. She would never have coped in the military."

Polished shoes

There is not such thing as dirty or unpolished boots and shoes in the military.

During inspections or parades, boots often have to be 'boned'. Soldiers will sometimes spend hours polishing and buffing their boots until they shine. It's something that many ex-soldiers will continue to do even after they have left the military.

"I have no problem wearing sneakers or sandals. In fact I enjoy wearing them," says Marcus. "But if I'm wearing more formal shoes then they have to be polished and shined."

Sharing experiences

Many soldiers that saw combat during their service are reluctant to talk about it.

Bruce served for 12 years in the army and was involved in combat numerous times. It's not something that he talks about.

"Whenever I talk about my military experience I always talk about the funny things that happened," says Bruce. "But I won't talk about what happened in combat. I won't even talk about it to my wife. Unless they were there, people will never understand. The only time I will ever open up is when I'm talking to fellow veterans that also saw combat. They understand where I'm coming from because they went through the same thing."

It's a traditional thing

For anyone in the military, spending Christmas on duty or away from home is never great. Yet there are some that at least try and make it easier.

I am pretty sure that there are numerous readers that spent at least one Christmas on duty. While others were enjoying time with friends and family you may have been the duty officer, duty NCO, or even standing guard somewhere.

Many others may have been on operational deployment. This is nothing new and has been around ever since Christmas was first celebrated and wars were first waged.

One of the things about war is that it doesn't stop over weekends or on special days of the year - including the traditional day of 'Peace and Goodwill'.

There have been occasions in history where those involved in the fighting took matters into their own hands and declared a Christmas truce. One of the most well-known of these occasions was the Christmas Truce of 1914.

On 24 December 1914, Christmas Eve, German troops in the region of Ypres, Belgium, began decorating the area around their trenches by placing candles on trees.

The British troops watched with a mixture of confusion and more than a little suspicion.

Then the Germans began to sing *Stille Nacht*. While the words may have been unfamiliar the British troops could recognise the tune of Silent Night. The British troops responded by singing English carols.

The two sides began shouting Christmas greetings to each other. Many of the Germans had worked or studied in Britain and could speak English fluently. There were calls for the two sides to meet in no-man's land.

Tentatively, in ones and twos, troops began leaving the trenches on both sides. Normally if you showed the slightest part of your body above a trench it would be hit by a bullet within seconds. Now people were climbing out of trenches, exposing themselves to the other side.

Early on Christmas

morning troops began meeting in no-man's land again. Both sides took the opportunity to bury the many dead that lay in no-man's land. Proper burials were held and in many instances soldiers from both sides mourned the dead together and paid their respects.

In more than one sector informal football matches were arranged in no-man's land.

In many sectors, the truce lasted through Christmas night, but in some areas, it continued until New Year's Day.

Naturally the top brass on both sides were not all that amused about this. After all, didn't the

troops realise that there was a world war going on?

Now days, however, there are very few, if any, truces declared

over Christmas. Yet those in operational areas usually have certain traditions that are observed over the Christmas period.

Anyone that served in the South African Defence Force

(SADF) and spent a Christmas in the operational area will have fond memories of the Southern Cross Fund.

Led by Elizabeth Albrecht, this remarkable organisation was formed in 1968. They were nicknamed the *Dankie Tanies* (Thank you aunties). They raised funds to take care of the welfare of the South African armed forces.

At Christmas every member of the SADF serving in an operational area would receive a Christmas parcel from the Southern Cross Fund.

Chris was



18 when he did his national service. He spent Christmas 1977 on the border and still remembers the Christmas gift he received from the Southern Cross Fund.

"It was the first Christmas I had ever spent away from my family," he recalls. "All of us were given a gift from the *Dank-ie Tanies*. It was a small black writing bag with the Southern Cross Fund logo on it. Inside was a Parker pen, some writing paper, envelopes, a few Christmas cards, a packet of chewing gum, and a pocket knife. There was also a tee-shirt with an image and the words 'I was there'." Most of us really appreciated the gift."

Douglas also spent a Christmas on the border and also received a gift from the Southern Cross Fund. The manner in which he received the gift was a little different.

"My company was stationed at a place by the name of Okalongo," he says. "Because my platoon would be out on patrol on Christmas Day, we had our Christmas brunch on 22 December."

"Our chef went to a lot of trouble and it was actually a damn good meal. What really made the whole thing special, however, was our company sergeant major."

"We all received a gift from the Southern Cross and it was given to each of us personally by the sergeant major. The best was that he was wearing a full-on Santa suit complete with hat and big white beard. We were rolling on the floor with laughter."

"When he gave me my pres-

ent I asked him if I could sit on his knee and tell him what I wanted for Christmas. He gave me this glare and said, 'Troop, ek sal vir jou so hard bliksem dat jou ma sal begin huil.' (Troop I will hit you so hard that your mother will start to cry). The whole thing really made our Christmas that year."

Some of the Christmas lunches at the larger base camps were pretty elaborate affairs and the food was of the highest quality. Certain units had traditions regarding the Christmas meal, as David (18) explains.

"We had a tradition in our unit that on Christmas day the officers and senior NCOs had to serve the troops lunch."

"We all sat down at these long tables that were covered with white table clothes and were decorated with Christmas crackers. Everyone got a little paper hat to wear and there were bottles of wine on the table."

"Then our OC and RSM led in the officers and senior NCOs to serve the food. They came around with trays and served us individually. It was really great fun."

"Our company sergeant major was a scream. He came in wearing his army boots, a paper hat, and a white apron and nothing else. By the looks of it, he had enjoyed a good bit of Christmas cheer before lunch."



Here he was walking around bare-arsed asking if we'd had enough to eat. I laughed so much that I nearly choked on my food. I think that it was an excellent tradition and I wonder if they still do things like that today?"

British traditions

The British Armed Forces have traditions that stretch back centuries. These include Christmas traditions. One of these is 'Gunfire'.

The drink is traditionally served to soldiers in their beds by their officers on Christmas Day. It is not, however, a drink for the faint-hearted. It is a cup of hot, black tea laced with a healthy shot of rum.

For troops away on deployment every attempt is made to make the Christmas meal special. Troops will sit down to a festive lunch together and, as is tradition, the officers will often serve the soldiers.

In 2012, troops serving in Lashkar Gah in Afghanistan organised the Lash Dash, a five



CHEERS: A troop is served 'Gunfire' by an officer on Christmas morning.

kilometre run for charity.

Participants and spectators alike sported festive costumes for the event.

Lash Dash organiser Captain Emma Wardall said: "We thought it would be a good excuse to get out of the office on Christmas morning and into the sunshine. All of the money we've raised will go to the Black Rat brigade charity and the Lashkar Gah orphanage."

During the Christmas Truce of 1914, British and German troops played a game of soccer in no-man's land.

In 2014, on the 100th anniversary of the Christmas Truce, British and German soldiers deployed in Afghanistan gathered in a dusty field for a commemorative game of football.

Brigadier James Stopford said: "A hundred years on to see German soldiers and British soldiers again on operations do this is just symbolic of progress and what can be achieved."

American traditions

During the American Revolution, troops were not stationed overseas, of course, but since

travel was mostly by foot and horseback, it was hard for soldiers to return home for Christmas and get back to the battlefield in a timely manner. They were forced to celebrate wherever they were, including fighting battles on Christmas Day.

George Washington crossed the Delaware Rive on 25 December 1776. After the Battle of Trenton was over, General Washington did his best to give his soldiers a bit of rest and time to celebrate among themselves.

The American Civil War was unique because families were split across both Union and Confederate lines. It was not uncommon for brothers to celebrate Christmas on opposite sides of the battlefield, often within sight of each other, one wearing blue, the other grey.

On Christmas Day in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln visited injured soldiers in various hospitals to brighten their spirits. Santa even appeared to Union troops one year.

Thanks to the growth of the aviation industry, air freight made sending care packages to troops in the European and Pa-

cific theaters easier and faster during World War II.

Presents, including home-made food, reached troops in time to celebrate and help them feel a bit closer to home so far away.

In addition to getting presents, troops not stationed on the front were treated to holiday meals anywhere there was no active fighting.

Many of the soldiers themselves donated their home-sent gifts to children in war zones whose homes had been destroyed in the bombing.

The conflicts in Korea and Vietnam continued the tradition of sending gifts and eating meals together but added one new layer - phone calls back home.

Thanks to advances in telecommunications technology, soldiers in certain areas could make a quick phone call back home and talk to loved ones rather than sending letters and waiting for weeks, sometimes months for a reply.

By the time Operation Desert Storm started in 1991, overseas calls to troops was common practice, and e-mail was starting to take hold on a large scale.

Today, soldiers on foreign deployment can stay in regular touch with folks back home via Skype, FaceTime, and other instant connections. Most laptop computers have video cameras which allow face to face communication.

For all those that will be on deployment away from home this year, we at Military Despatches wish you a happy, peaceful, and safe Christmas.

Christmas gifts for the outdoors man

Many military veterans tend to love camping and the outdoors. As if they didn't get enough of it during their service. Here's a few gift ideas for those veterans.



Tactical - All in One Survival Kit

What's in the box

- 1 x Tactical torch Flashlight
- 1 x Survival Paracord Bracelet
- 1 x Foldable Tactics Military Knife
- 1 x Compass
- 1 x Emergency thermal blanket
- 1 x Flintstone, Whistle
- 1 x Water Bottle Clip
- 1 x Tactical Camo Pouch
- 1 x roll Plaster
- 1 x roll bandage

BioLite Wood Burning Camp Stove

You're out in the bush and your cellphone or tablet dies. What if the heat from your camp fire could be used to generate electricity to give you unlimited access to power?

The BioLite CampStove 2 uses a thermoelectric generator to convert the heat from your fire back into reusable electricity so that you can charge out to your handheld devices. Access that power right away or store it for later with its integrated battery. Using only twigs, pine combs or brush as fuel, this portable smokeless camping stove can boil a litre of water in under five minutes. The LED dashboard gives real-time feedback on fire strength, fan speed, and power output, making it super easy and convenient to use.



TACT Bivvy Survival Sleeping Bag

The TACT Bivvy is an ingenious light-weight emergency sleeping bag that fits in size of your hand.

The TACT Bivvy is made from heat-reflecting Mylar and coated with a unique material called Heatsheets. This material is highly durable, resistant to tearing, and stretches so it can be used over and over again.

It will keep both rain and wind off of you, while keeping you warm in temperatures below zero.



Gerber Dime Multi-Tool

If you're going to use a multi-tool then you can't go wrong with Gerber.

This model includes 10 tools: Needle nose spring-loaded pliers, Wire cutter, Fine edge blade, Retail package opener, Scissors, Medium flat screwdriver, Crosshead screwdriver, Bottle opener, Tweezers, File.



LifeStraw Steel Personal Water Filter

This is something that can save your life in a survival situation. Put the straw into almost any water, no matter how polluted, and drink.

Stainless steel LifeStraw water filter features 2-stage filtration system that eliminates contaminants as well as odours and tastes

Durable and compact food-grade stainless steel straw meets FDA standards and is ideal for hiking, camping, backpacking, travel, and outdoor survival

Removes minimum 99.9999% of water-borne bacteria and 99.9% of water-borne protozoan parasites, and filters to 0.2 microns; surpasses EPA filter standard

Replaceable carbon capsule provides 2-stage filtration that reduces chlorine, organic chemicals, odours and bad tastes

Filters up to 1,000 litres and does not require batteries, pumping, or chemicals

The Korean War - a few facts

In 1950 the 'Cold War' became bit more heated. Known as the 'forgotten war', it would go on to claim more than five million casualties. We look at a few facts about the Korean War that you may or may not have known.

On 25 June, 1950 the 'Cold War' became 'hot' when North Korea launched an invasion against its neighbour to the South following a series of clashes along the border

The United Nations, with the United States as the principal force, came to the aid of South Korea. China came to the aid of North Korea, and the Soviet Union also gave some assistance to the North.

The war would last from 25 June, 1950 to 27 July, 1953 and would cost more than five million dead, wounded or missing.

When an armistice was signed on 27 July, 1953, the agreement created the Korean Demilitarized Zone to separate North and South Korea, and allowed the return of prisoners. However, no peace treaty has been signed, and according to some sources North Korea and South Korea are technically still at war.

What, where, when, who?

The Korean War was the first military action of the Cold War.

The Korean War began at 04h30 on June 25, 1950, and ended on July 27, 1953. The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when 75,000 North Korean soldiers poured over the 38th parallel into South Korea to impose communism on its neighbour.

Months before the North Korean army crossed the 38th parallel,

the CIA noted that North Korean troops were moving south. The CIA, however, did not take any action and viewed the movement as a "defensive measure."

Officially, the Korean War was never more than a "police action" because President Truman never asked Congress for a formal declaration of war. It was a clever way of keeping Congress out of the war because, as it was not an official war, they could not make any decisions nor resolutions about it.

During the war, North Korea was supported by the Soviet Union (Russia) and the People's Republic of China, both communist countries.

Both Russia and The People's Republic of China were members of the United Nations Security Council. Yet both supported North Korea, who were fighting against the United Nations forces.

During the Korean War, South Korea was supported by the United States, Great Britain, and the United Nations, which all supported democracy and opposed communism.

Even though 16 countries participated in the Korean War, it is still not considered a "world war." Fifteen United Nations countries sent combat troops to Korea: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Luxembourg, New

Zealand, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, and Turkey. Four countries sent medical assistance: India, Italy, Norway, and Sweden.

Although actual hostilities during the Korean War ended on July 27, 1953, Congress lengthened the war period to January 31, 1955, to extend benefit eligibility for soldiers because peace was so uncertain after the 1953 peace negotiations.

In March 2013, North Korea declared that the 1953 armistice was invalid. So for them, they war continues.

Although millions of people died during the Korean War, no one side can claim it won the war.

At best, South Korea can claim that it stopped North Korea from taking over and turning it into a communist nation. Both countries still remain divided, and North Korea is still a communist nation.

Prisoners of War

There were 7,245 American POWs during the Korean War. Of these, 2,806 died while in captivity and 4,418 were eventually returned to military control. Twenty-one refused repatriation.

These 21 American soldiers chose to stay with their Chinese captors. Hailed in China as "Peace Fighters," in America they were denounced as turncoats and traitors. The U.S. media claimed the soldiers were



DIVIDING LINE: The 38th Parallel marked the border between North and South Korea.

brainwashed by their captors. Most of them later recanted their statements and returned to America.

One of the most embarrassing incidents during the Korean War was when U.S. Army Brigadier General Francis Townsend Dodd was held hostage by North Korean POWs during a camp uprising. The incident led to a North Korean propaganda victory, and Dodd suffered career-ending embarrassment.

The highest-ranking U.S. officer captured by North Korean troops was Major General William F. Dean in the Battle of Taejon on 22 July 1950.

A bit of 'how's your father'

During the Korean War, like in other wars, prostitutes were available and became more available the farther back from the front line a soldier was.

Venereal diseases were a constant fear of the military, and many men contracted them.

During the Korean War, the

South Korean government provided women for its troops. According to one account, the government standard of performance for such women was to service at least 29 men a day. Intercourse should not last longer than 30 minutes so the prostitute could move on to other men and make the maximum daily profit.

There is heated and ongoing debate about how much the U.S. military was involved in providing prostitutes for its men.

Casualties

The Korean War took a heavy toll - up to a total of five million dead, wounded, or missing, and half of them civilians.

There were 6.8 million American men and women who served during the Korean War period, from 27 June 1950, to 31 January 1955. There were 54,200 American deaths during the period of hostilities. Of these, 33,700 were actual battle deaths.

Roughly a quarter of all Americans killed in action during the Korean War died between August and December 1950, mostly during the battles of the Pusan perimeter, Chosin Reservoir, and Kunu-ri Pass.

Many soldiers died of frostbite during the Korean War before ever reaching the battlefields. The temperature in some areas fell below zero for long periods of time.

One of the most brutal battles of the Korean War was the Battle of Chosin Reservoir, fought from November 27 to December 13, 1950. What made it different from other fierce fighting was the intensely cold and bitter weather. Temperatures dropped to -54° F. One survivor of the battle designed a bumper sticker that read: "Once Upon a Time Hell Froze Over. We Were There."

The highest-ranking U.S. Military officer to die in the Korean War died in an accident. Lt. General Walton H. Walker died when a truck hit his jeep on December 23, 1950.

New, shiny stuff

During the first few weeks of the Korean War, the U.S. rushed a new weapon into service to provide an effective counter to North Korean armour - the M-20 bazooka. It was nicknamed "super-bazooka" and could fire a larger, 3.5-inch rocket capable of penetrating North Korean armour.

During World War II the German Luftwaffe had been the first nation to use jet aircraft in action. During the Korean War both sides were equipped with jet aircraft. The world's first

all-jet dogfight occurred during the Korean War on 8 September 1950.

The top-scoring American flying ace of the Korean War was Air Force Captain Joseph McConnell. Flying F-86 Sabres, he shot down 16 enemy planes, including three MIG-15s in a single day. He died tragically in a test flight accident in August 1954.

The most powerful tank to see action in the Korean War was the 67-ton British Centurion with a 105 mm main gun.

The helicopter played an important role in the war. It was used not only to evacuate casualties, but was used to carry troops into combat zones.

Trivia

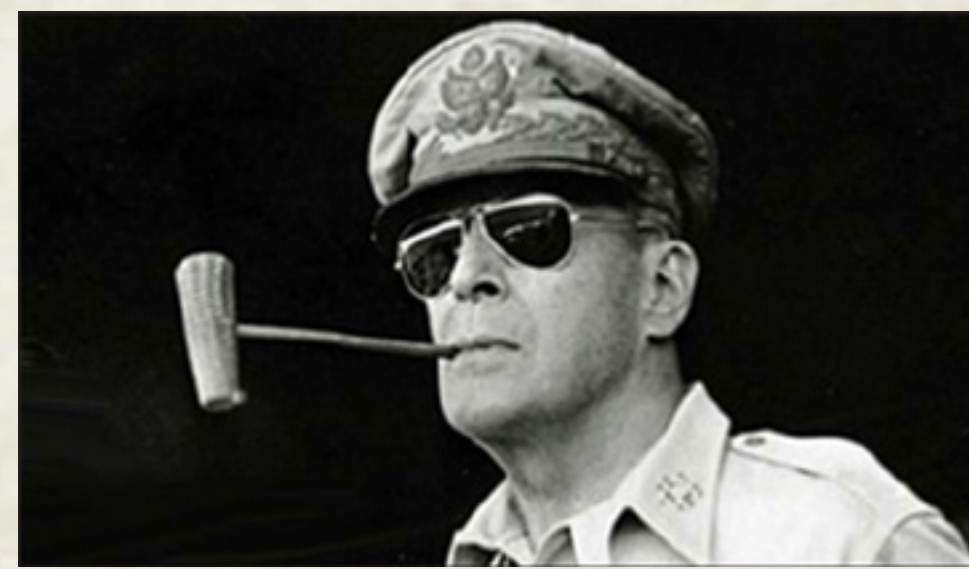
- Compared to World War II and even Vietnam, there are few movies about the Korean War. Some of the most well-known include *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *Pork Chop Hill* (1959), and *Birthday Boy* (2004).
- North Koreans who were

born after the Korean War in the late 1950s are on average about two inches shorter than South Koreans.

- The U.S. dropped more bombs in Korea (635,000 tons, as well as 32,557 tons of napalm) than in the entire Pacific theatre during World War II.
- During 1953, the soldiers of the U.S. Army I Corps donated \$385,000 to Korean relief charities. The 45th Infantry Division contributed \$300,000 to Korean relief organizations.
- According to the 1990 Census, of the 4.9 million Korean War veterans in the U.S., 4.5 million (92%) were white; 339,400 (7%) were African American; 30,400 (less than 1%) were American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut; 39,300 (less than 1%) were Pacific Islander; and 35,000 were of other races. There were an estimated 133,500 Hispanic (who may be of any race) Korean War veterans.
- It was during the Korean

War that the intravenous use of amphetamines was first reported. Some soldiers had developed the habit of mixing heroin with amphetamines and injecting the combination. A significant number of servicemen returning from the Korean War brought back the habit with them.

- Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command, U.S. Army General Mark Clark signed the armistice for the United States that ended the Korean War on 27 July 1953.
- During the Korean War, the United States Army and the United Nations forces were led by General Douglas MacArthur and, later, General Matthew Ridgway. The North Korean forces were led by Choi-Yong-kun.
- The United States still keeps troops in South Korea in case North Korea ever attempts to invade again.
- The capital of South Korea, Seoul, changed hands



FIRED: General Douglas MacArthur was fired by US President Harry Truman for being too aggressive. He was replaced by General Matthew Ridgway who was more conservative.

four times during the Korean War. It was first captured by the North Koreans on 28 June 1950, and then retaken by UN forces that September. The Chinese seized the city in January 1951, but gave it up two months later.

- The Korean War did not receive as much media attention as World War II and the Vietnam War. Consequently, it has been called the "The Forgotten War" or the "Unknown War."
- MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) units were first used in the Korean War. Their aim was to be closer to the combat zones to save more soldiers' lives.
- The most famous representation of the Korean War is the television series "M*A*S*H," which ran from 1972 to 1983. Its final episode was the most watched in TV history. The television series lasted 11 years, eight years longer than the actual war.
- Initially, the U.S. wanted to defend South Korea, but

later in the war, Truman convinced the UN that it was time to liberate North Korea as well. Under Gen. MacArthur's leadership, U.S. and UN troops gained control of most of North Korea. When China entered the war, MacArthur wanted to keep fighting despite China's overwhelming numbers. Truman fired MacArthur and replaced him with Gen. Matthew Ridgway, who had a much more conservative plan that included just defending South Korea.

- There were 131 Medals of Honour awarded during the Korean War.
- Tensions created by the Korean War led both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower to consider dropping a nuclear weapon on North Korea. With strategic missiles and thermonuclear (hydrogen) bombs still in testing, the bombs that would have been dropped were atomic bombs delivered by B-47s, similar in yield to the 1945 bombs. Both presidents ultimately

ly decided not to drop the bombs because they were afraid of starting WW III.

- In occupied areas of North Korea, the North Korean Army executed every educated person (such as those who held education, government, and religious positions) who could lead a resistance against North Korea.
- Because North Koreans would fight UN forces by disguising its soldiers as refugees who would ask UN forces for food and help and then open fire and attack, U.S. soldiers adopted a "shoot first, ask questions later" policy against anyone looking like a civilian refugee approaching U.S. battlefields.
- The paratroopers of the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (known as the "Rakkasans") conducted all of the airborne operations of the Korean War. They jumped into Sunch'ŏn, North Korea in 1950, and Munsan-ni, South Korea in 1952. The Rakkasans fought in a total of six campaigns in Korea. Today, the unit's heirs are part of 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).
- Approximately 848,000 Korean War veterans also served in other war periods: 171,000 in both World War II and Vietnam; 404,000 in World War II only; and 273,000 in Vietnam only.

TV HIT: The television sitcom MASH, set in the Korean War, lasted eight years longer than the actual war.



The war is history, get over it!

The vast majority of our readers were involved in the military at some stage of their lives. Many fought in a war. In our modern-day politically correct woke society some believe that it is time to stop 'wasting time' on remembering wars and events from history and move on with more important matters. JOE STANZA tends to disagree.

From time to time it is suggested to me that constant remembrances of past horrors is tantamount to "living in the past" and that we should all forget the less savoury things of the past so as to "move on" and not "waste time" by being "weighed down" by the things of the past.

