

CESSNA 152 for the SAAF MUSEUM



In a constant endeavour to display a balanced history, which would represent the full facet of its rich aviation heritage, the SAAF Museum recently obtained a CESSNA 152 for static display purposes.

Many would frown upon this latest arrival, it not being of truly military class, but this type of aircraft represents a unique part of African aviation history.

AVIATORS IN NIGERIA 1977

In 1976 a decision was taken by Azanian People Liberation Army (APLA) High Command, Central Committee and the Military Commission to train Aviators. A group of 22 cadres were identified and sent to the Nigerian Civil Aviation Training Centre at Zaria in Nigeria, where 14 Pilots, 4 Aircraft Electronic- and 4 Aircraft Engineers were trained.

Many eventually went on to serve in the South African Air Force after 1994 and have risen to the most senior management positions within the SAAF and SANDF.

The CESSNA 150 aircraft; one of the most proven ab-initio trainers; were utilized by