This argument would seem to have merit. Particularly those that have no idea of what it is all about.

In 1969 someone pinned a note onto a notice board at

MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam).

The note read: "For those who fight for it, life has a flavour the sheltered will never know". It refers to a quote made by Theodore Roosevelt.

Those that claim that we need to "stop living in the past" and that we need to "move on" and "stop wasting time on the past" do have a point.

The world is beset by problems (as it has been throughout recorded history) and this includes poverty, racial and religious tension and injustice, unemployment, disease, political differences, and even things such as global warming.

Yet while we need to focus on the present and plan for the future, we cannot be allowed to forget the past.

It was writer and philosopher George Santayana that is credited with the quote, "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." What he actually said was, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

What Santayana is basically saying is that history tends

to repeat itself - time and time again. It's certainly a catchy phrase and it's a big one, because if it is true and if history is driven by human nature, is ugly (actually, it is), then this saying ought to guide our public and private policy.

War has been a part of history ever since Cain picked up a rock and hit his brother Able over the head with it.

July 1914 saw the start of the first war on a truly global scale. More than 30 nations around the world took part in it.

It was originally known as "The Great War" and "The war to end all wars". Incidentally, it was English writer H.G. Wells that coined the term "The war to end all wars".

It was a war that would last four years, three months and two weeks. It was also a war in which 20 million people would die and 21 million would be wounded. It was a war where more civilians would die than military personnel.

When Santayana said that if we do not learn from history we are doomed to repeat it, he could just as well have said

"Those that do learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

You would think that after a war that saw more than 40 million people die, the world would come to its senses and say "Never again!"

Yet it turns out that the "War to end all wars" actually wasn't the war to end all wars. Just over twenty years later that world was at it again. This time on an even grander scale. The "Great War" was renamed World War I.

World War II began on 1 September 1939. Strangely enough, H.G. Wells predicted World War II and wrote that it would begin in January 1940. He was only four months out.

World War II would last six years and one day and involve more than 50 nations.

In a total war directly involving more than 100 million personnel from more than 30 countries, the major participants threw their entire economic, industrial, and scientific capabilities behind the war effort, blurring the distinction between civilian and military resources.

Aircraft played a major role in the conflict, enabling the strategic bombing of population centres and the only two uses of nuclear weapons in war

to this day.

World War II was by far the deadliest conflict in human history; it resulted in 70 to 85 million fatalities, a majority being civilians. Tens of millions of people died due to genocides (including the Holocaust), starvation, massacres, and disease.

Yet did we learn anything from World War I and World War II? Of course not.

Since Japan surrendered on 2 September 1945, bringing World War II to an end, there has never been a 24-hour period where a war wasn't taking place somewhere in the world.

Many of these conflicts were never officially recognised as wars. The Korean War (25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953) was a "police action" and the Vietnam War (1 November 1955 to 30 April 1975) was merely America and a few NATO countries offered military assistance to South Vietnam.

Try telling the nearly five million people that died in the Korean War and the more than 1,3 million that died in Vietnam that it wasn't a war.

Even our own Border War, in which many of our readers fought, was not an official war.

South Africa never declared war on anyone, nor did anyone declare war on us. Yet it lasted for 23 years, four months, two weeks and six days.

A total of 791 members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) were killed in action or died as a direct result of combat. More would die as a result of non-combat related events. In fact during the entire 37 year history of the SADF, 2,573 members died while on active service.

You also need to take into account that more than 16,000 soldiers fighting on the Angolan side, including nearly 5,000 Cubans, were killed. And all in a war that wasn't actually a war.

These statistics do not take into account the thousands that were wounded, maimed or still suffer from the psychological effects of the war.

And now there are people telling us that we need to forget all about our war, and the countless wars that came before and after it.

We need to stop building monuments to these wars and stop holding parades such as the annual Remembrance Day

parade that honours those that paid the ultimate sacrifice during World War I, and those wars after it.

We need to “get over it” and stop “living in the past”. We need to “move on” and stop “wasting time” being “weighed down” by the things of the past.

I have one word to say to those that make these claims. And that word is “No!”

I was personally involved in a war and it was something that affects me to this day. Yes, I have moved on, but no, I cannot and will not forget the past. How can I.

I am also a member of the Memorable Order of Tin Hats (also known as the Moths). This was an organisation formed after World War I to remember those that fell in the “Great War”. Membership was later extended to those that fought in World War II and our own Border War.

When I became a member I made an oath. It is an oath that we retake after every meeting. The oath says:

*They shall not grow old,
as we who are left grow old,
age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

It is an oath that I take very seriously. And when I “remember them”, I remember all those that died. Not just those that fought on my side.

It is my sad duty to inform all of those that believe that we need to forget history is that this is impossible. It did happen, that’s why it’s called history.

It’s something that did hap-



BORDER BOYS: The late General Constand Viljoen, former Chief of the SADF, marches in the annual Border Boys Parade in Cape Town. The parade is held to remember those that died in the Border War. General Viljoen is on the far right of the first row.

pen. So get over it. You can try as hard as you like, but you can’t make it go away.

We live in a cancel culture where we just “cancel” anything that we don’t like or that doesn’t agree with our viewpoint. Sorry to let you know, you’re not going to be able to cancel history. Get over it.

I am also highly amused by those that say that if we didn’t have armies then we wouldn’t have any more wars. I sometimes wonder if their shoe size is not larger than their IQ.

Nearly every country in the world has a military force of some kind or another. Even the smallest country in the world, Vatican City, has an army - the Swiss Guard. Fair enough, it only has an army that is 120 men strong, but it’s still an army.

It is true that a huge amount of money and personnel is

spent each year on the military. The United States of America, regarded as the most powerful military in the world, has an armed force of 1,4 million personnel. They also spend a staggering \$740,5 trillion on defence every year.

The People’s Republic of China has an even larger armed forces with 2,185,000 active personnel.

Consider a country such as Bhutan. It currently has the weakest military force in the world with only 7,000 military personnel. Yet even Bhutan spends just over \$19 billion on its annual defence budget.

So why should nations spend so much money on defence? Surely that money could be put to better use. Think of how many jobs it could create, how it could alleviate poverty. How many hospitals, schools and houses could be built with that

kind of money. A good point. Unfortunately every nation needs to defend itself.

Let’s go back to that ideal scenario where no nation had armed forces. A place where all 195 countries that make up the world all live in peace and harmony and sit around the camp fire singing Khumbaya.

Now let’s say that one of those 195 countries is run by a person such as Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong (aka Mao Tse-Tung), Kim II Sung, Pol Pot, Bashar al-Assad or Idi Amin - some of the most brutal dictators in modern history.

They decide that this is just too good an opportunity to let slip and they start to build up a powerful armed force. They then start to invade other countries around them.

How are these unarmed coun-

tries supposed to defend themselves. What are you going to do - cancel them. Good luck with that.

That’s why even a peaceful country such as Switzerland, which remained neutral throughout two world wars, has an armed force of 21,00 active personnel and a reserve force of 280,000 personnel. It also has an annual defence budget of more than \$5 billion.

They will not attack any other nation, but they are both willing and able to defend themselves.

In conclusion we have to face facts that history is filled with wars that have taken place. Even as I write this article, there is a war going on somewhere in the world.

We cannot forget those wars throughout history, and we should never be allowed to for-

get them. Nor should we be allowed to forget the millions of people that died in these wars. To forget these people would be a crime against humanity.

We should have a duty to teach future generations about history because remembrance of such things is the most compelling deterrent to doing it all again. Perhaps certain things should be celebrated in remembrance - if only to maintain a semblance of sanity.

Santayana may have been right when he said that “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

There is another quote from Santayana that may just put everything into context - “Only the dead have seen the end of war.”

Springbok



The SA Legion is a national organisation, part of a worldwide 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 August issue of Springbok by clicking on the cover to the left.

Special Forces - The Big Three

Most countries that have a military force will also have a special forces element. This month we look at the Big Three - Britain, America, and Russia.

NATO defines special operations as “military activities conducted by specially designated, organised, trained, and equipped forces, manned with selected personnel, using unconventional tactics, techniques, and modes of employment”.

Depending on the country, special forces may perform some of the following functions:

airborne operations, counter-insurgency, “counter-terrorism”, foreign internal defence, covert ops, direct action, hostage rescue, high-value targets/man-hunting, intelligence operations, mobility operations, and unconventional warfare.

Special forces selection criteria differs from country to country. What they do have in common is that fact that selec-

tion is tough and it's not easy to make the grade.

In Head to Head this month we will be looking at three different special forces units from three different countries, namely Britain, the United States and Russia.

We look at their history, their organisation, selection and training, and some of the small arms they use.



Special Air Service (SAS)



United States Navy SEALs



Spetsnaz

History

Special Air Service

The SAS was founded in 1941 as a regiment and in 1950 it was reconstituted as a corps.

Presently the corps consists of 22 Special Air Service Regiment, 21 (Artists) Special Air Service Regiment (Reserve) and 23 Special Air Service Regiment (Reserve). 21 and 23 Regiments are reserve units under the operational command of 1st Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade.

Originally known as L Detachment, Special Air Service Brigade, the unit was formed in July 1941 by David Stirling and was intended to be a commando force that operated behind enemy lines. It consisted of five officers and 60 other ranks.

Their first mission, in November 1941, was a disaster. It was a parachute drop in support of Operation Crusader. A total of 22 men, a third of the unit, were killed or captured.

Their second mission, however, was a major success. Transported by the Long Range Desert Group, it attacked three airfields in Libya, destroying 60 aircraft with the loss of 2 men and 3 Willys Jeeps. In September 1942, it was renamed 1st SAS, consisting at that time of four British squadrons, one Free French, one Greek, and the Folboat Section. The Folboat Section would later go on to become the Special Boat Service (SBS).

At the end of World War II the British Government saw no further need for the SAS and it was disbanded on 8 October 1945.

The following year the government had a rethink and decided that there was a need for a deep-penetration commando unit.

The Artists Rifles took on the mantle as 21st SAS Regiment on 1 January 1947.

In 1951 21 SAS squadron was raised to fight in the Korean War. After three months of training they were told that they

were no longer required and instead they were sent to fight in the Malayan Emergency.

Mike Calvert had already formed a new unit called the Malayan Scouts (SAS) and had formed a squadron of 100 volunteers. They became A Squadron, 21 SAS squadron became B Squadron, and 1,000 Rhodesian volunteers became C Squadron.

By this stage the British had recognised the need for a regular army SAS regiment. 22nd SAS Regiment was added to the army list in 1952 and have

been based at Hereford since 1960.

In 1959 the third regiment, 23rd SAS Regiment, was formed by renaming the Reserve Reconnaissance Unit.

Since then 22 SAS Regiment has taken part in operations around the world. This includes countries such as Borneo, Oman, Aden, Northern Ireland, Gambia, the Falklands, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and other countries.

US Navy SEALs

The United States Navy's Sea, Air and Land Teams, better known as the Navy SEALs, are the US Navy's primary special operations force and a component of the Naval Special Warfare Command.

The Navy SEALs can trace their roots back to World War II when the US Navy recognised the need for the covert reconnaissance of landing beaches and coastal defences.

In 1942 the Amphibious Scout and Raider School was established at Fort Pierce, Florida. The Scouts and Raiders were a joint US Army, Marine and Navy unit.

In September 1942 Navy Combat Demolition Units were trained in demolitions, explosive cable cutting and commando raiding techniques at ATB Little Creek in Virginia.

Some of the earliest World War II predecessors of the SEALs were the Operational Swimmers of the Office of Stra-

tegic Services, or OSS.

On 23 November 1943, the U.S. Marine landing on Tarawa Atoll accentuated the need for hydrographic reconnaissance and underwater demolition of obstacles prior to any amphibious landing. This led to the formation of Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT).

During the Korean War UDT units worked closely with the Republic of Korea naval special forces.

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy was passionate about the need for unconventional warfare and special operations as a measure against guerrilla warfare.

In a speech to Congress he announced his intention to spend over \$100 million to strengthen U.S. special operations forces and expand American capabilities in unconventional warfare.

Kennedy did not, however, create the Navy SEALs. His announcement was only a formal acknowledgement of a process

that had been under way since Korea.

Admiral Arleigh Burke, the Chief of Naval Operations, recommended the establishment of guerrilla and counter-guerrilla units.

This was the beginning of the Navy SEALs. All SEALs came from the Navy's Underwater Demolition Teams. The first two teams were formed in January 1962 and stationed on both US coasts: Team One at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, in San Diego, California and Team TWO at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Seal Teams One and Two saw extensive combat in Vietnam. They amassed a combined kill/death ratio of 200:1.

Since Vietnam the Navy SEALs have taken part in operations in countries such as Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Philippines and the Horn of Africa.

Spetsnaz

Spetsnaz is the abbreviation for *Войска специального назначения*, tr. *Voyska spetsialnogo naznacheniya* which can be translated as Special Purpose Forces or Special Purpose Military Units. Historically they were special military units controlled by the military intelligence service GRU.

In 1950, Georgy Zhukov advocated the creation of 46 military spetsnaz companies, each consisting of 120 servicemen. This was the first use of "spetsnaz" to denote a separate military branch since World War II.

These companies were later expanded to battalions and then to brigades. However, some separate companies (orSpN) and detachments (ooSpN) existed with brigades until the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The special purpose forces of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (RF) included fourteen land brigades, two

naval brigades and a number of separate detachments and companies, operating under the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) and collectively known as Spetsnaz GRU.

These units and formations existed in the highest possible secrecy, and were disguised as Soviet paratroopers (Army spetsnaz) or naval infantrymen (Naval spetsnaz) by their uniforms and insignia.

Twenty-four years after the birth of Spetsnaz, the first counter-terrorist unit was established by the Chairman of the KGB, Yuri Andropov. From the late 1970s through the 1980s, a number of special-purpose units were created in the KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD).

During the 1990s, special detachments were established within the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) and the Airborne Troops (VDV). Some civil agencies with non-police functions have created special

units also known as Spetsnaz, such as the Leader special centre in the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MChS).

2013 saw the creation of the Special Operations Forces of the Russian Federation encompassing all special military units in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Spetsnaz were very active during the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the Mujahideen had great respect for them.

After the collapse of the USSR, Spetsnaz forces of the Soviet Union's newly formed republics took part in many local conflicts such as the Civil war in Tajikistan, Chechen Wars, Russo-Georgian War and the Crimea Crisis.

Spetsnaz forces also have been called upon to resolve several high-profile hostage situations such as the Moscow theatre hostage crisis and the Beslan school hostage crisis.

include High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) and High Altitude High Opening (HAHO) techniques.



Mobility troop use vehicles and are experts in desert warfare. They are also trained to an advance level of motor mechanics and can field-repair most vehicle breakdowns.

Mountain troop are specialists in Arctic combat and survival. They are trained in the use of skis, snowshoes and mountain climbing techniques.

The four squadrons rotate duty. One is maintained on Counter Terrorism duty in the UK, a second is on deployment, a third will be preparing for

United States Navy SEALs

There are ten Navy SEAL teams and a SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team (SDVT).

A SEAL team will normally consist of six platoons and each platoon can be task organised for operational purposes into four squads of eight 4-5 man fire teams/boat crews.

The size of each SEAL Team with platoons and support staff is about 300 personnel.

A typical SEAL platoon will have an Officer in Charge (OIC), normally a lieutenant, a platoon chief and two squads commanded by a lieutenant (junior grade).



deployment while doing short term training, and the fourth will be preparing for long-term overseas training such as jungle or desert exercises.

After the massacre at the 1972 Summer Olympics, British Prime Minister Edward Heath ordered that an SAS Counter Revolutionary Wing (CRW) be established.

They are trained in Close Quarter Battle (CQB), sniper techniques, and hostage rescue in buildings or on public transport.

The remaining members of the team are operators with specialty skills in ordinance, communications, diving, medical, etc.

Platoon core skills consist of: Sniper, Breacher, Communicator, Maritime/Engineering, Close Air Support, Corpsman, Point-man/Navigator, Primary Driver/Navigator (Rural/Urban/Protective Security), Heavy Weapons Operator, Sensitive Site Exploitation, Air Operations Master, Lead Climber, Lead Diver/Navigator, Interrogator, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Technical Surveillance, and Advanced Special Operations.

SEAL Teams 1, 3, 5 and 7 are based at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, California. SEAL Teams 2, 4, 8, and 10 are based at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Virginia.

A SEAL Delivery Vehicle unit, SDVT-1, is located in Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. An SDV platoon consists of 12-15 SEALs.

Their first deployment was during the Balcombe Street Siege in December 1975. Members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) had been trapped in a flat by the Metropolitan Police. After a six day siege the PIRA unit heard on BBC Radio that the SAS were being sent in. They then surrendered.

The first documented action abroad by the CRW wing was assisting the West German counter-terrorism group GSG 9 at Mogadishu in 1977.

SEAL Team 6 was dissolved in 1987. The Navy then established the Naval Special Warfare Development Group, also known as DEVGRU.

While DEVGRU is administratively supported by Naval Special Warfare Command, they are operationally under the command of the Joint Special Operations Command. Much about DEVGRU remains classified.

While it is well known that the SEALs carried out numerous operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, most of these operations remain classified.

One of their best known operations is Operation Neptune Spear. On 2 May 2011 a CIA-led operation with Joint Special Operations Command, including SEAL Team 6, raided a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

The raid led to the death of Osama bin Laden, after an almost ten year search for him following his role in the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Organisation

Special Air Service

Based in Hereford in the United Kingdom, 22 SAS usually has a strength of between 400 to 600. There are four operational squadrons: A, B, D and G.

Under the command of a major, each squadron consists of roughly 65 men. Each squadron is divided into four troops and a small headquarters section. A troop will normally consist of 15 men with each man possessing a particular skill in addition to the basic skills he has learned during his extensive training.

These skills would include signals, medic, sniper, demolition, linguist, etc.

Each troop in a squadron will specialise in a different area. This is made up of boat troop, air troop, mobility troop and mountain troop.

Boat troop specialise in maritime skills that include diving using rebreathers, using kayaks and rigid-hulled inflatable boats. They often train with the Special Boat Service.

Air troop specialise in free fall parachuting and high altitude parachute operations that

Spetsnaz

The organisation structure of Spetsnaz is far more complex than most. That is because there is not a single Spetsnaz unit.

The Russian Ground Forces have their own Spetsnaz units, as does the Russian Navy. The Russian Airborne Troops have the 45th Guards Spetsnaz Brigade.

The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) have various Spetsnaz units as does the National Guard of Russia. Finally the Ministry of Justice also has its own inde-

pendent regional Spetsnaz detachments such as Saturn.

The basic Spetsnaz unit comprises a team of eight to ten soldiers commanded by an officer. Within each team there is a specialist in communications, reconnaissance, sniping and explosives, and every member of the team has been cross-trained to ensure that a mission can continue, even if a specialist is lost.

Modern Russian forces are structured in operational fronts that each contain a Spetsnaz Brigade.



Selection and training

Special Air Service

The SAS never recruit directly from the general public. Selection is open to any serving member of the UK Armed Forces, but historically most of the candidates will come from airborne or commando units such as One Parachute Regiment.

There are two selection courses a year, one in summer and one in winter. They are held in Sennybridge and in the Brecon Beacons, both of which are in Wales.

A selection course will normally start with about 200 candidates and last for five weeks. They first have to do a Personal Fitness Test (PFT) and then an Annual Fitness Test (AFT).

The hill phase sees the candidates march cross country against the clock. The distance is increased each day. This culminates in what is known as the Endurance or, as the SAS refer to it, the Fan Dance.

This is a 64 km march with

full equipment that scales and descends Pen y Fan, the highest peak in south Wales.

At the end of the hill phase candidates must be able to run 6.4 km in 30 minutes and swim 3.2 km in 90 minutes or less.

Typically only 15-20% will make it through the hill phase. Most will drop out within the first few days and by the end only about 30 will remain.

Following the hill phase the

remaining candidates move to the jungle phase that takes place in Belize, Brunei or Malaysia.

Candidates are taught navigation, patrol formations, patrol movement and jungle survival skills.

Those that pass this phase then return to Hereford to train in battle plans and foreign weapons. This is followed by a week-long escape and evasion exercise.



THE FAN DANCE: Pen y Fan in the Brecon Beacons is the location for the Endurance march during SAS selection.



SAS parachute wings

Candidates are formed into patrols. Dressed in old World War II uniforms and carrying a tin filled with survival equipment they are given a map point and told they have to reach it by first light.

US Navy SEALs

Before even applying to do Basics Underwater Demolition SEAL (BUD/S) training a prospective candidate must first pass a number of mental and physical requirements.

They must then pass the SEAL Physical Screening Test which involves a 457 metre swim in under 12.30 minutes, 50 push ups in two minutes, 50 sit-ups in two minutes, 10 consecutive pull-ups, and a 2.4 km run in under 10.30 minutes.

Those that make the grade

If they make the rendezvous point (RV) within a certain time window they may receive a little something to eat before being given the next RV. If they miss the window, they get nothing.

During the escape and evasion phase the candidates are being chased by a 'Hunter' force that attempts to track them down and capture them.

Those that are captured or make it through the week then

then go on the selection course. During selection candidates can be removed from the course or they can Drop on Request (DOR).

Hell Week, in the third week of the first phase of selection, consists of five and a half days of cold, wet, and very difficult operational training on less than four hours of sleep.

On average only 25% of the candidates will make it through Hell Week.

The typical Navy SEAL training cycle will consist of eight week Naval Recruit

have to face the final selection test, arguably the hardest, resistance to interrogation that last for 36 hours. Those that pass this final phase are rewarded with a transfer to an operational squadron.

During the past few years the Regiment has come in for criticism from the media due to the fact that a number of candidates have died during the selection course.

Training, eight week Naval Special Warfare Prep School, 24 week Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training (BUD/S), five week Parachute Jump School, and 26 week SEAL Qualification Training (SQT).

Upon graduation from SQT they receive the US Navy SEAL Trident, designating them as Navy SEALs. They are assigned to a SEAL Team or a SDV Team and begin 18 months of pre-deployment training.

This consists of six month Professional Development, six month Unit Level Training Detachment (ULT), and six month Squadron Integration Training (SIT).

ULT training blocks are Air Operations, Land Warfare, Maritime, Urban and Special Reconnaissance.

In total it can take over two and a half years to completely train a Navy SEAL for his first deployment.



HELL WEEK: This grueling phase of training is all about being wet, cold, hungry, and mentally and physically exhausted.

Spetsnaz

The selection and training for Spetsnaz is very demanding. Candidates must be physically fit, intelligent and politically reliable before they will even be considered.

Once they pass the basic requirements they then have to sign a loyalty oath. In this they acknowledge that the death



YOU CAN'T TAKE IT: An instructor goads a candidate, trying to get them to quit.

penalty awaits anyone who betrays the Spetsnaz.

During the selection phase candidates face obstacle courses and long gruelling marches, many of which are conducted in full chemical warfare protective clothing, including gas masks.

Compared to western standards the training is harsh and physical abuse of candidates is

not uncommon. They are often denied rations so that they have to forage for food themselves.

In addition to their basic military training, they receive specialised training in hand-to-hand combat, silent killing techniques, parachuting including HALO techniques, infiltration techniques including defeating alarm systems and locks, sabotage, demolition, foreign languages, survival, rappelling, sniping, reconnaissance, map reading, foreign weapons, foreign vehicle operation, and foreign tactics and procedures.

Those that get through specialised training then take part in a series of battlefield exercises in realistic environments such as mock Cruise missile bases, NATO airfields and communication facilities. All exercises involve the use of explosives and live rounds.

SAS Weapons



US Navy SEALs Weapons



Spetsnaz Weapons



Kurt Knispel

Credited as being the most successful tanker of World War II, he became the only non-commissioned officer of the German tank arm to be named in a Wehrmacht communique. Yet it was only his impressive track-record that saved him from ending up in a military prison.

Kurt Knispel is regarded as the best tank ace of World War II, with the most kills. Yet he is also the most forgotten panzer ace of them all.

What is astounding is that even though he was credited with eliminating 168 enemy tanks, he never received the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

Early life

Not a lot is known about the early life of Kurt Knispel. We do know that he was born in Salisfeld (Salisov), a small settlement near the town of Zuckmantel in Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, on 20 September 1921. He spent most of his childhood in nearby Niklasdorf.

Sudetenland was occupied by Nazi Germany on 1 October 1938. Knispel was 17 years old at the time.

That same year Knispel began an apprenticeship at an automobile factory.

In 1940, at the age of 19, Knispel applied to join the armoured branch of

the German Army.

Military career

Knispel joined the Heer forces, more specifically the Panzer-Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 15. He was based in Sagan, Lower Silesia. The first months were spent doing basic infantry training and lessons related to armoured

warfare in tanks such as the Panzer I, II and IV.

Knispel was placed in the 3 Kompanie of the Panzer Regiment 29. The Panzer Regiment 29 was part of the 12th Panzer Division. From 1 October 1940 Knispel was trained as a loader and gunner in the short-barrelled Panzer IV.

In 1941 Knispel and his unit entered the battle against the Soviet Union. The 12 Panzer Division was a part of Heeresgruppe Mitte.

Knispel's first action was during Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

Knispel secured his first kills against regular infantry on 22 June 1941. Several days later the 12 Panzer Division found itself on the outskirts of Minsk, capital of Belarus. On 26 June

Knispel crossed the River Dvina.

In July Knispel's panzer was damaged and he had to change tanks.

On 20 July of the same year, Knispel's division was

transferred to Heeresgruppe Nord, and the unit set course for Leningrad.

Five days later Knispel and his Panzer IV were leading the column when they were hit by a Russian shell. The entire crew jumped out of the tank, with the exception of Knispel.

He looked through his periscope until he spotted the Russian T-34 tank that had fired on them. Knispel fired at the Russian tank and destroyed it. This became his first official tank kill.

Despite all efforts of the Germans, Leningrad remained in Soviet hands.

The Panzer Regiment 29 suffered heavy casualties and the 9th company was amalgamated with Knispel's 3rd. Knispel changed tanks and during the reformation of the regiment he met Obergefreiter Alfred Rubbel, a promising tank commander. Knispel and Rubbel would become close friends.

By January 1942 Knispel would add another seven tanks to his list together with various other vehicles such as trucks and cannons.

On 17 May 1942 Kurt Knispel and his unit returned to Germany. There a brand new Panzer IV with the long-barrelled 75mm gun was awaiting Rubbel and Knispel.

During their leave they heard that their unit would be attached to the III Abteilung Panzer Regiment 4 of the 13th Panzer Division.

The majority of the unit had already left for the Ukraine on

11 July, but as Rubbel and Knispel had to wait for their brand new tanks, they could only leave on 26 July.

On their way to the front the train stopped in Krakow, Poland. When Knispel heard a Soviet prisoner scream, he immediately rushed to the scene where he saw the prisoner being maltreated by an SS Guard.

Knispel, with pistol in his hand, intervened and his actions led to the fact that the SS guard landed on the train tracks. The German military police, the SS, and the army in general were far from pleased with what had happened.

From then on Knispel was treated very differently. He did not gain promotion and his actions in combat went unrewarded. He would receive medals far slower than anyone else of his calibre.

On 4 August Knispel arrived in Ukraine where he joined the rest of the Panzer Regiment 4, which was already in action at the Caucasus Mountains.

The 13th Panzer Division would nearly become encircled in the pocket of Ordjonikidze. The unit had to leave practically everything and force their way to the SS Wiking, who came to their rescue.

During the battle of the Caucasus Knispel in the Panzer IV F2 would add another 12 tanks to his list of kills.

For his actions Knispel was promoted to Unteroffizier and he also received the Iron Cross Second Class.

Several men of the Regiment

earned a spot to man the new Tiger I. Fortunately for Knispel he was one of the lucky ones chosen. He was granted leave over the Christmas and New Year's period, so he was able to spend time with his family.

In early 1943 Knispel was trained on the new 88mm gun. He came first in his class and he was placed in the 1 Kompanie of the Schwere Panzer Abteilung 503.

In April Knispel and his new unit set out for the Ostfront where they would participate in Operation Zitadelle, also known as the Battle of Kursk - one of the biggest tank battles in history.

The Battle of Kursk began on 5 July 1943. Kurt Knispel and the 1st company, heavy tank battalion 503 were tasked with opening the road for the 6th Panzer Division on the right flank of the battle.

On the opening day of the battle, Knispel eliminated several anti-tank positions. On 7 July Knispel managed to destroy a Soviet T-34 tank from 1,500 metres with a single shot. One day later he destroyed seven tanks from ranges up to 2,000 metres.

When the Zug, a platoon of Tigers, bumped into a Soviet tank column of 14 tanks, they opened fire on the column and 11 Russian tanks were destroyed within a few minutes.

During the Kursk campaign Knispel was responsible for destroying no fewer than 27 tanks. For his remarkable actions at Kursk, Knispel would receive



the Iron Cross First Class.

As of 16 July the Germans were on the back foot at Kursk. Knispel and the platoon were ordered to help SS Kavallerie Brigade Fegelein from being over-run. In doing so Knispel managed to destroy a Soviet tank from a range of 3,000 metres.

In a night time action Knispel, who was then operating as a tank commander, and Rippl, a fellow tank commander were positioned around Osswetz. Knispel could hear Soviet tanks closing in on their location. When a third Tiger joined the party, all hell broke loose.

The German commanders opened fire and soon two Soviet tanks were ablaze. In return the Third Tiger was hit by a T-34. Shortly after this another eight T-34 tanks were burning. When Knispel's engine overheated his battle was over.

By the end of September 1943, Knispel had already racked up the impressive amount of 80 enemy tanks destroyed.

In January 1944 Knispel and the 34 Tigers of the 503rd Heavy Tank Battalion were integrated in the Armoured Kampfgruppe Bake.

They were tasked to liberate the encircled men at the famous Tcherkassy pocket. The Tigers managed to put an astonishing amount of 267 tanks out of action. One the axis of Boscovka – Frankovka – Buchanka, Knispel destroyed one Soviet tank after another.

By April of the same year Knispel's kill count now stood at 101 kills. For this impressive achievement, Knispel would receive the German Cross in Gold.

Just before 6 June – the Allied



KING TIGER: The crew of Kurt Knispel's Tiger II, or King Tiger, take some time out to perform maintenance of the vehicle.

invasion of Normandy – Knispel and his unit returned to Germany where they received the brand new Tiger II – the King Tiger. Not long afterwards the Schwere Panzer Abteilung 503 was sent to Normandy to deal with the incoming Allied threat.

Although Knispel racked up a crazy amount of kills on the Eastern Front, he only managed to destroy two Allied tanks and several other vehicles. This is probably due to the different nature in both combat and the battlefield.

At the end of August 1944 the battalion was once again back in Germany for reformation. Knispel was granted permission to travel to his hometown. Little did he know that it would be the last time he would see his parents.

On 8 October 1944 Knispel and the unit were sent towards Hungary. The unit was located near the town of Sconemedi and the unit immediately came under heavy fire. Knispel's good

friend Rubble was wounded for the fourth time in his career. Rubbel would survive the war and live to the ripe old age of 92.

At this time Knispel secured his 126th victory. Knispel's commanding officer, Dr Dienst-Korber, recommended Knispel for the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross - an award which Knispel would never receive. In fact throughout the war four different commanders had recommended Knispel for the Knights Cross for his outstanding bravery, superb marksmanship, and situational awareness. Yet Knispel would become the Ace of Aces without receiving the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

The situation on the Ostfront for the German worsened by the day. On 15 April 1945 Knispel and the Tiger II's of the 503 Heavy Tank battalion were located north of Vienna.

The unit had suffered dearly in the battles around Dubnik. By



GERMAN CROSS IN GOLD: This was awarded to Knispel after he had destroyed 100 enemy tanks.

April only eight Tigers survived. On 19 April Knispel knocked out another three T-24/85 tanks and destroyed an IS-2.

Two days later Knispel destroyed another four tanks in the morning. During the afternoon he racked up another three kills.

On 26 April the remnants of the 503rd were repositioned to



Vlasovice, a town between Brno and Vienna. Two days later, on the 28th, Knispel was promoted to Feldwebel. The day after Kurt Knispel departed for battle for the last time in his life.

Death

He went into battle in the area of Vrbovec. He finally secured his 168th tank kill, but at that point he was being overwhelmed by Soviet armour. Immobilised and encircled, his Tiger II received a finishing blow.

Kurt Knispel was mortally wounded and succumbed to his wounds several minutes later.

In April 2013 Czech archaeologists found the bodies of 15 German soldiers buried on the grounds of a church at Vrbovec. Knispel was identified by his dog tag that he was wearing around his neck.

On 12 November 2014 the Ace of Aces found his final resting place in the German Military Cemetery of Brno.

Legacy

Though he was recommended for it four times, Knispel never received the coveted Knight's Cross, a standard award for most other World War II German tank aces.

Other Panzer Aces such as Otto Carlius (Knights

Cross with Oak Leaves), Hans Bolter (Knights Cross with Oak Leaves), Paul Egger (Knights Cross), and Michael Wittman (Knights Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords) were all recognised for their achievements. But not Knispel.

Unlike some other commanders, Knispel was not consumed by the pursuit of decorations and did not suffer from a "sore throat", army slang for those who lusted after the Knight's Cross.

When there were conflicting claims for a destroyed enemy tank, Knispel always stepped back, always willing to credit success to someone else. It is claimed that his actual total of kills was as high as 195.

The probable reason why Knispel never received the Knights Cross, nor received promotion beyond the rank of Feldwebel (Sergeant), was because of his military bearing and his constant conflicts with higher Nazi authorities.

Knispel was never a 'spit and polish' soldier. He sported a goatee beard, he had a tattoo, and his hair was far longer than regulations allowed.

He had a number of run-ins with Nazi authority, including the time when he had assaulted an SS Einsatzgruppen officer for mistreating Soviet prisoners.

It was rumoured that Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, had no time for Knispel and took a special interest in his career.

In fact it was only his impressive track-record and the fact that many of the troops regarded him as a hero that saved him from ending up in a military prison.

Fort Eben Emael was considered to be one of the most powerful fortifications in the world. According to experts, it would be impossible to assault. The Germans, however, had other ideas.

On 10 May 1940 the Germans launched *Fall Gelb* (Case Yellow), an invasion of the Low Countries.

The ultimate goal was France. The German *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (High Command of the Armed Forces) believed that by attacking through the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium they could outflank the formidable French Maginot Line.

The Germans could then advance through southern Belgium and into northern France, cutting off the British Expeditionary Force and a large number of French forces and forcing the French government to surrender.

The Germans needed to capture several important bridges over the Albert Canal. The easterly roads led into the Belgian heartland and the rest of the Low Countries.

There was, however, a major obstacle that faced them. The Fort of Eben Emael, considered to be one of the most powerful fortification in the world.

Construction

Constructed between 1931 and 1935, it was reputed to be impregnable and, at the time, the largest fortress in the world.

It was designed to defend Belgium against a German attack across the narrow belt of Dutch territory in the region.

When designing the fort, the Belgians had taken the lessons learnt during World War I into account. The fort sat on high ground overlooking the Albert Canal. Reinforced concrete was used in place of plain mass concrete. The gun turrets were less closely grouped.

Ventilation was greatly improved, magazines were deeply buried and protected,

and sanitary facilities and general living arrangements for the troops were given careful attention. The 120 mm and 75 mm guns gave the fort the ability to bombard targets across a wide area of the eastern Liège region.

In 1940, Fort Eben-Emael was commanded by Major Jottrand. There were around 1,200 Belgian troops stationed at the fort, divided into three groups. The first group was permanently stationed at the fort and consisted of 200 technical personnel (e.g. doctors, cooks, weapon maintenance technicians, administration staff).

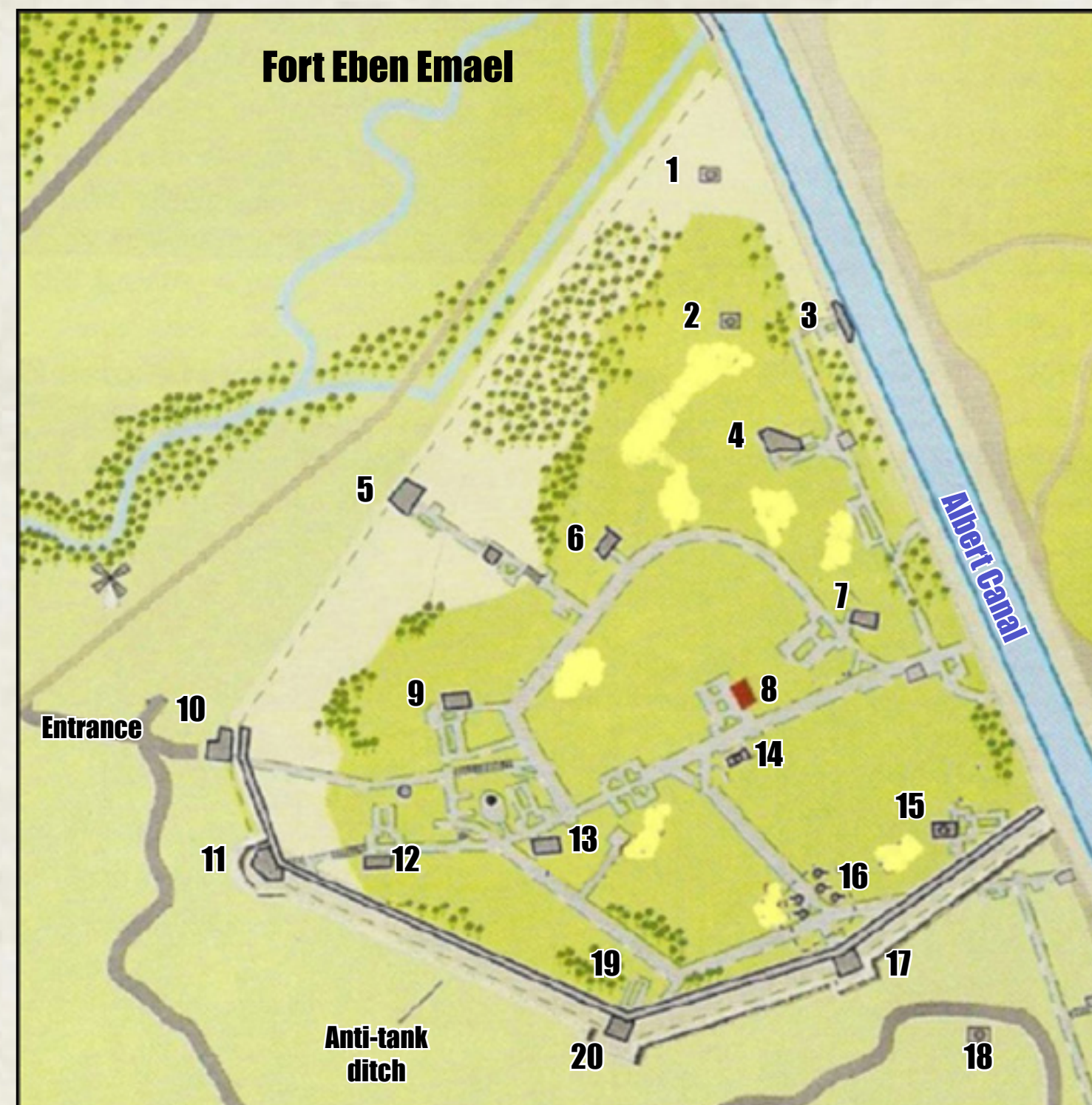
The two other groups consisted of 500 artillerists each. In peace time one group would be stationed at the fort for one week. The other group would be in reserve at the village of Wonck, about 5 km away. These two groups would change places every week.

Except for some of the officers and NCOs, most of the men were conscripts. The majority of these were reservists and were called up after the Invasion of Poland in 1939. Infantry training was poor, since the men were considered to be purely artillerists.

The Germans prepare

The airborne assault on Fort Eben-Emael, and the three bridges it helped protect, was part of a much larger German airborne operation that involved the 7th Air Division and the 22nd Airlanding Division.

The force tasked with assaulting the fort and capturing the three bridges was formed from elements of the 7th Air Division and the 22nd Airlanding Division, and was named *Sturmabteilung Koch* (Assault Detachment Koch) after the



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Decoy cupola | 11. Block VI- 2 x 60 mm guns & MGs |
| 2. Decoy cupola | 12. Visé II - 3 x 75 mm guns |
| 3. Canal Nord - 60 mm guns & machine guns | 13. Maastricht II - 3 x 75 mm guns |
| 4. Mi Nord - Machine gun block | 14. Cupola 120 - Twin 120 mm gun |
| 5. Block II - 2 x 60 mm guns & MGs | 15. Cupola Nord - 2 x 75 mm guns |
| 6. Mi Sud - Machine gun block | 16. Anti-aircraft position |
| 7. Visé I - 3 x 75 mm guns | 17. Block IV - 2 x 60 mm anti-tank guns |
| 8. Barracks | 18. Decoy cupola |
| 9. Maastricht I - 3 x 75 mm guns | 19. Cupola Sud - 2 x 75 mm guns |
| 10. Block I - 2 x 60 mm anti-tank guns | 20. Block V- 2 x 60 mm guns & MGs |

Fort Eben-Emael occupied a large hill just to the east of Eben-Emael village and overlooking the Albert Canal. Underground galleries extend over 4 kilometres beneath the hill, connecting the combat blocks and serving the underground barracks, power plant, ammunition magazines and other spaces. Fresh air was obtained from intake vents over the canal

leader of the force, Hauptmann Walter Koch.

Fifty DFS 230 transport gliders were supplied for use by the assault force. Then came the serious training for the mission.

Joint exercises between the parachutists and the glider pilots were carried out in the early spring of 1940, and a number of refinements made to the equipment and tactics to be used.

One of these refinements was the attachment of barbed wire to the nose-skids of the gliders. This meant that the skids would dig in, forcing the glider to a stop.

The airborne troops trained with special equipment such as flamethrowers and shaped charges.

A detailed study of the fort, the bridges and the local area was made, and a replica of the area was constructed for the airborne troops to train in.

The Plan

Hauptmann Koch divided his force into four assault groups. Group Granite, made up of eighty-five men in eleven gliders whose task would be to assault and capture Fort Eben Emael.

Group Steel, formed of ninety-two men and nine gliders, would capture the Veldwezelt bridge; Group Concrete, composed of ninety-six men in eleven gliders, would capture the Vroenhoven bridge; and Group Iron, composed of ninety men in ten gliders, who would capture the Kanne bridge.

Time was the vital component of the attack. The Germans were relying on two factors. First of all the believed that the use of gliders would not alert the Bel-



ATTACK: Fallschirmjäger exit a DFS 230 glider. This photo was posed after Fort Eben Emael had already been captured.

gians. Secondly, the lack of a declaration of war by the German government would give the attackers the element of surprise.

The Germans estimated that this element of surprise would last for sixty minutes before they reacted. It was therefore imperative that during those sixty minutes as many anti-aircraft positions, individual cupolas and casemates as possible had to be eliminated. The most important objective, however, was to put the long-range artillery covering the bridges out of action.

The destruction of these guns was expected to be completed within ten minutes; within this time the airborne troops would have to break out of their gliders, cover the distance to the guns, fix the explosive charges to the barrels of the guns and detonate them, all while under enemy fire.

The finalized plan for the assault called for between nine and eleven gliders to land on the western bank of the Albert Canal by each of the three bridges just prior to 05h30 on 10 May, the time scheduled for *Fall Gelb* to begin.

The groups assigned to as-

sault the three bridges would overwhelm the defending Belgian troops, remove any demolition charges and then prepare to defend the bridges against an expected counter-attack. Forty minutes later, three Ju-52 transport aircraft would fly over each position, dropping a further twenty-four airborne troops as reinforcements as well as machine-guns and significant amounts of ammunition.

Simultaneously, the force assigned to assault Fort Eben-Emael was to land on top of the Fort in eleven gliders, eliminate any defenders attempting to repel them, cripple what artillery they could with explosive charges, and then prevent the Garrison from dislodging them.

Having achieved their initial objectives of seizing the bridges and eliminating the long-range artillery pieces possessed by the Fort, the airborne troops would then defend their positions until the arrival of German ground forces.

The Battle

The mission didn't get off to the best of starts. The tow-rope



JOB DONE: Fallschirmjäger share cigarettes and swap stories after the successful attack on Fort Eben Emael.

on one of the gliders snapped and it was forced to land inside Germany. The pilot of another glider released his tow-rope prematurely and the glider was unable to reach its target.

Because of strict radio silence the senior commanders of the assault force could not be informed. Both gliders were from Group Granite and, to make matters worse, one of the gliders was carrying Oberleutnant Witzig, the commander of the group.

The remaining gliders were released 32 km away from their objectives at an altitude of 2,100 m. After the Ju-52's released the gliders and began turning away, Belgian anti-aircraft artillery positions detected them and opened fire. This alerted the defences in the area to the presence of the gliders.

Group Steel

All of Group Steel's nine gliders landed next to the bridge at Veldwezelt at 05h20. They managed to take the bridge without it

being destroyed.

Two field-guns, located five hundred metres from the bridge, pinned them down and the group commander, Leutnant Altmann, had to call in air support. Several Junkers Ju 87 Stukas responded and knocked out the guns.

Group Steel was supposed to be relieved by 14h30, but the relief force was held up by Belgian resistance and only arrived at 21h30.

Group Steel lost eight dead and 30 wounded.

Group Concrete

Ten of the eleven gliders transporting Group Concrete landed next to the Vroenhoven bridge at 05h15, the eleventh glider having been hit by anti-aircraft fire en route to the bridge and being forced to land prematurely inside Dutch territory.

One of the gliders was hit by anti-aircraft fire and three troops were seriously wounded.

One of the gliders landed near to the fortification housing the bridge detonators. This allowed

the airborne troops to rapidly assault the position. They killed the occupants and tore out the wires connecting the explosives to the detonator set, ensuring the bridge could not be destroyed.

The Belgians mounted several counter-attacks in an attempt to recapture the bridge. Group Concrete held out until they were relieved at 21h40. They lost seven dead and 24 wounded.

Group Iron

Things went awry for Group Iron from the start. Nine of the gliders were able to land next to their objective, while one was dropped in the wrong area due to a navigation error.

Yet while they were able to land next to their objective and eliminate the Belgian defenders, it was too late. The bridge at Kanne had already been destroyed.

Unlike the garrisons of the other two bridges, the Belgian defenders at Kanne had been forewarned. The German mechanized column heading to the bridge to reinforce Group Iron had arrived twenty minutes ahead of schedule.

With the element of surprise lost, the defenders had enough time to set off the demolition charges on the bridge.

Group Iron had secured the area by 05h50, but they came under strong counter-attack and had to call in air support.

They were only relieved on the morning of 11 May.

Group Iron suffered the heaviest casualties of all three assault groups assigned to capture the bridges with twenty-two dead and twenty-six wounded.

One of the airborne troops as-

signed to the Group was taken prisoner by the Belgians. He was later freed by German forces at a British prisoner of war camp at Dunkirk.

Group Granite

Nine of Group Granite's gliders successfully landed on the roof of Fort Eben Emael. They gliders used arrester-parachutes to bring them to a quick halt.

The airborne troops quickly exited their gliders and headed for their individual objectives. The prime objectives were the artillery pieces that could target the bridges.

Objective No. 18, an artillery observation casemate housing three 75mm artillery pieces was damaged with a light demolition charge and then permanently destroyed with a heavier charge, which collapsed the casemate's observation dome and part of the roof of the Fort itself.

A traversing turret holding two artillery pieces, Objective 12, was destroyed by troops who then moved on to Objective No. 26, a turret holding another three 75 mm weapons. Another pair of 75 mm guns in a cupola was disabled, as was a barracks known to house Belgian troops.

Objective 24 proved to be a problem. The twin turrets with heavy-calibre guns mounted on a rotating cupola, was too large for airborne troops from a single glider to destroy on their own, forcing troops from two gliders to be used.

Shaped charges were fixed to the turrets and detonated. While they shook the turrets, they did not destroy them. Troops were forced to climb the turrets and smash the gun barrels.

In the northern section of the fort, similar actions were taking place.

Objective No. 13 was a casemate housing multiple machine-guns whose arcs of fire covered the western side of the Fort; to destroy the casemate, the airborne troops used a flame-thrower to force the Belgian soldiers manning the weapons to retreat, and then detonated shaped charges against the fortification to disable it.

Objective No. 23 was a retractable cupola housing two 75 mm guns. It had been thought that these would not be a threat to the airborne troops. They were proved wrong when the weapons opened fire, forcing the airborne troops in the area to go to cover.

They were pinned down and had to call for air support. A Stuka squadron bombed the cupola and although the bombs did not destroy the cupola, the explosions did force the Belgians to retract it throughout the rest of the fighting.

The airborne troops had achieved their initial objective of destroying or disabling the artillery pieces that the fort could have used to bombard the captured bridges, but they still faced a number of small cupolas and emplacements that had to be disabled. A number of these included anti-aircraft weapons and machine-guns.

As these secondary objectives were attacked, a single glider landed on top of the Fort. It carried Oberleutnant Rudolf Witzig.

After his glider had landed in German territory, he had radioed for another tug. The Ju-52 land-

ed in the field with a replacement glider.

Witzig's troops had quickly broken down fences and hedges obstructing the aircraft and the new glider was towed through anti-aircraft fire to the objective - Fort Eben Emael.

Having achieved their primary objectives of disabling the artillery pieces possessed by the fort, the airborne troops then held it against Belgian counter-attacks, which began almost immediately.

These counter-attacks were made by Belgian infantry formations without artillery support and were uncoordinated. This allowed the airborne troops to repel them with machine-gun fire.

Patrols were also used to ensure that the garrison stayed in the interior of the fort and did not attempt to emerge and mount an attempt to retake the fort.

Group Granite was not relieved until 07h00 on 11 May by the 51st Engineer Battalion. Once the airborne troops had been relieved, the battalion, in conjunction with an infantry regiment that arrived shortly after the engineers, mounted an attack on the main entrance to the fort.

Faced with this attack, the garrison surrendered at 12:30, suffering sixty men killed and forty wounded. The Germans captured more than a thousand Belgian soldiers. Group Granite suffered six killed and nineteen wounded.

The capture of the bridges, and the neutralization of the artillery pieces in the Fort allowed infantry and armour from the 18th Army to bypass other Belgian defences and enter the heart of Belgium.



Fort Eben Emael

Fort Eben-Emael is now open to the public. While still military property, it is administered by the Association Fort Eben-Emael, which provides tours and activities. If you're ever in Belgium, be sure to visit this amazing museum.



CUPOLA: One of the fort's cupolas.



MAZE: Part of the underground bunker system.



GLIDER: One of the models.

DAMAGED: The damage caused by a shaped-charge is still visible to this day.



OF DUTY: Part of the defenders sleeping quarters.



IMPRESSIVE: The exhibits at the Fort Eben Emael Museum are really top class.

Churchill Tank

One of the heaviest Allied tanks of World War II, the Churchill saw service during the North African, Italian and North-West Europe campaigns. It also saw active service on the Eastern Front.

The Tank, Infantry, Mk IV (A22) Churchill was a British heavy infantry tank used in the Second World War, best known for its heavy armour, large longitudinal chassis with all-around tracks with multiple bogies, its ability to climb steep slopes, and its use as the ba-

sis of many specialist vehicles. It was one of the heaviest Allied tanks of the war.

The origins of the Churchill's design lay in the expectation that war in Europe might well

be fought in conditions similar to those of the First World War, and thus emphasised the ability to cross difficult ground.



The Churchill was hurried into production in order to build up British defences against a possible German invasion. The first vehicles had flaws that had to be overcome before the Churchill was accepted for wide use.

After several Marks (versions) had been built, a better-armoured specification, the Mark VII, entered service with the British Army. The improved versions performed well in the later stages of the war.

The Churchill was used by British and other Common-

wealth forces during the North African, Italian and North-West Europe campaigns. In addition, 344 Churchills were sent as military aid to the Soviet Union during the Second World War and more than 250 saw active service on the Eastern Front.

What's in a name?

The Churchill tank was named after Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had promoted the development of the tank in the First World War.

Churchill told Field Marshal Jan Smuts "That is the tank they named after me when they found out it was no damn good!"

The name only incidentally matched what

became the British Army practice of giving service names beginning with C to tanks. Cruiser tanks were given names, such as the contemporary Covenant, Crusader, Cromwell, Cavalier and Comet but infantry tank naming had no particular pattern.

Post-war, the merging of the cruiser and infantry tank lines in the 'universal' or main battle tanks continued with C names: Centurion, Conqueror, Chieftain, and Challenger.

History

A20

Initially specified just before the outbreak of the Second World War, the A20 (its General Staff specification) was to be

supplement the Matilda II and Valentine infantry tanks.

In accordance with British infantry tank doctrine and based on the expected needs of attacking a fixed defensive line, crossing wide trenches, possibly shell-cratered ground similar to First World trench warfare it was to be immune to the current German 3.7 cm Pak 36 anti-tank guns and carry an unditching beam.

A general outline produced by Woolwich Arsenal was expanded by Belfast shipbuilders Harland & Wolff with advice from the Department of Tank Design.

The General Staff had proposed that it was armed with two QF 2 pounder guns, each located in a side sponson with a coaxial Besa machine gun. A third Besa and a smoke projector would be fitted in the front hull.

To reduce weight the specification was revised to prefer a maximum armour to the front of 60 mm - sufficient to protect against ordinary shells from the German 37 mm gun.

Outline drawings were produced by Woolwich Arsenal based on the A12 Matilda turret - the Director of Mechanisation opposed a turretless design - and the engine and Wilson epicyclic transmission being developed for the A13 Mark III Covenanter tank.

Detail design and construction of the A20 was left to Harland & Wolff, who completed four prototypes by June 1940. During the construction period, the armament was reconsidered, including fitting either a 6-pounder gun or the French

short 75 mm gun (as used on Char B1) in the forward hull - the former was considered too long and the latter would require redesigning the front of the hull.

In the end, a 3-inch howitzer was chosen. The A20 designs were short-lived, however, as at roughly the same time the defeated British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from Dunkirk. While intended for "positional warfare" and direct assaults against fortifications (it was referred to as "Shelled Area Tank", or by the French phrase *Char de Fortresse*) which had been rendered pointless by the fast pace of German armoured warfare a heavy tank that could defend the infantry from other tanks was still desired.

At an initial 32 tons, with a 300 hp flat-12 Meadows DAV engine, the A20 had limited power compared to the 16-ton Covenanter.

This was a less serious limitation than it might appear, owing to the British distinction between the high-speed cruiser tanks and the slow-speed infantry tanks.

Vauxhall, who were already involved as consultants on the suspension, were approached to see if they could build the A20 and one example was sent to Vauxhall at Luton to see if they could provide an alternative engine developing 350 bhp.

To this end, they developed a flat-12 petrol engine. For speed of production, this engine was based on a Bedford Vehicles (Vauxhalls commercial vehicle operations) six-cylinder lorry engine, giving rise to its name of "Twin-Six".

Although using sidevalves to fit within the space, the engine was developed with high squish pistons, dual ignition and sodium-cooled exhaust valves in Stellite seats to give 350 bhp.

A22

With France lost, the scenario of trench warfare in Northern Europe was no longer applicable and the design was revised by Dr Henry Merritt, Director of Tank Design at Woolwich Arsenal, based on the combat witnessed in Poland and France. These new specifications, for the A22 or Infantry Tank Mark IV, were given to Vauxhall in June 1940.

With a German invasion of Britain looking imminent, and the loss of a substantial amount of military vehicles in the evacuation from France, the War Office specified that the A22 had to enter production within a year.

By July 1940, the design was completed and by December of that year the first prototypes were completed; in June 1941, almost exactly a year as specified, the first Churchill tanks began rolling off the production line.

A leaflet from the manufacturer was added to the User Handbook, which also described known faults, with work-arounds and what was being done to correct the problem. It said:

"Fighting vehicles are urgently required, and instructions have been received to proceed with the vehicle as it is rather than hold up production. All those things which we know are not as they should be will be



CHURCHILL MK IV: The Mk IV was the most produced of the Churchill variants, with more than 1,600 being built.

put right."

Harold Drew of Vauxhall achieved miracles with the Churchill and its Merritt-Brown Tank Gearbox produced by David Brown Limited; "a brilliant design that went into production off the drawing board without adequate prototype testing and had the most disastrous teething troubles" according to Robotham, but British tanks were under-powered, under-gunned and unreliable.

At the Tank Board level the Director of Artillery was still extolling the merits of the 2-pounder, and this gun was still fitted to every British tank until March 1942. In a 1942 exercise one tank had to have its gearbox changed five times.

Because of its hasty development, there had been little testing and the Churchill was plagued with mechanical faults. Most apparent was that the Churchill's engine was under-powered, unreliable, and difficult to access for servicing.

Another serious shortcoming was the tank's inadequate armament, the 2 pounder (40 mm) gun, which was improved

by the addition of a 3-inch howitzer in the hull to deliver a HE shell, albeit not on a howitzer's usual high trajectory.

Production of a turret to carry the QF 6 pounder gun began in 1941, but lack of supplies of the plate used in an all-welded design led to an alternative cast turret also being produced. These formed the distinction between Mark III and Mark IV.

In August 1942, the Churchill was used offensively for the first time in the Dieppe Raid.

The poor speed of the Churchill nearly caused production to be ceased in favour of the forthcoming Cromwell tank; it was saved by the successful use of the Mk III at the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942.

The second major improved Churchill, the Mk VII, was first used in the Battle of Normandy in 1944. The Mk VII improved on the already heavy armour of the Churchill with a wider chassis and the British 75 mm gun, which had been introduced on the Mk VI. It was primarily this variant, the A22F, which served through the remainder of war. It was re-designated A42 in 1945.

The Churchill was a versatile project and was used in numerous specialist roles.

Design

The hull was made up of simple flat plates, which were bolted together in earlier models and were welded in later models. The hull was split into four compartments: the driver's position at the front, then the fighting compartment including the turret, the engine compartment, and the gearbox compartment.

The suspension was fitted under the two large "panniers" on either side of the hull, the track running over the top. There were eleven bogies either side, each carrying two 25 cm wheels.

Only nine of the bogies normally took the vehicle weight, the front coming into play when the vehicle nosed into the ground or against an obstacle, the rear acting in part as a track tensioner.

Due to the number of wheels, the tank could survive losing several without much in the way of adverse effects as well as traversing steeper terrain obstacles. As the tracks ran around the panniers, escape hatches in the side could be incorporated into the design. These were retained throughout the revisions of the Churchill and were of particular use when the Churchill was adopted as the AVRE.

The Bedford Vehicles engine was effectively two engines in horizontally opposed configuration ("flat twelve") on a common crankshaft. There were four Solex carburettors each on a separate manifold that fed

three cylinders formed as a single cylinder head.

The elements of the engine and ancillary components were laid out so they could be reached for maintenance through the engine deck covers. Air for the engine was drawn from the fighting compartment through air cleaners.

Cooling air was drawn into the engine compartment through louvres on the sides, across the radiators and through the engine compartment by a fan driven by the clutch. This fan blew the air over the gearbox and out the rear of the hull. By opening a flap between the fighting compartment and the engine compartment, this air-flow could be used to remove fumes produced by firing the armament.

The gearbox featured a regenerative steering system that was controlled by a tiller bar instead of the more commonplace brake levers or, as with the German Tiger I heavy tank, a steering wheel. The tiller was connected, with servo assistance, hydraulically to the steering brakes.

The Churchill was also the first tank to utilise the Merritt-Brown triple differential gearbox, which allowed the tank to be steered by changing the relative speeds of the two tracks; this effect became more pronounced with each lower gear, ultimately allowing the tank to perform a "neutral turn" when no gear was engaged, where it could fully pivot within its own length and thus rotate in place.

There were final reduction gears, of the planetary type, in

the driving wheels. Although capable of 27 km/h the noise at that speed was so great that the Churchill was limited to 16 to 19 km/h by not using the highest gear.

The first turrets were of cast construction and were rounded in shape, providing sufficient space to accommodate the relatively small 2 pounder gun.

To fulfil its role as an infantry support vehicle, the first models were equipped with a 3-inch howitzer in the hull in a layout very similar to the French Char B1. This enabled the tank to deliver a useful high-explosive capability while retaining the anti-tank capabilities of the 2 pounder.

However, like other multi-gun tanks, it was limited by a poor fire arc - the track horns limiting traverse - and elevation of only 9°. Despite the length of the gun the muzzle velocity was only 180 m/s. The Mark IVA (retrospectively the Churchill Mk II) dispensed with the howitzer (there had been only enough guns to equip 300 tanks and replaced it with a bow machine gun and on the Mk III, the 2 pounder was replaced with the 6 pounder, significantly increasing the tank's anti-tank capabilities.

The tank underwent field modification in North Africa with several Churchills being fitted with the 75 mm gun of destroyed M4 Shermans. These "NA75" variants were used in Italy.

The use of the 75 mm increased the effectiveness of the tank, as it was a generally superior weapon to the 6 pounder, possessing similar anti-tank ca-

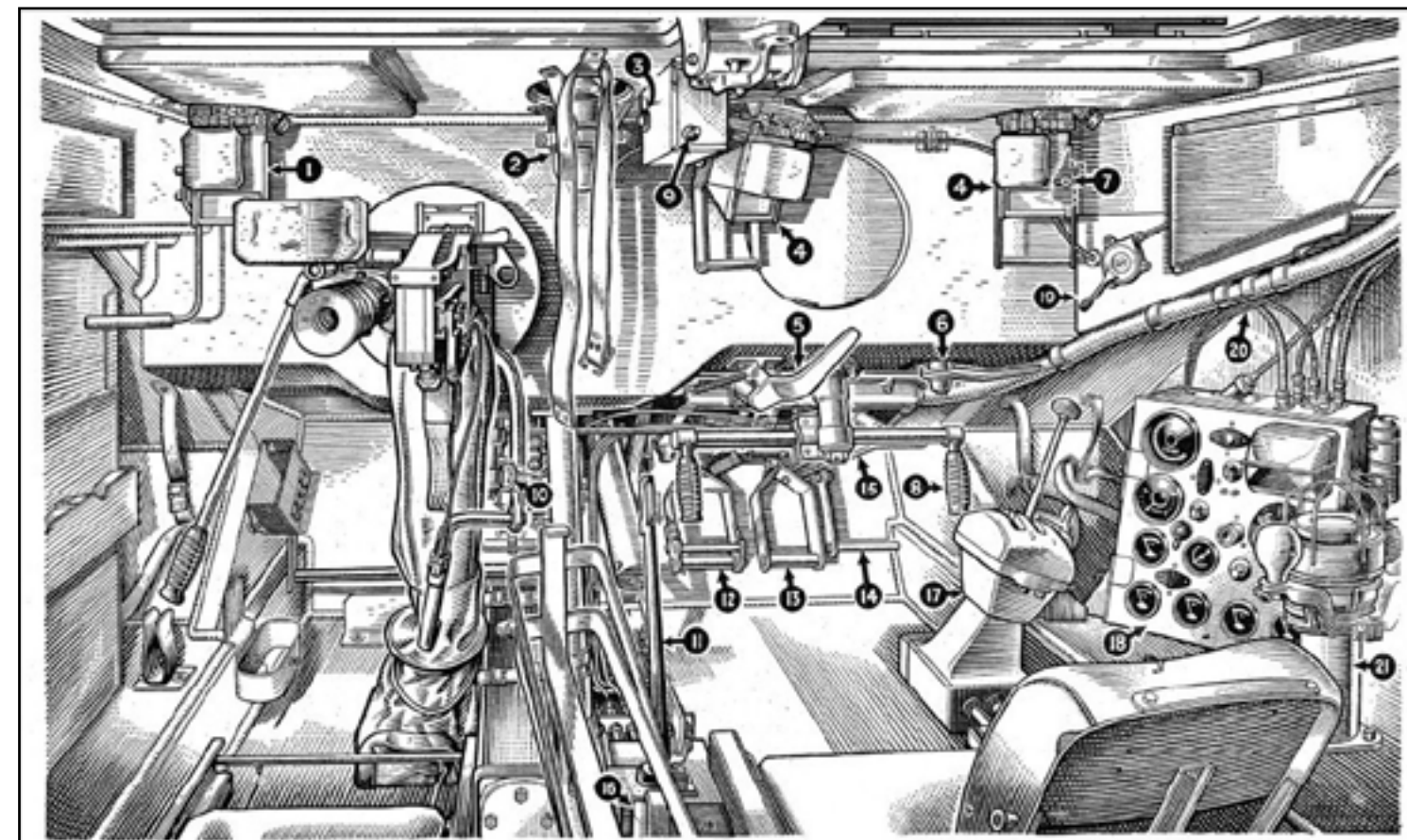
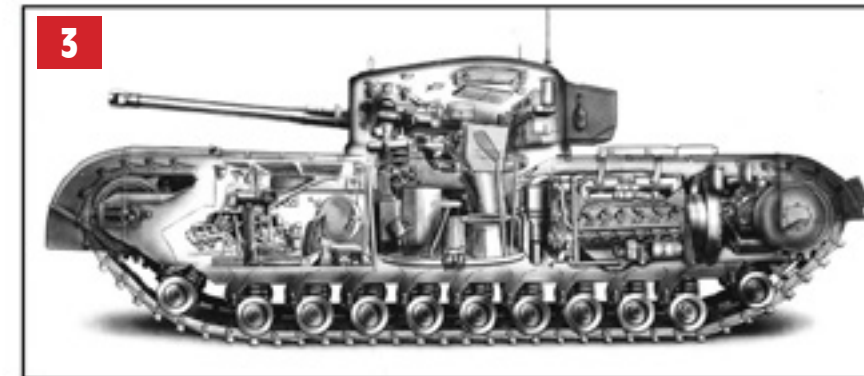
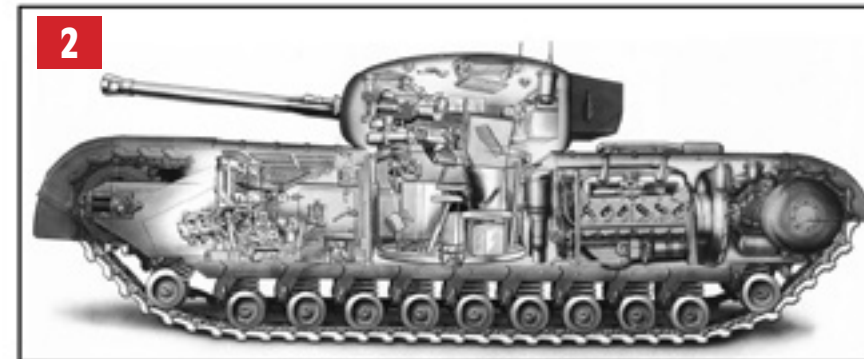
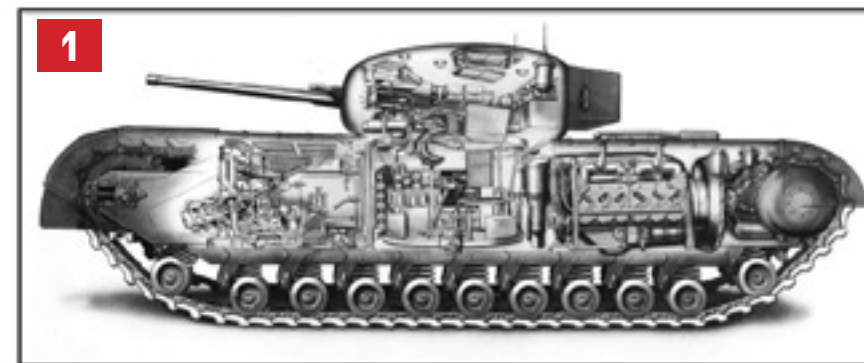
pabilities, while also being considerably more effective when used in infantry support roles.

Churchills made use of the Vickers Tank Periscope MK.IV. In the Mark VII, the driver had two periscopes as well as a vision port in the hull front that could be opened. The hull gunner had a single periscope as well as the sighting telescope on the BESA machine gun mounting. In the turret, the gunner and loader each had single periscope and the commander had two fitted in his hatch cupola.

The armour on the Churchill, often considered its most important feature, was originally specified to a minimum of 16 millimetres and a maximum of 102 millimetres; this was increased with the Mk VII to a range from 25 millimetres to

BELOW RIGHT: Churchill Mk VII driving compartment.

1. Front Gunner's periscope.
2. Fan.
3. Fan switch.
4. Driver's periscope.
5. Vision port locking lever.
6. Vision port opening lever.
7. Vision port release lever.
8. Main steering handlebar.
9. Ignition stop switch.
10. Air pressure gauge.
11. Hand brake lever.
12. Clutch pedal.
13. Foot brake pedal.
14. Accelerator pedal.
15. Throttle hand lever.
16. Driver's seat adjustment.
17. Gear lever gate.
18. Instrument panel.
19. Choke control.
20. Hydraulic fluid level plug.
21. Binnacle compass.



1. Churchill Mk IV.

The division into driving, fighting, engine and gearbox compartments can clearly be seen. The gun is a 6-pounder with free elevation.

2. Churchill Mk IV in cross-section.

This tank has a 75 mm gun with geared elevation, but an early two periscope cupola.

3. Churchill Mk VII in cross-section.

Note the round pannier door. This appears to be an early Mk VII as it does not have the all-round vision cupola.

The gun tanks can all be regarded as having four major components:

- Front - housing the driver and front gunner.
- Fighting - housing the turret crew.
- Engine - behind the fighting compartment.
- Gearbox - housing the gearbox and compressor, steering and main brakes, with the dynamo for the turret traverse on the floor.

152 millimetres.

Though this armour was considerably thicker than its rivals (including the German Tiger I tank, but not the Tiger II) it was not sloped, reducing its effectiveness. Earlier models were given extra armour by the expedient of welding on extra plates.

On the Mark VII, the hull front armour was made up of a lower angled piece of 140 mm, a nearly horizontal 57 mm plate and a vertical 152 mm plate. The hull sides, were, for the most part, 95 mm. The rear was 51 mm and the hull top 013.3 mm.

The turret of the Mark VII was 150 mm to the front and 95 mm for the other sides. The turret roof was 20 mm) thick.

The A22F, also known as “Heavy Churchill”, was a major revision of the design. The most significant part was the use of welding instead of riveted construction. Welding had been considered earlier for the Churchill but, until its future was assured, this was no more than testing techniques and hulls at the firing ranges.

What welding reduced in the overall weight (estimates were around 4%), the thicker armour of the A22F made up for. Welding also required fewer man-hours in construction. The hull doors changed from square to round which reduced stresses.

A new turret went with the new hull. The sides, which included a flared base to protect the turret ring, were a single casting while the roof, which did not need to be so thick, was a plate fitted to the top.

Since the engines on the Churchill were never upgraded,

the tank became increasingly slow as additional armour and armament was equipped and weight increased; while the Mk I weighed 41,000 kg and the Mk III weighed 39,630 kg, the Mk VII weighed 40,640 kg. This caused a reduction in the tanks’ maximum speed from its original 26 km/h down to 20.4 km/h.

Another problem was the tank’s relatively small turret that prevented the use of powerful weapons; definitive versions of the tank were armed with either the QF 6-pounder or the derivative QF 75 mm gun.

The 6-pounder was effective against armoured vehicles, but less so against other targets; the 75 mm was a better all-round weapon, but lacked in effectiveness against armour. Although the Churchills with their 6-pounders could out-gun many contemporary German medium tanks (like the Panzer IV with the short-barrel 75 mm gun, and the Panzer III armed with the 50 mm gun) and the thick armour of all Churchill models could usually withstand several hits from any German anti-tank gun, in the later years of the war the German Panther tank had a 75 mm high-velocity cannon as its main armament along with increased protection, against which the Churchills’ own guns often lacked sufficient armour penetration to fight back effectively.

The Churchill had many variations, including many specialised modifications. The most significant change to the Churchill was that it was up-gunned from 2-pounder to 6-pounder and then 75 mm

guns over the course of the war. By the war’s end, the late model Churchill Mk VII had exceptional amounts of armour – considerably more than the German Tiger tank.

However, the firepower weakness was never fully addressed. The Mark VII turret that was designed for the 75 mm gun was of composite construction – cast with top and bottom plates welded into position.

While it had weaknesses, the Churchill could cross terrain obstacles that most other tanks of its era could not. This capacity frequently proved useful, especially during the fighting in Normandy. One action in Normandy where the tank’s ability to surmount obstacles was found to be of value was the capture of Hill 309 on 30/31 July 1944 (Operation Bluecoat) conducted by VIII Corps.

Service history

DIEPPE RAID - The Churchill first saw combat on 19 August 1942, in the Dieppe Raid in France. The Dieppe raid was planned to temporarily take control of the French port of Dieppe using a strong force of about 6,000 troops – mostly drawn from inexperienced Canadian units.

The operation, codenamed Jubilee, would test the feasibility of opposed landings. Nearly 60 Churchill tanks from the 14th Army Tank Regiment (The Calgary Regiment (Tank) were allocated to support the infantry and commandos; they would be put ashore by Landing Craft Tank vessels, along with the supporting engineers.

Nearly 70% of the Canadians

were killed, injured or captured and none of the raid’s objectives were met.

NORTH AFRICA - Two Mark II had been sent to North Africa for trials and they were joined by six Mk III Churchills (with the 6 pounder) to form the Special Tank Squadron commanded by Major Norris King.

They saw action in the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942. This detachment, called “Kingforce”, supported the attack of 7th Motor Brigade first with three tanks at Kidney Ridge (where one was hit “repeatedly” by anti-tank gun fire (including “friendly fire” from a British gun) and another took “a lot of punishment”), then the remaining five at Tell-el-Aqqar.

The Churchills were fired on many times by Italian and German anti-tank guns, but only one was knocked out and partially caught on fire. One tank was said to have been hit up to 80 times.

ITALY - Churchill tanks were not in use initially following the Allied invasion of the Italian mainland in 1943; there were six regiments with Churchills in Tunisia.

They may have been kept out because Montgomery preferred the Sherman or because their 6-pdr guns were not suitable for the fighting in Italy.

Churchills did land in Italy in April/May 1944 with 75mm gun armed Churchills arriving later. As the mainstay of the Tank Brigades, which operated in support of the infantry, Churchill units were in operation more often than other tank units.

NORTH-WEST EUROPE - Churchills saw widespread action in Normandy during the Battle of Hill 112 and Operation Bluecoat, as well as subsequent operations in the Low Countries and into Germany, such as the fighting in the Reichswald during Operation Veritable.

The Churchill was able to cross the muddy ground and force through the forests of the Reichswald; a contemporary report expressed the belief that no other tank could have managed the same conditions.

BURMA AND INDIA - A single Churchill, possibly a Mk V, was trialled in Burma in 1945. It was operated by the 3rd Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers) from the end of April 1945 for about a month. Although it proved impossible to bring the Churchill into action, on approach marches the tank proved at least the equal to the M3 Lee then in service.

SOVIET UNION - The Soviet Union was sent 344 Churchill Mk III and Mk IV types as part of the Lend-Lease programme. 91 were lost en route on the Arctic Convoys. Initial deliveries were on Convoy PQ 17 (June 1942) and Convoy PQ 18 (September 1942) to Arkhangel'sk.

In 1942–1943, Churchills were used in the Battle of Stalingrad (47th and 48th regiments of heavy tanks - 42 Churchills).

In 1943, the Soviet 5th Guards Tank Army used Churchills in the Battle of Prokhorovka (15th and 36th regiments of heavy tanks - 42 Churchills) during the Battle of Kursk, and in the Fourth Battle of Kharkov. It was also used in other battles

until 1944 (82nd regiment of heavy tanks).

KOREAN WAR - In late 1950, a Churchill Crocodile squadron (C squadron, 7th Royal Tank Regiment) was sent to Korea. In action against the Chinese, they mostly fought as gun tanks, for example in the Third Battle of Seoul.

To restore the 1st Battalion, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers’ position during the defence of Seoul, Brigadier Thomas Brodie of the 29th Infantry Brigade sent four Churchill tanks as reinforcement; their contributions to the battle were widely praised by British and American historians.

These were the last use of the Churchill in action by the British. The tank remained in the service of the British Army until 1952 with one, a bridge-layer, remaining in service well into the 1970s.

Variants

The Churchill saw a great number of models and variants being produced.

Churchill I (303 produced)

Equipped with a 40 mm Ordnance QF 2-pounder gun in the turret with 150 rounds and a coaxial Besa machine gun. There was an Ordnance QF 3 inch howitzer in the hull, with 58 rounds, for use against infantry.

It was a tank that was noted for poor mechanical reliability. It was used alongside Mark IIs and IIIs with Canadian forces on the Dieppe Raid and in Tunisia; some were still in use late in the war in Italy on the Gothic Line.

Churchill Mk II (1,127 pro-

duced)
Replaced the hull howitzer with another machine gun to reduce cost and complexity. Sometimes referred to as “Churchill Ia”.

Churchill Mk IICS (Close Support)

Placed the 2-pounder gun in the hull and the howitzer in the turret, available in very limited numbers. Sometimes called the “Churchill II”. Not used in combat.

Churchill Mk III (675 produced)

The III was the first major armament overhaul of the series, eliminating the hull howitzer and equipping the tank with a more powerful Ordnance QF 6-pounder gun with 84 rounds.

Churchill Mk IV (1,622 produced)

The IV, the most numerous Churchill produced, was virtually identical to the III, the largest change being a return to the cheaper cast turret, keeping the welded turret’s “clean” squarish shape. A telephone box was fitted to the rear of the tank for communication with infantry.

Churchill Mk V (241 produced)

A Churchill equipped with a close support Ordnance QF 95 mm howitzer with 47 rounds in place of the main gun in a cast turret. The gun could fire smoke, HE, or HEAT round with a maximum range of 6,200 metres.

Churchill Mk VII (A22F)

(1,600 produced)
The second big redesign, the VII used the 75mm gun, was wider and carried much more armour, 50 percent thicker at the front than a Tiger I, giving it the ability to withstand massive amounts of punishment.

Churchill Mk VIII (1,600 produced)

A Churchill VII with a 95 mm howitzer and 47 rounds in a slightly different turret.

Churchill Mk IX

Churchill III/IV upgraded with extra armour added to hull and turret, along with gearbox and suspension modifications. If the original turret was retained without added armour it was called LT (“Light Turret”).

Churchill Mk X

The same improvements as for the IX applied to a Mk VI.

Churchill Mk XI

The same improvements as for the IX applied to a MkV CS. Does not appear to have been built.

Churchill NA75 (200 produced)

Churchill IVs with 6-pounder guns replaced (under Operation Whitehot by US 75 mm guns and mantlets from destroyed or scrapped Sherman tanks, fitted to Churchill IV cast turrets.

Specialist vehicles

Churchill Oke

A Churchill II or III with a flamethrower. The Oke flame-throwing tank was named after its designer, Major J.M.

Oke. The design was basically a Churchill tank fitted with the Ronson flamethrower equipment.

Churchill AVRE (Assault Vehicle Royal Engineers)

Proposed by a Canadian engineer as a result of experience from the Dieppe Raid, the Assault Vehicle Royal Engineers was a Churchill Mark III or IV equipped with the “Mortar, Recoiling Spigot, Mark II” (or Petard), a 290 mm spigot mortar that throws the 18 kg Bomb Demolition Number 1 (“Flying dustbin”) with a 12.7 kg high-explosive warhead.

Churchill ARV (Armoured Recovery Vehicle)

Mk I – A turretless Mk I with a jib that could be fitted at front or rear. Production began in early 1942.

Mk II – A Churchill Mark III or Mark IV with a fixed turret/superstructure with a dummy gun. It was equipped for recovering other tanks from the battlefield.

Churchill ARK (Armoured Ramp Carrier)

The Armoured Ramp Carrier was a turretless Churchill with ramps at either end and trackways along the body to form a mobile bridge. Fifty of these were built on Mark II and Mark IV Churchills.

Churchill bridgelayers

The British already had experience of bridge-laying tanks with the Valentine tank and the Covenanter tank, and began work on a Churchill-based bridge-layer in 1942.

The bridge, which could support a tank of 60 tons or be used by Class 40 wheeled traffic, was carried on top of a turretless Mk III or Mk VI chassis. When the obstacle was reached, an arm (driven by hydraulics in the tank) pivoted at the front of the tank and placed the bridge in position.

Churchill Crocodile

The Churchill Crocodile was a Churchill VII that was converted by replacing the hull machine gun with a flamethrower. The fuel was in an armoured wheeled trailer towed behind.

Gun Carrier, 3-inch, Mk I, Churchill (A22D)

Coming out of a General Staff request in 1941 to investigate fitting high velocity large calibre guns on infantry and cruiser tanks specifically for use against German tanks.

Churchill Flail FV3902 or Toad

A 1950s mine-clearing flail tank built on a Churchill chassis using a Rolls-Royce Meteor engine to drive the flails.

Churchill Goat

A charge layer, like the Double Onion device.

Churchill Great Eastern Ramp

A much larger longer and higher trackway ramp than the ARK for crossing 18 metres.

Churchill Kangaroo

The Churchill Kangaroo was a turretless Churchill hull converted to an armoured personnel carrier.

Black Prince (A43)

In 1943, an attempt was made to produce a 17 pounder armed tank on the Churchill chassis. It was known that insufficient numbers of the 17 pounder Challenger cruiser were going to be produced in time for the invasion of Europe, and work was only starting on the Centurion cruiser design.

Operators

- Australia - retired, replaced with the Centurion main battle tank.
- Canada - retired, replaced with the Centurion.
- India - retired.
- Ireland - retired in 1969, replaced with the Comet cruiser tank.
- Poland (Polish Armed Forces in the West) - retired in 1947 without replacement.
- United Kingdom - retired, replaced with the Conqueror heavy tank and Centurion.
- Soviet Union (Lend-Lease) - retired, replaced with IS-3 and T-10 heavy tanks.
- Kingdom of Iraq - retired, replaced with the Centurion.

The Tank, Infantry, Mk IV (A22) and its many variants played an import role during World War II in particular.

It served in the British Army from 1941 to 1952 and was able to take its place in the annals of British Military History. It was a machine that was ‘Forged in Battle’.

Production history

- Designer: Harland & Wolff (A20); Vauxhall Motors (A22)
- Manufacturer: Vauxhall Motors and others

Specifications

- Weight: 39.1 t (Mark I); 40.7 t (Mark VII)
- Length: 7.44 metres
- Width :3.25 metres
- Height: 2.49 metres
- Crew: Five (commander, gunner, loader/radio operator, driver, co-driver/hull gunner)
- Armour: For Churchill I-VI: 102 mm hull front, 76 mm hull side, 51 mm hull rear, 89 mm turret front, 76 mm turret side and rear; For Mark VII-VIII - 152 mm hull and turret front, 95 mm hull sides and turret sides and rear, 51 mm hull rear
- Main armament: QF 2 pounder (Mark I and II); QF 6 pounder (Mark III and IV); QF 75mm (Mark VI and VII); QF 95mm (Mark V and VIII)
- Secondary armament: one coaxial 7.92mm Besa machine gun; 3 inch howitzer (Mark I) or one Besa MG (other marks)
- Engine: Bedford 12-cylinder, 4 stroke, water-cooled, horizontally opposed, L-head petrol engine, 350 hp (261 kW) at 2,200 rpm
- Suspension: Coiled spring
- Operational range: 90 km
- Maximum speed: 24 km/h

All I want for Christmas

Here is a copy of the letter than Matt O'Brien sent to Santa this year.



Dear Fat Guy in the red suit,

Okay, I've been a good boy this year. You can ask anyone, even my parole officer. So how about this year you give me what I'm actually asking for.

Last year when I said I wanted Shakira for Christmas, I wasn't talking about her new CD.

This year I'm not asking for much. All I need are 10 games for my PC. Now you're probably going to say that I'm greedy. But you've got to make up for the past ten years where I got nothing from you.

And please don't get it wrong this year. I know where you live, if you get my meaning. And a word of advice - don't park your sleigh in my neighbourhood or you just might find it on bricks and your reindeer ending up on someone's braai.

Merry Christmas.

Matt O'Brien

So these then are the ten games that O'Brien wants in his Christmas stocking this year. And he says that if you're looking for a PC game to keep you occupied over the silly season, you won't go wrong with any of these titles. Click on the game cover to watch a review of the game.



Company of Heroes 2

This is a real time strategy game set during World War II. Built around the concepts of cover and directional fire, suppression and morale, you have to use actual battlefield strategies if you wanted to succeed.

In Company of Heroes 2 the action moves to the Eastern Front. In the single player campaign you control the Soviet Army from Operation Barbarossa to the Battle of Berlin.

Where the game really comes into its own is in skirmish mode. You can play multi-player, coop, or even go up against

the AI (Artificial Intelligence). What's also cool is that you can play as the Russians or the Germans.

The base game gives you both the Russian and German forces. It also includes DLC which gives you access to the Americans, British and the Oberkommando faction.

It's not that difficult to learn to play the game and with skirmish mode it will provide hours and hours of entertainment.

Price: R199 (on Steam)



ARMA 3

ARMA 3 is an open world, military tactical shooter video game. You can go anywhere you want and do anything you want.

ARMA 3 takes place on the Aegean islands of Altis and Stratis of Greece. The islands feature photo-realistic terrain and water environments. Altis features 270 square kilometres of terrain.

The game features a large assortment of weapons, equipment, vehicles, aircraft, and

helicopters.

Modding groups have created thousands of extra stuff for the game, including a group that specialises in South African and African content.

You can also use the Eden Editor that comes with the game to create your own content and scenarios.

This is an excellent military simulator and one I would recommend.

Price: R479 (on Steam)

Red Dead Redemption II

When a game has sold more than 40 million copies since its release, you know that it's a pretty good game.

The story is set in 1899 in a fictionalized representation of the Western, Midwestern, and Southern United States and follows outlaw Arthur Morgan, a member of the Van der Linde gang.

Arthur must deal with the decline of the Wild West whilst attempting to survive against government forces, rival gangs,

and other adversaries.

The graphics on the game are excellent and there is so much for you to do in the large open world - you can hunt, fish, rob trains, become a bounty hunter, gamble, and much more.

Besides the main story missions, there is a ton of side missions and activities to do.

An incredible game and well worth the price.

Price: R699 (on Steam)



Battlefield 1

Battlefield 1 is one of the few games that is set in World War I. The game is known for its on-line play where you can play with up to 64 players at a time.

The single player campaign is also really good, if a bit short. It consists of six chapters, known as 'war stories'.

In the intro chapter you get to play as various soldiers of the Harlem Hellfighters.

In the second war story "Through Mud and Blood" - set

in France though the eyes of a British tank driver.

You will also get to play as a Royal Flying Corps pilot, a member of the Italian Arditi, an ANZAC runner during the Gallipoli campaign, and as a Bedouin warrior under the command of Lawrence of Arabia.

If you have a good Internet connection, then try the on-line game.

Price: R649 (on Steam)





Ultimate Admiral: Age of Sail

Ultimate Admiral: Age of Sail is a unique wargame allowing you to experience naval, land, and combined arms landing operations.

Taking the role of a famous commander, you will be at the heart of the historical battles and events.

In the British campaign you play as Horatio Nelson and in the American campaign you get to be John Paul Jones.

The developers have done a lot of research into the ships

and weapons of the time in an effort to make the game as realistic as possible.

Build up your fleet, improve your ships and equipment, and work out the best tactics to be victorious.

Use your marines to capture enemy ships, repair them, and add them to your fleet.

This is a good game for anyone interested in naval history and tactics.

Price: R175 (on Steam)

Jagged Alliance: Back in Action

The king of an island called Arulco needs to overthrow his wife, Queen Dedriana, and take back his kingdom. And he's hired you to do the job.

Armed with a laptop and a limited budget you have to search a website called AIM (Association of International Mercenaries) and hire the right people to do the job.

You can hire up to three teams of six mercenaries. Problem is you can't afford any good mercs to start off with. And the

good ones won't work for you until you've built up a bit of a reputation.

Each mercenary comes with certain skills and characteristics. So you have to put together the right team.

As you take over sectors of the island you can gain more income and hire better people and equipment.

It's an addictive game to play and great fun.

Price: R219 (on Steam)

Ghost Recon: Wildlands

This game is what is known as a tactical shooter. It is set in 2019 in Bolivia. The country has become increasingly unstable as a Mexican drug cartel known as the Santa Blanca Cartel gains more power and influence within the country and turns Bolivia into the world's largest producer of cocaine.

A task force, consisting of you and three others are sent in to take the cartel down. The map is 400 square kilometres

and you can get around the map using cars, trucks, dirt bikes, boats, light aircraft and helicopters.

You have to take down local *buchon* (local bosses) before you can take on the head honcho named El Sueño.

Some missions will require stealth, others brute force. It will keep you occupied for hours.

Price: R699 (on Steam)



U-Boat

U-Boat is exactly what it says it is, a submarine simulator. In a nutshell, you are given command of a Type VII submarine during World War II.

Unlike other submarine games you are not in charge of the submarine itself, but rather in charge of the men controlling the submarine. You act as the U-Boat captain.

Your job is to manage the morale, discipline and trauma of the crew and make sure all the crew come back alive at the

end of a mission.

Before you leave port you are given a mission briefing. You need to check that your boat is in good condition, and take on supplies include torpedoes, fuel, food, water and any other necessary rations and equipment.

You will be required to make all the decisions and handle any situations that may crop up. This is a challenging sim.

Price: R175 (on Steam)



Total War: Shogun 2

As daiymo (warlord) of a Samurai clan your objective is to take on the other clans and become the shogun - the supreme military leader of Japan.

You start with a single territory and the objective is to take over enough territories until you become the most powerful daiymo in Japan.

You will have to build up a strong enough army to invade other territories as well as defend your own. You will need to construct military buildings

to train your troops.

But you also need to look after the civilian population of your territories and provide them with food, education and spiritual guidance. All this costs money.

Collect taxes, loot other provinces or trade with them. Use diplomacy, make and break alliances. Do what needs to be done.

Price: R299 (on Steam)

Tank Mechanic Simulator

You start off with a workshop where you can repair and restore tanks. You also have a tank museum.

People will send you an e-mail and offer you a contract to repair or restore a tank. If you accept the contract then the tank will be delivered to your workshop. Nearly all of the tanks you receive will be covered in rust.

The tank is placed over an inspection pit and is ready for

you to start work. Also in your workshop you have an engine stand and a turret stand.

You need to strip the tank down and repair or replace all of the parts that are damaged.

As you progress you will gain access to better tools and workshop functions. Once you're done you get paid. You can also discover and repair old tanks to either sell or place in your museum.

Price: R130 (on steam)





Stocking fillers

Looking for a stocking filler for either yourself or a friend this Christmas? Then how about one of these movies. Five of them are based on true stories. We can strongly recommend 'My Father's War' to any South African military veteran. Click on the cover to watch a trailer of the movies.



Enemy at the Gates



A Bridge too Far



Siege at Jadotville



The Great Escape



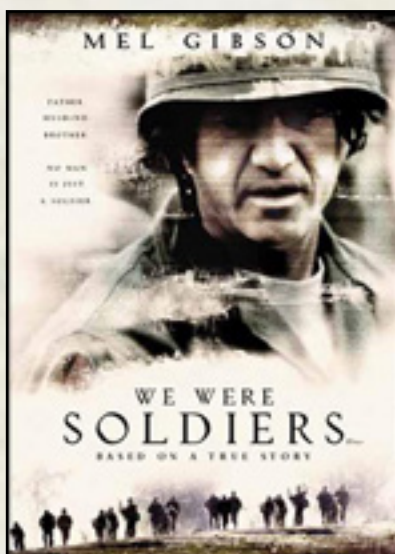
My Father's War



Das Boot



Platoon



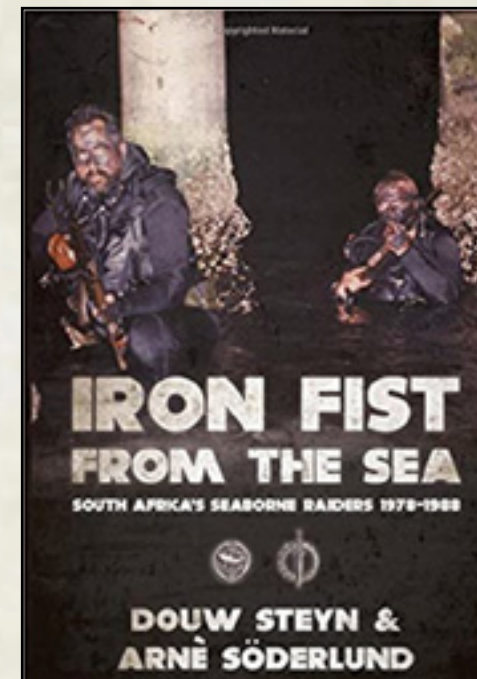
We Were Soldiers



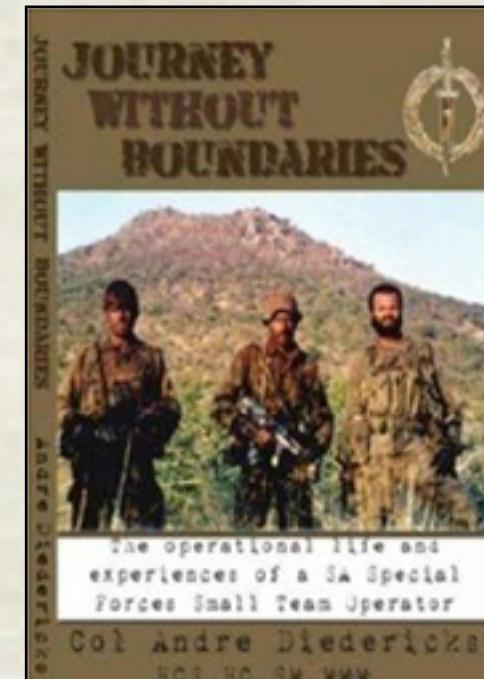
Full Metal Jacket

Good reads for the holidays

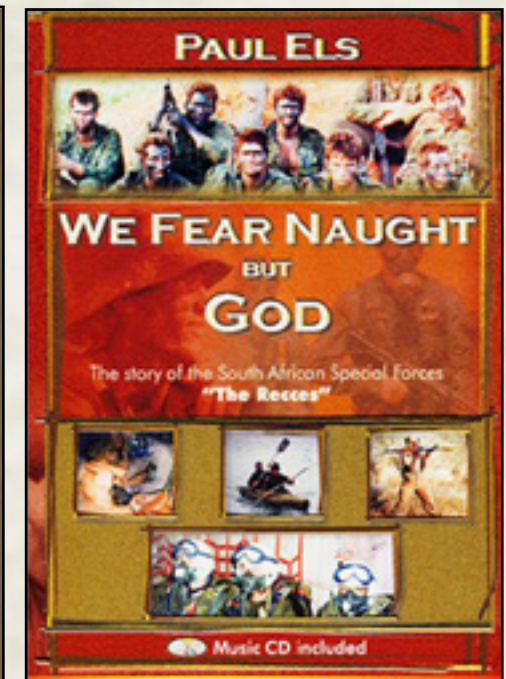
Many people will be on leave during December and it's the perfect time to catch up on a bit of reading. And many of us will be looking for the ideal gift to buy. You can't go wrong with a good book and we can recommend any of the books on this list. All of these books have been read and reviewed in Military Despatches at some stage.



Iron Fist from the Sea
Douw Steyn & Arnè Söderlund
R300



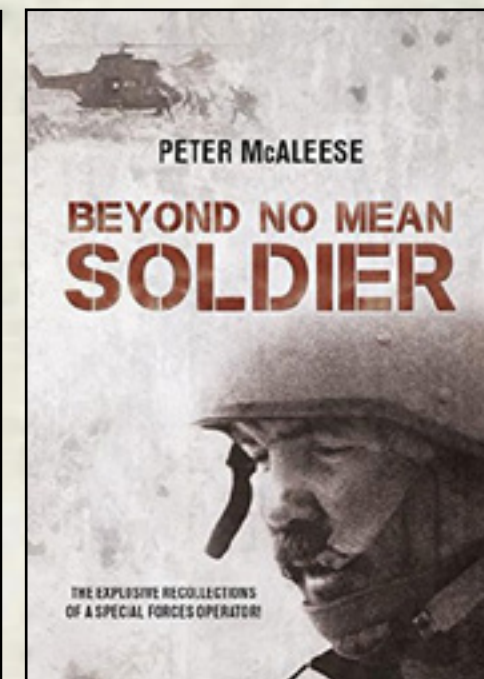
Journey Without Boundaries
Col Andre Diedericks
R325



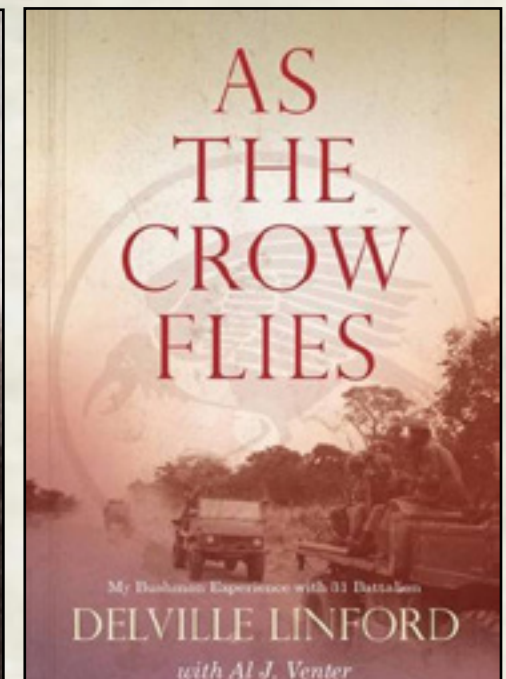
We Fear Naught But God
Paul Els
R395



Cuito Cuanavale
Gennady Shubin & Igor Zhdarkin
R255



Beyond No Mean Soldier
Peter McAleese
R525



As The Crow Flies
Delville Linford
R255

All books are available from [Bush War Books](http://bushwarbooks.co.za)

Some of the significant military events that happened in December. Highlighted in blue are the names of those members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) that lost their lives during the month of December.

1 December

- **1914** - Col. J.F. Jordaan of the SA force captures Gen. Christiaan de Wet, on his way to German South West Africa at Waterbury, near Vryburg, Northern Cape (now North West Province).
- **1933** - Rudolf Hess & Ernst Rohm become ministers in Hitler's government.
- **1939** - SS-Fuhrer Himmler begins deportation of Polish Jews to concentration camps.
- **1978** - Lance Corporal Lionel Ashley Roe from Air Force Base Waterkloof was killed in a military vehicle accident at Waterkloof. He was 20.
- **1980** - Rifleman Johan Nothnagel from 1 Parachute Battalion was killed in a private motor vehicle accident while on weekend pass. He was 19.
- **1992** - Cabinet decides to replace the SAAF trainer Harvards by the Swiss-made Pilatus PC-7 MK2. The joint venture will include twelve SA companies.
- **1995** - Prosecutors in South Africa formally charge former Defence Minister Gen. Magnus Malan and nineteen others with the murders of thirteen people in 1987. They were all later acquitted.
- **1998** - At least fourteen people are killed and twenty-four injured in a bomb explosion in a market in Algiers.

2 December

- **2012** - The world's first nuclear carrier, USS 'Enterprise' (CVN 65), is inactivated after 51 years of commissioned service.
- **1805** - Napoleon defeated Russia and Austria in the Battle of Austerlitz.
- **1836** - Commandant Andries Hendrik Potgieter is elected chief commandant of the Voortrekkers.
- **1856** - The Battle of Tugela (also Battle of Ndongakusuka) takes place in the war between Cetewayo, eldest son of the Zulu chief Mpande, and his father's younger brother, Umbolazi (also Mbulazi). In one of the bloodiest battles fought on the southern tip of Africa, more than 5,000 warriors are killed and thousands drown in the Tugela River.
- **1877** - The Battle of Umzimtsani takes place during the Ninth Border War. Seventy men of the Prince Alfred's Guard unit are attacked by the Galekas, but ward the attack off.
- **1900** - The Battle of Goede Hoop takes place during the Second Anglo-Boer War. Chief Commandant De Wet engages Col. Herbert at Goede Hoop, between

Smithfield and Bethulie in the OFS. De Wet takes off on the arrival of reinforcements sent by General Knox.

- **1914** - Adolf Hitler is awarded the Iron Cross, Second Class. "The happiest day of my life," he says.
- **1914** - Austrians capture Belgrade, Serbia, after several tries.
- **1935** - Abyssinian government orders troops out of Harar on humanitarian grounds.
- **1941** - HMS 'Prince of Wales' & 'Repulse' ("Force Z") arrive at Singapore.
- **1942** - The Allies repels a strong Axis attack in Tunisia, North Africa.
- **1965** - Rifleman Mark Andrew Brown from the Kaffrarian Rifles died as a result of heat exhaustion during a training session at the Infantry School in Oudtshoorn. The heat was reported at over 37 Degrees C during the training session. As a direct result of the findings of Board of Enquiry held into his death, training procedures were modified and amended. He was 21.
- **1978** - Corporal Johannes Havenga from 5 SAI was Killed in Action after being struck in the chest by a Soviet RPG-7 Anti-Tank Rocket during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents at Eenhana. He was 20.

- **1979** - Lieutenant Johannes Jacobus Du Toit from 3 SAI Died of Wounds while serving in Rhodesia. He was 23.
- **1980** - Rifleman Nicolaas Christian Izaks from the South African Cape Corps was killed when he was struck by a bullet from an accidental discharge of a fellow soldiers rifle while stationed at M'pacha in the Caprivi Strip. He was 21.
- **1984** - Rifleman Wynand Eckard from 2 Parachute Battalion was killed in a private motor vehicle accident in South West Africa while on leave pass. He was 21.
- **1988** - Rifleman Johannes Gerhardus Janse van Vuuren from the SADF Equestrian Centre was killed in a private motorcycle accident while on a weekend pass in Klerksdorp. He was 20.

3 December

- **1810** - Britain seizes the islands of Reunion and Mauritius from French control.
- **1902** - Mitsuo Fuchida, the Japanese pilot who would one day transmit the code "Tora, Tora, Tora" (indicating that the attack on Pearl Harbour had been successful) was born on this day.
- **1915** - British 6th Indian Division falls back on Kut-el-Amara, Iraq.
- **1942** - Guadalcanal: Japanese destroyers land reinforcements.
- **1963** - The Minister of De-

fence, P.W. Botha, announces a reshuffle of senior defence force posts to increase the efficiency of the country's Defence Department, the Defence Production Board and the Defence Organisation. Consequently Lieutenant-General C.A. Fraser, at present Chief of the Army, becomes Joint Commander, Combat Forces, in which capacity he will take command in times of war or emergency of the fighting formations of Army and Air Force elements.

- **1980** - Two members from 3 SAI were Killed in Action and one was critically wounded (he later Died of Wounds on 20 January 1981) while their Company was based at Ondangwa Town. The casualties were: Rifleman Johannes Erasmus van der Merwe (19). Rifleman Christo van Zyl (18).
- **1982** - SA Minister of Foreign Affairs Pik Botha warns that SA will not tolerate the introduction of Cuban troops and will not hesitate to launch counter-measures against Mozambique, if it allows nationalist guerrillas to operate against SA from its territory.
- **1986** - Rifleman J.H. Nanyemba from 202 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents

in Northern Owamboland. He was 23.

- **1987** - Angola claims South African troops and planes have launched attacks deep inside Angola.
- **1993** - Angola's government and its rebel foes agree to a cease-fire in their eighteen-year war. The final cease-fire agreement was only signed in April 2002.

4 December

- **1941** - US Navy Department orders Guam to destroy all codes and secret documents.
- **1943** - During World War II, the second Cairo Conference took place, attended by Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt and President Inonu of Turkey.
- **1963** - The Security Council, in resolution 182 (1963), calls upon all States "to cease forthwith the sale and shipment of equipment and materials for the manufacture and maintenance



Pik Botha

of arms and ammunition in South Africa”.

- **1971** - The Defence Minister denies that South Africa has sent troops to Malawi to quell the security threat on Malawi's southern border, but admits that military equipment is being supplied.
- **1978** - Sapper Jacobus Cornelius Francois Cloete from the SWA Engineer Support Unit SWATF was accidentally killed during construction work at Grootfontein when a concrete block fell off a scaffolding and struck him on the head, killing him instantly. He was 19.
- **1983** - US airstrikes on Syrian anti-aircraft positions in Lebanon.
- **1986** - Defence Amendment Act, dealing mainly with various ways of combating terrorism, commences.
- **1987** - Rifleman A. Dala from 32 Battalion was found murdered by persons unknown. He was 31.
- **1987** - Private Abraham Samuel Jacobus Stander from 31 Field Workshop, Technical Service Corps was accidentally killed approximately 10km outside Grootfontein when he fell off the rear of a moving Samil 20 vehicle that was travelling on the road to Otavi. He was 21.
- **1992** - President George Bush orders about 28,000 US troops to Somalia to block warring Somali gangs from intercepting food shipments.

5 December

- **1812** - Napoleon deserts his army during the retreat from Moscow.
- **1839** - George Armstrong Custer, who made his last stand at the Battle of Little Big Horn, was born on this day.
- **1861** - Richard Gatling applies for a patent on a clever device - the machine gun.
- **1911** - Italian forces at Tripoli defeat Turks.
- **1934** - Italian and Ethiopian troops clash at the Ualul (Welwel) on the disputed Somali-Ethiopian border.
- **1941** - Japanese First Air Fleet at 40 North 178 East, 2,655 kilometres from Pearl Harbour.
- **1941** - US military commanders in the Pacific are informed that Japanese embassies & consulates have been ordered to destroy their codes & code machines.
- **1941** - Moscow Counter-offensive: Under pressure from Zhukov's Soviet troops, the Germans call off their drive on Moscow.
- **1943** - Japanese air raid on port facilities at Calcutta.
- **1943** - USAAF introduces drop-tanks, allowing P-47s & P-51s to escort bombers from Britain into Germany
- **1950** - Korean War. UN forces abandon Pyongyang under heavy Chinese pressure.
- **1979** - The Prime Minister announces the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry

into the reporting of defence matters, to be headed by Justice M.T. Steyn. The Commission is to inquire into and make recommendations on the dividing line between the rights of the media to inform and the right of the public to be informed on the one hand, and the interests of the security of the state on the other.

- **1980** - Rifleman Frans Nyundu from 202 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 32.
- **1981** - Rifleman Wayne Leon Jooste from 8 SAI was killed when his Buffel Troop Carrier overturned in Northern Owamboland. He was 20.
- **1983** - Private Stefan Willem Welgemoed from the South African Medical College, attached to Naval Base Durban, was killed in a military vehicle accident at Richmond. He was 19.
- **1984** - Trooper Johannes Fred from 202 Battalion SWATF was Killed when his Buffel Troop Carrier overturned in Northern Owamboland. He was 19.
- **1992** - Aid agencies are stripped by gunmen in Somalia on the eve of US troop arrival.

6 December

- **1865** - The Battle of Platberg is fought during the Orange Free Sate-Basotho War.

- **1912** - First underwater submarine torpedo attack: Greek submarine 'Deflin' misses Turkish cruiser 'Medjidije' at 500m.
- **1914** - The Germans capture Lodz.
- **1917** - Two ships collided at Halifax, Nova Scotia, resulting in an explosion that killed more than 1,500 persons and injured 8,000. The Norwegian ship Imo collided with the French munitions ship Mont Blanc which was loaded with supplies for the war in Europe, including 5,000 tons of TNT. A tidal wave caused by the explosion destroyed much of the city.
- **1935** - Dessye palace, Ethiopia, is destroyed by an Italian air raid.
- **1941** - Admiral Husband Kimmel says, "No young man, I don't think they'd be such damned fools," when a journalist asks if the Japanese might initiate war.
- **1942** The Royal Air Force bombs Philips factory in the Netherlands, 150 die.
- **1943** - Burma: Allies cancel major amphibious operation.
- **1961** - Heavy fighting erupts in Congo's Katanga Province between United Nations and Katangan forces.
- **1968** - 2nd Lieutenant Ian Anthony Hefer from 5 Squadron was killed when his De Havilland Vampire FB9 crashed near Waterkloof during a routine training flight. He was 18.

- **1977** - Signaller Jan Johannes Bothma from 84 Signals Unit was killed in a head-on collision between a Military Bedford and a Military Landrover on the Grootfontein to Rundu road. He was 22.
- **1988** - Sergeant Petrus Alwyn Minnaar from 3 Electronic Workshops was killed in a military vehicle accident at Rundu. He was 29.
- **1988** - Corporal Derrick Gobey from 2 SAI was killed when his Samil 100 truck overturned at Bagani. He was 20.
- **1988** - Rifleman Deon Potgieter from 1 SAI was killed in a military vehicle accident. He was 19.

7 December

- **1891** - In German South West Africa Captain Kurt von François moves his administrative headquarters to Windhoek, seven months after erecting a fort there.
- **1895** - At the Battle at Amba Alagi, Abissynia, the Ethiopians beat Italian armies.
- **1914** - Pope Benedict XIV calls on all powers to declare a Christmas truce.
- **1917** - US declares war on Austria-Hungary.
- **1940** - The British attack larger Italian forces in Libya by surprise, capturing 40,000 prisoners in three days.

- **1941** - The U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was attacked by nearly 200 Japanese aircraft in a raid that lasted just over one hour and left nearly 3,000 Americans dead.
- **1964** - Field Cornet (Lieutenant) Izak Cornelius Potgieter from 42 Army Air Reconnaissance Squadron (later 42 Squadron) was killed when his Cessna 185A crashed near Coligny during a routine low level cross-country reconnaissance flight. He was 23.
- **1975** - Sergeant Frederick Gerhardus Wannenbergh CS (P) from 1 Reconnaissance Commando Died of Wounds in the Battle for Bridge 14 in Central Angola during Operation Savannah. He was 24.
- **1976** - Sergeant Jan Gerrit Bantjies from 1 SAI organised himself a live Alouette Gunship 20 x 82mm High Explosive Incendiary (HEI) cannon cartridge to keep as a souvenir while he was serving in the Operational Area.



George H.W. Bush

While attempting to make the device safe, the High Explosive projectile exploded, killing him instantly. He was 28.

- **1979** - Rifleman Patrick Benjamin Bickers from 5 SAI died in 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria from injuries received in a hit and run accident on the Pietersburg Highway. He was 19.
- **1979** - Rifleman Johannes Gabriel Albertus Mostert from 11 Commando Regiment was Killed in Action while on patrol in the Etale area. He was 19.
- **1981** - Spain becomes a member of NATO.
- **1987** - The US state department says it hopes South Africa's withdrawal from Angola will be followed by the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the country.
- **1987** - Lieutenant (Mrs) Daphne Margaret Therissa Bacher from the South West Africa Medical Command SWATF died in the Windhoek State Hospital after contracting pneumonia. She was 43.
- **1988** - Lance Corporal Johannes Christiaan Du Plessis from 2 Special Service Battalion was killed at the Rooisloot Training Area when his armoured car overturned, crushing him underneath. He was 19.

8 December

- **1895** - Battle at Amba Alagi: Ethiopian emperor Mene-lik II drives Italian general

Baratieri's forces out.

- **1914** - General Christiaan Beyers, former Speaker of the Transvaal Parliament and Commandant-General of the Union Defence Force, drowns in the Vaal River.
- **1914** - Battle of the Falkland Islands: British battlecruisers annihilate von Spee's German cruiser squadron.
- **1940** - During the Blitz, the House of Commons and Tower of London were seriously damaged amid an overnight air raid by German bombers on London.
- **1941** - Japanese troops land in Malaya, attack Hong Kong, invade Siam and the Dutch East Indies, bomb the Philippines, and capture the USS Wake in Shanghai.
- **1941** - WWII: The Union of SA, Australia and the US declare war on Japan.
- **1943** - Japanese air raids on British airfields in Assam.
- **1944** - Iwo Jima: U.S. bombers and carrier aircraft begin a 72 day pre-invasion bombardment.
- **1952** - French troops fire on demonstrators at Casablanca, 50 die.
- **1977** - Three SADF members were Killed in Action during a contact SWAPO/PLAN with insurgents when their patrol walked into an ambush near Ruacana. The casualties were: Sergeant Johannes Cornelius Badenhorst from Regiment North Natal (28). Lance Corporal Christiaan Rudolf Kotze from West Coast Comman-

do (23). Rifleman Johannes Hendrik Petrus Kruger from Bloemfontein Commando (25).

- **1987** - Two members from the Gordonia Commando were killed when they were run over by a civilian vehicle that failed to stop at a military roadblock near Uppington. They were: Rifleman Willem Petrus Burger (23). Rifleman Desmond Reginald van der Merwe (38).

9 December

- **1838** - The Voortrekker commando under Andries Pretorius and Sarel Celliers make a solemn promise to God. Should they be victorious, they undertake that they and their descendants will annually dedicate the day of the conquest to the glory of God alone. This promise was repeated nightly until the Battle of Blood River on the 16th was fought.
- **1900** - During the Second Anglo-Boer War the Russian czar rejects President Paul Kruger's pleas for official aid in South Africa against the British. Many Russians fought as volunteers on the Boer side.
- **1917** - General Sir Edmund Allenby enters Jerusalem, on foot.
- **1931** - Japanese army attacks Chinese province of Jehol.
- **1939** - Russian air raid on Helsinki.
- **1940** - British 8th Army opens offensive in North

Africa by attacking Sidi Barrani in Egypt. They seize 1,000 Italians in a sudden thrust.

- **1940** - The Greeks begin a counter offensive against the Italians in Albania
- **1941** - South African armoured cars take part in the pursuit of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps as it retreats towards El Agheila in North Africa.
- **1941** - China declares war on Japan, Germany and Italy.
- **1946** - The Nuremberg "Doctors' trial" begins, against physicians and officers who conducted Nazi human experimentation, euthanasia, and mass murder.
- **1961** - SS Colonel Adolf Eichmann is convicted of war crimes in Israel.
- **1967** - The United States withdraws the last of three C-130 transport planes sent to Congo in July to help the Kinshasa government airlift troops to suppress a rebellion of White mercenaries and Katangese soldiers.
- **1974** - Portuguese and Rhodesian soldiers are accused in a UN report of torturing and killing over 1,000 Africans in Mozambique during the war of independence.
- **1977** - Two members from 1 SAI were Killed in Action when their patrol walked into a SWAPO/PLAN insurgent ambush near St. Mary's on the Yati Strip. They were: Corporal Abraham Izak Emmanuel Venter (20). Rifle-

man Edwin Chaplin Bishop (20).

- **1982** - Rifleman Simeon Shimbaranda from 202 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents. He was 24.
- **1982** - South African Defence Force commandos crossed the border into Lesotho. Their target was a cluster of houses on the outskirts of Maseru where members of the African National Congress (ANC) were believed to be in hiding.
- **1983** - Rifleman Allen Derrick Wolton from 7 SAI was killed in an accidental mortar bomb explosion during operations in Southern Angola. He was 19.
- **1991** - Sergeant Laurens Kruger from Group 21 was killed when his Military vehicle overturned between Watersend and Bray. He was 26.
- **1992** - American forces land in Somalia to begin humanitarian operation in famine-stricken country.
- **1993** - 2nd Lieutenant Gideon van Zyl from 4 SAI was Killed in Action by automatic weapons fire in Katlehong Township on the East Rand during a military intervention in a fire-fight between Armed IFP and ANC Militia's. He was 19.

Adolf Eichmann



10 December

- **1665** - The Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, founded by Michiel de Ruyter, was founded on this day.
- **1898** - The Treaty of Paris was signed between American and Spanish representatives following Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War. Under the treaty, the U.S. gained the Philippine Islands, the islands of Guam and Puerto Rico, and an agreement by Spain to withdraw from Cuba.
- **1899** - British General Gatacre is defeated in the Battle at Stormberg Junction by the Republican forces under Chief Commandant J.H. Olivier. This is the first of three serious British setbacks known as Black Week.
- **1941** - During World War II, British Battleships Repulse and Prince of Wales were sunk by Japanese warplanes in the South China Sea, kill-

- ing nearly 800 crewmen.
- **1941** - Guam surrenders to a Japanese landing force after a two day battle.
- **1975** - Rifleman Thom Du Toit Lotze from 2 SAI was Killed in Action in a contact with Cuban Forces during Ops Savannah. He was 19.
- **1975** - Sapper Udo Kneed von Schmettau from 2 Field Engineer Regiment was Killed in Action during Ops Savannah. He was 19.
- **1976** - Lance Corporal Marthinus Petrus Pearson from 3 SAI was killed when his Buffel Troop Carrier overturned in Northern Owamboland. He was 19.
- **1978** - Private Hendrik Stephanus Willem Engelbrecht from the South African Medical Corps Training Centre was killed in a Military Vehicle Accident in Northern Owamboland. He was 21.
- **1978** - Rifleman Mark Steven Taylor from Infantry School was critically injured in a private motor vehicle accident near Calitzdorp. He was 19.
- **1983** - Rifleman Richard Barrington from 6 SAI was shot dead when a fellow soldier accidentally mistook him for an insurgent during an ambush. He was 19.
- **1983** - Lieutenant Robert Ernest Byron from Infantry School was killed in a private motor vehicle accident near Hartenbos. He was 23.
- **1988** - Sapper Christiaan Andre de Goede from 2

Field Engineer Regiment was killed when his military vehicle overturned near Nelspruit. He was 18.

- **1992** - Troops open fire on a truckload of Somalis who barrel through a French checkpoint, killing two and injuring seven in the first bloodshed of the U.S.-led military mission in Somalia.
- **2010** - For the first time since World War II, a German infantry battalion paraded in a French city, at Strasbourg, to mark the formation of a Franco-German combat brigade.
- **2011** - Henry Lafont, last French veteran pilot of the Battle of Britain, dies aged 91.

11 December

- **1845** - The first Anglo-Sikh War in India began as the Sikhs attacked British colonial forces. The Sikhs were defeated after four battles. Part of the Punjab region of northwestern India was then annexed by the British.
- **1878** - Sir Bartle Frere, new British High Commissioner, delivers an ultimatum to Cetewayo, Zulu chief, to disband his army, hand over certain offenders and receive a British resident. This led to the war between Britain and Zululand.
- **1899** - The British under Methuen attempt to advance and are defeated by the Boers under Cronje as the Battle of Magersfontein,

one of the most decisive battles of the war, starts. Apart from the dead and wounded, many hundreds, especially the killed Scots, are rendered medical casualties through exposure and serious sunburn.

- **1937** - Italy withdraws from League of Nations.
- **1940** - British capture Sidi Barrani, Egypt, from Italians.
- **1941** - US submarines commence war patrols against Japanese shipping
- **1941** - A major turning point in World War II occurred as Japan's Axis partners, Italy and Germany, both declared war on the United States. The U.S. Congress immediately declared war on them. President Roosevelt then made the defeat of Hitler the top priority, devoting nearly 90 percent of U.S. military resources to the war in Europe.
- **1960** - Black Sunday: Anti-French Riot in Algiers, 114 die.
- **1975** - Sapper Alfred Robert Willemse from 2 Field Engineer Regiment Died of Wounds in the Battle of Bridge 14 during Operation Savannah. He was 19.
- **1977** - Two members of 11 Commando Regiment Died of Wounds when their Buffel vehicle detonated a boosted Yugoslavian TMA-3 Cheese Mine. They were: Corporal Mark Anthony Wilcox (19). Rifleman Daniel Louis Buys (19).

- **1978** - Lance Corporal Vivian Charles Evert from 5 SAI was accidentally killed while doing a recovery of a broken down pantry Bedford near Glencoe. He was 19.
- **1982** - Lance Corporal Johnny Alvern Booysen from the South African Cape Corps was accidentally drowned at Rundu during an off-duty excursion. He was 21.
- **1982** - Rifleman Paul Labuschagne from 8 SAI was killed at Eenhana when struck by a bullet from an accidental discharge of a fellow soldier's rifle. He was 19.
- **1983** - Signaller Gary Bresler from 2 Signals Regiment was killed instantly after being struck by lightning during a training exercise at Sabie. He was 23.
- **1983** - Lieutenant Eugene Werner Nel from the Infantry School was killed in a private motor vehicle accident near Oudtshoorn. He was 24.
- **1984** - Captain Carel Petrus van der Merwe Brand from Sector 30 was killed in a military vehicle accident on the Kamanjab to Erwee Road in South West Africa. He was 34.
- **1984** - Sapper D.A. van Wyk from 1 SWA Engineer Regiment, attached to 102 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in the Koakoveld. He was 18.

- **1990** - Private Rudi van Rooyen from the Ordnance Service School was accidentally killed at Bloemhof while refueling a convoy en route to Cape Town when he was run over by a diesel bunker vehicle. He was 21
- **1994** - Russia sent tanks and troops into Chechnya to end the rebel territory's three-year drive for independence.

12 December

- **1899** - The Battle of Magersfontein continues. At about midday the British retire to their camp at Modder River.
- **1899** - Winston Churchill climbs over the yard wall of the State Model School in Pretoria where he has been imprisoned and walks to the Eastern railway line where he jumps a train to Lourenço Marques.
- **1900** - During the Second Anglo-Boer War Britain announces in London that more than 11,000 British soldiers have already been killed.
- **1917** - French troop train derailed in the Alps, killing 543.
- **1940** - British troops capture Sidi el-Barrani.
- **1941** - British decide to abandon northern Malaya.
- **1941** - Germans begin house-by-house search for Jews in Paris.
- **1941** - Japanese invade Burma.

- **1975** - Rifleman David Hercules Dewald Marais from 2 SAI Died of Wounds received in action on 10 December 1975 in a contact with a Cuban Patrol during Ops Savannah. He was 18.
- **1979** - Rifleman Johannes Jacobus Fourie from 5 SAI was Killed in Action during a 20 minute contact with a numerically superior force of 181 heavily armed SWAPO/PLAN insurgents near the Cut-line. He was 20.
- **1980** - 2nd Lieutenant Arthur Eduard De Villiers from 3 SAI was killed instantly at Ondangwa during a thunderstorm when lightning struck a tent pole while he was holding onto the tent pole chain. He was 20.
- **1980** - Rifleman Gary Lang from 61 Mech Battalion was killed in a private motor vehicle accident while on pass. He was 19.
- **1992** - Rifleman Sabelo Lukhozi from 21 Battalion was attacked and stabbed



Franklin D. Roosevelt

to death by persons unknown while on foot patrol in Soweto. He was 24.

13 December

- **1862** - During the American Civil War, the Battle of Fredericksburg occurred in Virginia as the Union Army of the Potomac under General Burnside suffered a costly defeat, losing 12,653 men after 14 frontal assaults on well entrenched Rebels on Marye's Heights. "We might as well have tried to take hell," a Union soldier remarked. Confederate losses were 5,309. "It is well that war is so terrible - we should grow too fond of it," stated Confederate General Robert E. Lee during the fighting.
- **1880** - The First Anglo-Boer War (Transvaal War of Independence) begins.
- **1899** - On this night a bedraggled Winston Churchill knocks on the door of the manager of Delagoa Bay Collier, pleading for something to eat after his escape from Pretoria the night before. The manager, John Howard, hides him in the underground stables of the mine, and slips him into a goods truck destined for Lorenzo Marques six days later, from where he sails to Durban to enjoy a rousing welcome as hero.
- **1916** - Avalanches kill 10,000 Austrian & Italian troops in 24 hrs in the Tyrol.
- **1916** - French chief of staff Josef Joffre replaced by

Robert Nivelle.

- **1918** - The first US occupation troops cross the Rhine to enter Germany.
- **1937** - The beginning of one of the worst atrocities of World War II as the Chinese city of Nanking (Nanjing) was captured by the Japanese. Over the next six weeks, the Rape of Nanking occurred in which Japanese soldiers randomly attacked, raped and indiscriminately killed an estimated 200,000 Chinese persons.
- **1939** - Battle of the Rio de La Plata: three British cruisers defeat the German pocket battleship 'Graf Spee'.
- **1941** - British and Canadian troops abandon the mainland portions of Hong Kong.
- **1945** - The "Beast of Belsen" Josef Kramer (39), the "Bitch of Belsen" Irma Grese (22), and six other Belsen war criminals, hanged on this day.
- **1969** - Britain announces agreement to withdraw all its forces from Libya within next few months.
- **1976** - Lance Corporal William Hendrik Boucher from 95 Tactical Airfield Unit (Later Air Force Base Ondangwa) was part of the SAAF Guard detail on the Base when a fire broke out in one of the tents in the Air Force camp area. While assisting to put out the fire, the heat of the flames caused a fire extinguisher to explode, killing him instantly. He was 22.

- **1977** - Candidate Officer Gerard Genis from 4 Squadron was killed at Lanseria shortly after take-off in his Atlas MB326KM Impala Mk II when the radio compartment panel opened in flight causing the aircraft to roll inverted out of control. He was 19.
- **1985** - Rifleman J.N. Hamukwaya from 202 Battalion SWATF died in the Rundu State Hospital from injuries received when his Buffel Troop Carrier overturned near Rundu. He was 23.
- **1987** - Rifleman John Marcus Bothma from the South African Cape Corps was killed in a private vehicle accident at Usakos. He was 20.
- **1988** - Rifleman Alfred Mahlakwane from 116 Battalion was killed in a military vehicle accident at Pietersburg. He was 22.
- **1988** - Private Jacob Janse from 6 Maintenance Unit was admitted to 3 Military Hospital in Bloemfontein suffering from liver cancer. He succumbed to the disease on 13 December 1988. He was 22.
- **1988** - Angola, Cuba, and South Africa end eight months of negotiations under US mediation for a settlement in South West Africa by signing a protocol in Brazzaville, the Congo, thereby ensuring independence for the territory. The final signing took place at UN

headquarters in New York on 22 December.

- **1991** - North and South Korea signed a treaty of reconciliation and non-aggression which also formally ended the Korean War, although actual fighting had ceased in 1953.
- **2003** - US troops find Iraqi Dictator Saddam Hussein in a hole in the ground.

14 December

- **1799** - George Washington died at Mount Vernon.
- **1896** - World War II General James Doolittle was born in Alameda, California. On April 18, 1942, he led a squadron of B-25 bombers launched from the aircraft carrier Hornet to conduct the first American air raid of the war against mainland Japan. He also headed the Eighth Air Force during the Normandy invasion and was awarded the Medal of Honour.
- **1901** - Reports reach London of the large number of deaths in South African concentration camps during the Second Anglo-Boer War.
- **1939** - The Soviet Union (Population 181 million) "defends" itself by attacking Finland (2 million).
- **1939** - The League of Nations expelled Soviet Russia for its aggression against Finland.
- **1939** - Norwegian politician Vidkun Quisling meets Hitler for the first time, in Berlin, and offers to betray his

country to the Nazis.

- **1941** - Japanese forces in Malaya occupy Gurun & Kroh.
- **1970** - Field Marshal Viscount Slim, Defender of India, Liberator of Burma, dies at the age of 79.
- **1979** - Two members from 5 SAI were Killed in Action near Nkongo when their Platoon was ambushed by a numerically superior force of SWAPO/PLAN insurgents near a village waterhole. The casualties were: Rifleman Willie Jacobus Applegryn (19). Rifleman Daniel Jacobus Victor (19).
- **1981** - Sapper Jan Adriaan Crous from 25 Field Engineer Squadron was Killed in Action while driving a Buffel Troop Carrier when the vehicle detonated a boosted Soviet TMA-3 Cheese mine on Oom Willie se Pad. He was 20.
- **1981** - Rifleman Fernando Chameia from 32 Battalion was Killed in Action in a landmine explosion on the road between Ongiva and Chiede during operations in Southern Angola. He was 27.
- **1981** - Signaller Abraham Johannes Nortje from SALNET accidentally drowned while crossing a river during a foot patrol near the Cutline. He was 29.
- **1984** - Rifleman Theodore Marais from North West

Command was killed after being accidentally run over by a military vehicle while at Potchefstroom. He was 20.

- **1995** - A Bosnian peace treaty was signed in Paris by leaders from the former Yugoslavia. The treaty ended Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

15 December

- **1815** - The Slagtersnek rebels are tried in the Uithenhage landdrost court. One is reprieved by Lord Charles Somerset, the other, Cornelis Faber (43), Stefanus Cornelis Botma (43), his brother Abraham Carel Botma (29), Hendrik Frederik Prinsloo (32) and Theunis de Klerk, are sentenced to death.
- **1890** - Sioux leader Sitting Bull (native name Tatan-ka-yatanka) was killed in a skirmish with U.S. soldiers along the Grand River in South Dakota as his warriors tried to prevent his arrest.
- **1899** - The British under General Redvers Buller make a frontal attack in the



Saddam Hussein

Battle of Colenso aimed at relieving the besieged town of Ladysmith. The action fails and the British lose over 1,100 men, including Lieutenant Freddy Roberts, only son of Field-Marshal Lord Frederick Roberts. Eight Boers die and thirty are wounded. This third straight defeat of British troops, which began at Stormberg on December 10, brings "Black Week" to an end.

- **1938** - General Jan Kemp, acting SA minister of defence, announces during the Voortrekkereuefes festivities that Robertshoogte in Pretoria will in future be known as Voortrekkerhoogte.
- **1941** - USS 'Swordfish' (SS-193) becomes 1st US sub to sink a Japanese ship.
- **1943** - The Battle of San Pietro took place during World War II as a German panzer battalion devastated American forces trying to take the 700-year-old Italian village.
- **1961** - Nazi SS-Colonel Adolf Eichmann was sentenced to death in Jerusalem for his role in the Holocaust. Eichmann had organized the deportation of Jews from all over occupied Europe to Nazi death camps.
- **1976** - Corporal Timothy Gilmore Conway from Regiment Algoa Bay was Killed in Action after suffering multiple shrapnel wounds when his Temporary Base near Oshikango came under heavy enemy mortar attack.

He was 23.

- **1978** - Corporal Thomas Davis from 2 Parachute Regiment was accidentally killed in the Operational Area when struck by a bullet resulting from an accidental discharge of a fellow soldiers rifle. He was 24.
- **1980** - Rifleman Anthony Uytenbogaardt from 1 SAI was killed when his civilian motor vehicle was involved in a head-on collision with another vehicle. He was 19.
- **1981** - Lance Corporal Jeremiah Richards from 8 SAI was killed in Northern Kavangoland when the Buffel Troop Carrier in which he was traveling, overturned and he was crushed under the vehicle. He was 19.
- **1984** - Two members from 1 SWA Engineer Regiment SWATF were killed when their Buffel Troop Carrier overturned in Northern Owamboland. They were: Sapper G.J. Bock (18). Sapper J.P. Isaacs (18).
- **1989** - Mercenary coup in Comoros gives up power after twenty-one days. The mercenary leader and ex-presidential bodyguard, Bob Denard, attempted to create a 'pirate kingdom' after the assassination of president Ahmed Abderrahman Abdallah.
- **1989** - The dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet ended in Chile. Pinochet had come to power in 1973 after a military overthrow of the democratically elected gov-

ernment.

16 December

- **1653** - Following the defeat of King Charles I in the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell, leader of the Parliamentary forces, was declared Lord Protector of England.
- **1773** - The Boston Tea Party occurred as colonial activists disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded British ships anchored in Boston Harbor and dumped 342 containers of expensive tea into the water.
- **1838** - In the Battle of Blood River, a Voortrekker commando of 470 men, under leadership of Andries Pretorius, is attacked at Ncome River (later called Blood River) by an army of Zulu King Dingane. About 3,000 Zulus are killed. This day was first commemorated by the Afrikaner community as Dingaan's Day and later as Day of the Covenant.
- **1880** - The first shots in the First Anglo-Boer War are fired in Potchefstroom. The war ended with the defeat of the British in the battle of Amajuba, on 27 February 1881.
- **1900** - The second Republican invasion of the Cape Colony starts under Commandant P.H. Kritzinger and General J.B.M. Hertzog.
- **1913** - The Women's Memorial is unveiled in Bloemfontein, to commemorate

26,251 women and children who died during the Second Anglo-Boer War, mainly in British concentration camps.

- **1914** - German battlecruisers shell the British resort towns of Scarborough and Hartlepool.
- **1941** - Dan Pienaar gains distinction in an attack on the Italian outpost of El Wak and is awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).
- **1944** - American big-band leader Glenn Miller disappeared in a small plane over the English Channel and was presumably killed. Best remembered for Moonlight Serenade and In the Mood.
- **1944** - During World War II in Europe, the Battle of the Bulge began as the Germans launched a big counter-offensive in the Ardennes Forest along a 75-mile front, taking American troops by surprise. Aided by foggy, snowy weather, the Germans penetrated 104 kilometres into Allied lines by the end of December. The German advance was eventually halted by Montgomery on the Meuse and Patton at Bastogne. As the weather cleared, Allied aircraft attacked German ground forces and supply lines and the counter-offensive failed. There were an estimated 77,000 Allied and 130,000 German casualties.
- **1944** - German V-2 rocket strikes Antwerp theatre. 638 are killed.

• **1956** - UN troops occupy Port Said, Suez Canal Zone, following the abortive Tripartite Invasion.

- **1961** - Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), formed since June 1961 under leadership of Nelson Mandela, performs its first acts of sabotage by attacking post offices and other buildings in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban.
- **1963** - Able Seaman Johannes Hendrik Jordaan from SAS President Steyn was critically injured in a private motor vehicle accident between Colesberg and Phillipolis. He was admitted to the Bloemfontein Hospital where he later succumbed to his injuries. He was 23.
- **1971** - Pakistan accepts an armistice, ending the Bangladesh Liberation War and Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.
- **1979** - Rifleman Arrie Zagarias Greyling from 5 SAI was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 20.
- **1982** - Signaller Daniel Andries Barnard from 2 Signal Regiment was killed in a private motor vehicle accident, in Pretoria. He was 23.

17 December

- **1920** - South Africa receives the League of Nations man-

date over South West Africa.

- **1963** - President Christophe Soglo is overthrown in a military coup in Dahomey, now Benin.
- **1965** - Eight members of the South African Cape Corps drowned during a sea training exercise when their light surface craft was hit by a freak wave and capsized in Kalkbay. They were: Rifleman Piet Rittles (25). Rifleman Harden Classen Presence (36). Rifleman Jacobus Newing (22). Rifleman Mattheus Willem Joubert (24). Rifleman Harry Harris (33). Rifleman Jacobus Gideon Farmer (32). Rifleman Frikie Braaf (24). Rifleman Jacobus Abraham Arnolds (20).
- **1968** - The first rocket to be wholly developed and manufactured in South Africa is successfully launched from the new rocket launching range at St. Lucia Bay on the east coast. The Minister

Glenn Miller



of Defence asserts that the rockets are defensive not offensive weapons.

- **1975** - Gunner Barend Hermanus Neethling from 4 Field Regiment was accidentally killed in Central Angola during Ops Savannah. He was 18.
- **1975** - Trooper Danie Anderson from 1 Special Service Battalion was accidentally killed during Operation Savannah. He was 19.
- **1979** - Rifleman Leon Pereira from 32 Battalion was Reported Missing after being attacked by a crocodile while swimming in the Kavango River near Buffalo. He was 20.
- **1981** - Sergeant Ronald Potgieter from Regiment De la Rey Died of Wounds resulting from an accidental mortar bomb explosion during a weapons demonstration in Northern Owamboland. He was 21.
- **1983** - Rifleman Daniel Chindumba from 201 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Southern Angola. He was 22.
- **1984** - Rifleman Lenas July from 201 Battalion SWATF was killed at Omega after being struck by a bullet resulting from an accidental discharge of a fellow soldier's rifle. He was 25.
- **1993** - American troops are pulled out of Somalia following a series of gun battles with Somali troops un-

der the command of General Mohammed Farah Aidid.

18 December

- **1899** - Field Marshal Lord Roberts is appointed British supreme commander in South Africa.
- **1916** - During World War I, the Battle of Verdun concluded after ten months of fighting in which 543,000 French and 434,000 German soldiers were killed.
- **1939** - Air Battle of Heligoland Bight: RAF bombers attempting to raid German naval bases suffer heavily at the hands of the Luftwaffe.
- **1940** - Adolf Hitler ordered the German General Staff to begin planning Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Soviet Russia.
- **1972** - Operation Linebacker: US begins "Christmas bombing" of North Vietnam.
- **1983** - During Ops Askari, ten members that were part of an Anti-Aircraft team deployed near Caiundu in Southern Angola were Killed in Action during a fierce fire-fight when their position was attacked by a numerically superior enemy force of more than 200 FAPLA troops. The casualties were: Lieutenant Keith Claassen (20). Sergeant Hendrik Albertus Oosthuysen (25). Rifleman Lourens Johannes Jansen van Rensburg (20). Rifleman Thomas Kakuru (20). Rifleman Ndara Diyerenge (20). Rifleman Alfred Ka-

munga (18). Rifleman Esau Mashika (20). Rifleman Hamat Hamutenya (22). Rifleman Aron Dikuwa (20). Rifleman Edward Moyo (20).

- **1985** - Rifleman Albert Hapera from 911 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN Insurgents. He was 19.
- **1988** - Commandant Ernestes Johannes Jacobus Brummer from the Northern Cape Command Headquarters died in the Kimberley Hospital after being critically injured in a private motor vehicle accident in Kimberley. He was 31.

19 December

- **1941** - Italian divers sink British BBs 'Queen Elizabeth' & 'Valiant' at Alexandria.
- **1942** - General Dan Pienaar is killed as his aircraft crashes into Lake Victoria at Kisumu while returning to South Africa. The suburbs Danville (Pretoria) and Dan Pienaar (Bloemfontein) have been named after him.
- **1942** - Guadalcanal: Malaria rate reaches 972 cases per 1,000 US troops.
- **1943** - Military coup in Bolivia.
- **1946** - War broke out in French Indochina as Ho Chi Minh attacked the French seeking to oust them from Vietnam. This marked the beginning of a thirty-year conflict which eventually led to heavy U.S. involve-

ment and ended with a Communist victory in April 1975 after U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam.

- **1964** - Air Mechanic Henri Martin Strydom from Air Force Base Ysterplaat was critically injured in a private motor vehicle accident on 17 Dec 1964. He was transferred to 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria where he sadly succumbed to his injuries on 19 December 1964. He was 18.
- **1976** - Corporal Benjamin Johannes Schoeman of Regiment Noord Natal Died of Wounds while on patrol along the Cut-line North of Ombalantu. He was 28.
- **1982** - Rifleman Terence Norman Fitzpatrick from 5 SAI was killed in a military vehicle accident at Ladysmith. He was 18.
- **1982** - Rifleman Shaline Lloyd Keen from Special Forces Headquarters was accidentally killed at the Headquarters while he was standing on the back of a Landrover and the vehicle overturned. He was thrown out of the vehicle and the vehicle rolled over him. He was 19.
- **1985** - Two members from 202 Battalion SWATF were killed when their Buffel Troop Carrier overturned near Omega. The casualties were: Rifleman Lenox Hipangua (20). Rifleman Benjamin Johannes Thomas (21).
- **1992** - President F. W. de

Klerk announces that he is either suspending or forcibly retiring 23 officers of the South African Defence Force, including two generals and four brigadiers for illegal or unauthorised activities and malpractice. He says further disciplinary action and possible criminal prosecution will follow pending the completion of the probe.

20 December

- **1852** - Sir George Cathcart, governor and commander-in-chief at the Cape (31 March 1852-26 May 1854), is defeated when he attacks Moshesh at Berea Mountain, Basutoland, with his force of 2 500 regular troops. He concluded peace in accordance with instructions from the British Colonial Office and returned to the Cape Colony.
- **1860** - South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union in a prelude to the American Civil War. Within two months Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas seceded. In April 1861, Virginia seceded, followed within five weeks by Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina, thus forming an eleven state Confederacy with a population of nine million, including nearly four million slaves. The Un-

ion had 21 states and a population of over 20 million.

- **1880** - The Battle of Bronkhorstspuit takes place, four days after the Transvaal War of Independence started, in which a detachment under British officer Col. P.R. Anstruter is cut to pieces by a commando led by Comdt. Frans Joubert: half of the force is killed and wounded and the rest taken prisoner.
- **1900** - The Kitchener memorandum concerning the implementation of concentration camps for Boer women and children is issued. Between 1900-1902 27,827 people, mostly women and children, were to die in these camps.
- **1914** - Josef Johannes (Jopie) Fourie, rebel commando leader during the 1914 Rebellion, is executed by a firing squad after being found guilty of high treason. His death caused an outrage in Afrikaans-speaking circles, and was a potent factor in the rise of the National Party.



Ho Chi Minh

- **1924** - Adolf Hitler is freed from prison, having served only part of his sentence for the "Beer Hall Putsch".
- **1935** - Italians are driven back to the Dembeguina Pass when Abyssinian troops cross the River Takaze.
- **1939** - Captain Hans Wilhelm Langsdorff, commander of the 'Graf Spee,' commits suicide at the age of 45.
- **1942** - First Japanese bombing of Calcutta.
- **1944** - Battle of Bastogne: Germans surround the American defenders, initiating a siege.
- **1958** - First successful test of the US Titan ICBM.
- **1965** - A re-organisation of the South African Defence Force replaces the General Staff with a body to be known as the 'Supreme Command' with the Commandant-General as Chairman and the Executive Commanders as members.
- **1979** - Rifleman Antonio Cahasa from 32 Battalion was accidentally killed during a follow-up patrol in Southern Angola when his Buffel Troop Carrier was involved in a collision with a Hyena vehicle. He was 33.
- **1985** - Six South Africans and three Lesotho nationals are killed in an attack for which the renegade Lesotho Liberation Army claims responsibility, while the Lesotho government blames SA.
- **1989** - The U.S. invaded Panama attempting to capture Manuel Noriega on charges of narcotics trafficking. Operation Just Cause occurred seven months after Noriega had declared unfavorable election results in his country to be null and void. The invasion toppled the Noriega government and resulted in the installation of Guillermo Endara as president. Noriega temporarily eluded capture, but surrendered a few weeks later to U.S. troops. He was then tried, convicted, and imprisoned in the U.S.

21 December

- **1832** - Egyptian forces rout Turkish army at Battle of Konieh.
- **1879** - Soviet Russia leader Josef Stalin was born in the village of Gori in Georgia, Russia. His original name was Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili.
- **1900** - The inaugural meeting of the Burgher Peace Committee is held in Pretoria. Lord Kitchener discusses his concentration camp policies with this group, mentioning that stock and Blacks would also be brought in. An estimated 14,100 Blacks were to die in these camps.
- **1941** - Japanese renew their attempt to capture Wake Island.
- **1945** - World War II General George Patton died in Germany following a car accident. He had been injured on

9 December near Mannheim and was taken to a hospital in Heidelberg where he died. He was buried in Luxembourg.

- **1964** - SA signs treaty with Great Britain on the supply of military equipment to South Africa.
- **1977** - Rifleman Stephen Victor Paul Devereaux from SWA SPES, SWATF died from a gunshot wound accidentally self-inflicted while he was serving at Okankolo in Northern Owamboland. He was 18.
- **1979** - Rifleman C. Kavatjana from the Hereroland Area Force Unit SWATF was accidentally shot and killed by own forces after being caught in cross-fire during a heavy contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Northern Owamboland. He was 25.
- **1979** - Peace agreement signed, ending seven-year Rhodesian guerrilla war and 15-year rebellion against the British crown.
- **1983** - Rifleman Gustav Carl Schönborn from the University of the Orange Free State Military Unit was killed when a military vehicle accidentally drove over him in very dusty conditions with poor visibility during anti-insurgent follow-up operations in Southern Angola. He was 21.
- **1988** - Pan American Flight 103 exploded in midair as the result of a terrorist bomb and crashed into Locker-

bie, Scotland. All 259 passengers and crew members along with 11 persons on the ground were killed.

- **2003** - The Sudanese government and rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Army reach a tentative deal to evenly divide the country's oil wealth as part of negotiations to end its 20-year-old civil war.

22 December

- **1880** - During the First Anglo-Boer War a three-month siege of Pretoria begins.
- **1894** - A French court martial convicts Alfred Dreyfus of treason on trumped up charges, triggering "The Dreyfus Affair".
- **1944** - Battle of the Bulge. General Anthony McAuliffe to a German ultimatum to surrender with the reply, "Nuts!". (See this month's Famous Figures in Military History).
- **1944** - Vietnamese Liberation Army is formed by Vo Nguyen Giap.
- **1956** - Last British and French troops leave Egypt.
- **1965** - Second military coup in Dahomey (now Benin) is led by Colonel Christophe Soglo.
- **1977** - Rifleman David Herculaas Wilters from 4 SAI Died of Wounds in Northern Owamboland. He was 18.
- **1977** - Lieutenant Kurt Gagliano from 101 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Ac-

tion during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents near the Cut-Line. He was 21.

- **1982** - Private Pieter Johannes Jordaan from 92 Ammunition Depot was killed in a private motorcycle accident near Witbank while off duty. He was 30.
- **1988** - South Africa signs an accord granting independence to South-West Africa. Angola, Cuba, and South Africa end eight months of negotiations under US mediation for a settlement in South-Western Africa by signing a formal treaty at UN headquarters in New York, after signing a protocol earlier in December.
- **1989** - Private Johannes Bornman from the North West Command Workshops, Technical Service Corps, died in 1 Military Hospital after suffering a brain aneurysm. He was 20.
- **1990** - Rifleman Michael Charles Muller from the South African Cape Corps died at Umgababa from a gunshot wound, accidentally self-inflicted. He was 19.

23 December

- **1910** - German SS General Kurt "Panzer" Meyer was born on this day.
- **1941** - British troops capture Benghazi, Libya.
- **1943** - General Montgomery, commander of the Al-

lied forces in North Africa, is advised that he will be appointed commandant for D-day.

- **1948** - Hideki Tojo was hanged for war crimes. He had been Japanese prime minister from 1941-44. Following Japan's defeat in World War II, he was arrested as a war criminal, tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to death. He was hanged along with six other Japanese wartime military leaders at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo, with the sentence carried out by the U.S. 8th Army.
- **1968** - North Korea releases 82 crewmen of the USS 'Pueblo' (AGER-2), held since January.
- **1971** - Private Hendrik Roos from the Air Force Gymnasium was killed in a private motorcycle accident at Honeydew in Johannesburg. He was 17.
- **1975** - Two members from 14 Field Regiment attached to Battle Group Orange



Hideki Tojo

during Ops Savannah were Killed in Action when their artillery gun position received a direct hit from a salvo of 122mm Soviet BM-21 Katyusha rockets. The casualties were: Gunner Glen Martin Felix Muller (18). Gunner Matthys Jacobus Theunissen (18).

- **1975** - Sergeant (Flight Engineer) Pieter van Rensburg from 17 Squadron SAAF was killed while serving in Rhodesia when his Alouette III Helicopter crashed after flying into High Tension overhead Power Lines. He was 22.
- **1976** - Lieutenant Christiaan Johan Swart from 32 Battalion was Killed in Action after breaking his neck when his Unimog overturned after detonating a landmine just outside Elundu. He was 23.
- **1980** - Rifleman Ivan Shipago from 101 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents near the Cut-line. He was 25.
- **1983** - Rifleman Simon Petrus Jurgens Du Toit from the Kimberley Regiment was killed in a private motor vehicle Accident, at Warren-ton. He was 21.
- **1985** - Five civilians were killed and forty injured in a bomb explosion in the Sanlam shopping centre in Amanzimtoti, Natal South Coast. Umkhonto we Siswe (MK) cadre Andrew Sibubiso Zondo, who detonated

the explosive in a rubbish bin, was executed by hanging in 1986.

- **1986** - Rifleman Peter James from 202 Battalion SWATF was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN Insurgents. He was 19.
- **1989** - Lance Corporal Samuel Athol Ellis from Regiment Bloemspruit was accidentally killed after being struck by a bullet during a shooting incident at Nkongo Base. He was 20.
- **2013** - Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov, the man that designed the AK-47, dies at the age of 94.

24 December

- **1914** - The first-ever German air raid against Britain took place when a German monoplane dropped a single bomb on Dover, England, during World War I.
- **1914** - World War I. Along sections of the Western Front, British and German troops declare an unofficial Christmas truce.
- **1941** - Manila is heavily bombed by Japanese aircraft.
- **1942** - The first surface-to-surface guided missile, later known as the V-1 Flying Bomb, was launched by German rocket engineer Wernher von Braun. Called "Buzz Bombs" for the loud buzzing sound of their motor, they were used by Nazi Germany against Britain beginning in September 1944.

- **1943** - General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force preparing for D-Day.
- **1976** - Private Philip Lindsay Backhouse from 16 Maintenance Unit was killed when the civilian motorcycle he had borrowed, was involved in an accident. He was 19.
- **1976** - Private Hermanus Jakobus van der Westhuizen from 13 Maintenance was killed in a military vehicle accident at the Letaba Training Area. He was 18.
- **1976** - Sergeant Stephen Graham van Biljon from Central Flying School Dunottar died after suffering a fatal heart attack at the Base. He was 38.
- **1978** - Sergeant Abrie Pieter De Man from 2 SAI was killed in a military vehicle accident in Kavangoland. He was 20.
- **1980** - Signaller Thomas Arnold Du Toit from the Orange Free State Command Died of Wounds after being accidentally shot in a friendly fire incident near Ruacana. He was 21.
- **1980** - German admiral & führer Karl Dönitz dies at the age of 89.
- **1981** - Rifleman Karel Theunissen from the South African Cape Corps was Killed in Action after his Buffel Troop Carrier detonated a Landmine while on patrol in Northern Owamboland. He was 19.
- **1983** - Trooper Johan van

- **1987** - Rifleman Pieter Breytenbach from 44 Parachute Regiment was Reported Missing during a parachuting exercise at Komatipoort after he was seen to land in the Crocodile River. Despite an intensive search, his body was never located and he has no known grave. He was 22.

25 December

- **1901** - During the Battle of Tweefontein, (also Groenkop or Krismiskop) General De Wet surprises British soldiers. At least fifty-seven of them are killed. De Wet takes the unwounded soldiers (about 120) with him to put them across the Basutoland border a few days later.
- **1941** - British-Canadian garrison of Hong Kong surrenders to the Japanese 38th Division.
- **1977** - Rifleman Michael Nicolaas Beukes from 4 SAI was critically wounded during a fierce contact that took place between Beacon 9 & 10. He was 18.
- **1979** - Private Ronald Atkins from 2 Military Base Management was killed in a Military Vehicle Accident, at Grootfontein. He was 20.
- **1981** - Rifleman Funa Dala

- **1985** - The Six-day War between Mali and Algeria over the disputed Agacher strip starts.
- **2016** - Airplane crash in the Black Sea kills 92, including the Russian Army Chorus.

26 December

- **1862** - The first US navy hospital ship, 'Red Rover' commissioned, with four Catholic nuns serving as nurses.
- **1893** - Mao Tse-Tung was born in Hunan Province, China.
- **1900** - The Battle of Greylingstad takes place when Commandant Buys attacks the South Rand mine, near Greylingstad. Part of the guard is cut off and has to surrender, but the burghers are forced to retreat when the main column arrives.
- **1915** - The German gunboat, the Kingani, is captured by the British on Lake Tanganyika. It is removed by portage through the jungle of the Belgian Congo.
- **1916** - Joseph Joffre is made a Marshal of France.
- **1943** - Battle of North Cape: The Scharnhorst is

- sunk by the Royal Navy.
- **1944** - Battle of the Bulge: US 4th Armored Div relieves Bastogne.
- **1944** - The Red Army surrounds Budapest.
- **1972** Former US President Harry S Truman dies at the age of 88.
- **1975** - Cariango, Angola is taken by Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, (MPLA, Popular Liberation Movement of Angola) guerrillas.
- **1987** - Private Andre Johan van Niekerk from 1 Maintenance Unit died of pneumonia at 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria. He was 18.
- **2006** - Former naval officer and US President Gerald R. Ford dies at the age of 93.

27 December

- **1838** - In the Battle of the White Umfolozi, the Voortrekker commando is ambushed and nearly overpowered by a Zulu impi. Alexander Harvey Biggar, among others, is killed in the running fight.



Mikhail Kalashnikov

- **1922** - The Imperial Japanese Navy commissions the 'Hôshô', the first purpose-built carrier to enter service in any navy.
- **1941** - British Commandos raid Vaagso, Norway.
- **1944** - B-29s from Saipan make their fifth major raid on Tokyo.
- **1956** - 5,580 Egyptian prisoners of war are exchanged for four Israelis held by Egypt.
- **1960** - France detonates its third atomic device in the Sahara.
- **1977** - Two members from the 1st Battalion Regiment Bloemspruit and one member from the Bronkhorst-spruit Commando were killed when their Unimog vehicle skidded off the road and overturned in wet weather while traveling on the Rundu to Bagani Road. They were: Sergeant Andries (23). Lance Corporal Barend Frederick Wiese (26). Rifleman Leon Myburgh (27).
- **1979** - Soviets invade Afghanistan, initiating a disastrous nine-year war that opens the country to a Taliban takeover.
- **1980** - Two members from 101 Battalion SWATF were accidentally shot dead in Northern Owamboland by members of a 53 Battalion Patrol who mistook them for SWAPO/PLAN insurgents. They were: Rifleman Phillipus Elifas (20). Rifleman Elias Philipus (21).
- **1983** - Rifleman Teixeira Manganhes from 32 Battalion burnt to death when Aerospatiale SA330C/H Puma struck trees and crashed during a take-off near Cassinga while carrying out trooping during Ops Askari. He was 31.
- **1983** - Rifleman Shawn Pretorius from 4 SAI Died of multiple shrapnel wounds received in an accidental hand grenade explosion inside a Ratel while in Southern Angola during Ops Askari. He was 18.
- **1996** - A genocide trial began concerning the killing of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda. In 1994, a bloody civil war had broken out between the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. After the Hutu army seized power it had waged a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against the Tutsi population.
- **2012** - General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of the US Army during "Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm", dies at the age of 78.

28 December

- **1901** - Commandant Gideon Scheepers is found guilty on several charges by a British court martial and sentenced to death. He professes his innocence to the end.
- **1921** - The Rand Revolt begins with a strike by miners after announcements

of wage reductions on the gold-mines necessitated by the depression following WWI.

- **1950** - Korea: Chinese troops cross 38th Parallel.
- **1962** - UN troops occupy Elizabethstad, Katanga.
- **1971** - Ordinary Seaman Johannes Petrus Gerhardus Botha from SAS Simonsberg was killed in a private motor vehicle accident. He was 18.
- **1983** - Trooper Norman Walter Niemand from 1 Special Service Battalion attached to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group, was Killed in Action in Southern Angola. He was 19.

29 December

- **1895** - Leander Starr Jameson crosses the border into Transvaal, leading about five hundred hand-picked policemen of the Chartered Company on their way to Johannesburg.
- **1900** - The Battle of Helvetia near Machadodorp takes place, with the British under Major Cotton surrendering to General Ben Viljoen. Major Cotton is fatally wounded.
- **1940** - During the Blitz, German aircraft dropped thousands of incendiary bombs on the centre of London, causing the worst fire damage since the great fire of 1666. St. Paul's Cathedral survived but eight other Wren churches along with the Guildhall and Old

Bailey were badly damaged.

- **1941** - First Japanese air raid on Corregidor.
- **1965** - During the Vietnam War, North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh rejected unconditional peace talks offered by the U.S.
- **1981** - Rifleman James Clark Cromhout from 2 Parachute Battalion was Killed in Action during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents in Southern Angola. He was 23.
- **1983** - Rifleman Jacobus Johannes Adonis from the South African Cape Corps was Killed in Action in Northern Owamboland during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN insurgents. He was 20.
- **1983** - Corporal Sarel Johannes Reynders from 3 Squadron was killed in a private motorcycle accident, in Pretoria. He was 21.
- **1983** - Private Johan Coghill from the South African Medical Corps was killed in a military vehicle accident at De Doorns. He was 20.
- **1983** - Commodore Dieter Gerhardt, former commanding officer of the Simons Town naval base, and his wife Ruth Gerhardt, are sentenced to life imprisonment and ten years' imprisonment respectively, being found guilty of high treason on charges of spying for the Soviet Union.
- **1992** - Rifleman Abraham Mohlolo Khoathela from

44 Parachute Regiment was killed in a military vehicle accident at the Soweto off-ramp while traveling on the Potchefstroom Road. He was 24.

30 December

- **1900** - Battleships are sent to Tangiers by the Spanish government as the first part of its intended invasion of Morocco.
- **1935** - Italian bombers destroy a Swedish Red Cross unit in Ethiopia.
- **1959** - USS 'George Washington' (SSBN-598) is commissioned, the first ballistic missile sub.
- **1972** - US President Richard Nixon halts bombing of North Vietnam & announces peace talks.
- **1975** - Major Hendrik Matthee from the School of Armour suffered a fatal heart attack while on duty at Grootfontein. He was 38.
- **1976** - Corporal Peter Vaughan Phipson from the Equestrian Regiment Died of Wounds in 1 Military Hospital after being critically wounded near Okatopi. He was 19.
- **1987** - The Transkei military, under General Bantu Holomisa, overthrows the administration of Stella Sigcau of the Transkei.
- **1988** - Airman Johan Nicolaas Nel from the 70 Mobile Radar Unit was acci-

dentally electrocuted while serving at 140 Squadron, AFB Ondangwa. He was 19.

- **1989** - Private Douglas Emmanuël De Freitas from 72 Motorised Brigade Headquarters was killed instantly while on guard duty at the Brigade Headquarters when he was struck by a bullet resulting from an accidental discharge from a fellow soldier's rifle. He was 19.
- **2006** - Saddam Hussein is hanged at the age of 69.

31 December

- **1967** - Prime Minister B.J. Vorster warns that the government would re-assess the Simon's Town agreement during 1968. This reaction follows the British government's decision to maintain the South African arms embargo.
- **1971** - Sergeant Petrus Johannes Engelbrecht from 1 Special Service Battalion Died of Wounds received in an accidental hand grenade explosion while serving in



Mikhail Kalashnikov

the Caprivi Strip. Eleven others were also injured in the same incident. He was 21.

- **1975** - Rifleman Michael Lenin van der Schyff from the Equestrian Regiment was accidentally killed when struck by a bullet resulting from an accidental discharge of a fellow soldier's rifle. He was 19.
- **1976** - Rifleman Jacobus Abraham Visser from Infantry School was killed when he accidentally fell from a horse and broke his neck. He was 18.
- **1981** - In his second military coup, Jerry Rawlings overthrows the government of President Hilla Limann in Ghana.
- **1982** - Lance Corporal André Christiaan Weideman from 6 SAI was killed when his Buffel Troop Carrier

overturned on the Oshakati to Ruacana road. He was 20.

- **1983** - 2nd Lieutenant Pieter Marcus Liebenberg from 4 SAI was Killed in Action near Cuvelai in Southern Angola during Ops Askari. He was 21.
- **1983** - Three Members from 4 SAI attached to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group were Killed in Action during Ops Askari in Southern Angola. They were: Rifleman Gabriel Pieter le Roux (18). Rifleman Derick John Schröner (18). Rifleman Mathys Cornelius Smit (18).
- **1983** - Rifleman Johan Car-el Fourie from Regiment Groot Karoo, attached to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group was Killed in Action during Ops Askari. He was 21.

- **1983** - The Nigerian civil government of President Shehu Shagari is overthrown in a fourth, bloodless, military coup led by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari. He was declared Head of State on 2 January 1984.
- **1986** - Trooper Peter Matthews from 1 Special Service Battalion, attached to 32 Battalion contracted cerebral malaria while deployed in Southern Angola. He was evacuated to 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria where he unfortunately succumbed to the illness. He was 20.
- **1993** - Staff Sergeant R. Nieuhaus from 44 Parachute Regiment was accidentally killed when his parachute failed to open during a practice free-fall jump. He was 32.

1940 London Blitz



SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

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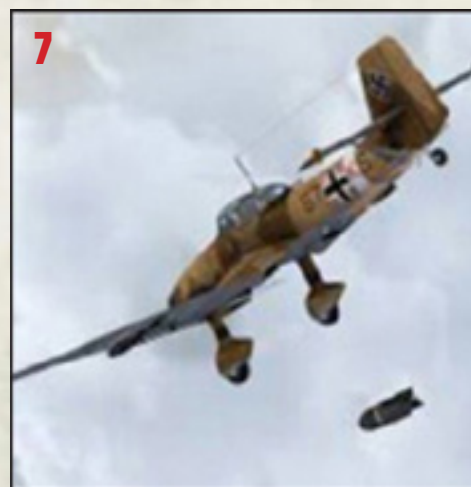




Nicknames

1. Honey tank.
2. Adolf Galland.
3. Stonewall.
4. M4 Sherman. The British named it the 'Ronson' after a cigarette lighter because they said it "lights up first time, every time" when hit.
5. British Field Marshall Douglas Haig.
6. The Nebelwerfer Rocket Launcher.
7. Junkers Ju 87.
8. General George S. Patton Jr.
9. 101st Airborne Division.
10. Bubi (A German word meaning "young boy" or "kid".)
11. Stalin Organ.
12. Grease Gun.
13. Mike Hoare.
14. Adolph Malan.
15. Jimmy.
16. White Death.
17. The potato masher or the stick grenade.
18. Thompson submachine gun or Tommy Gun.
19. The Dam Busters.
20. Vorster Orrel.
21. Der rote Kampfflieger - the Red Battle-Flyer.
22. Dad's Army.
23. The Red Devils.
24. Eland 60 armoured car.

25. Bohemian Corporal.
26. H. Norman Swartzkopf.



Useful links

Every month we will be featuring a few useful links to military websites, newsletters and on-line 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

"Things don't have to change the world to be important."

Steve Jobs



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Have you checked out the bookshelf on the website? Here you can open and read individual articles on screen with no need to download anything.

You will find articles on numerous different topics that have been published over the past two years as well as video clips and documentaries.

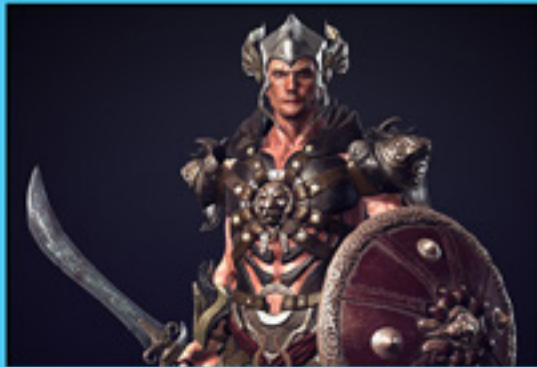
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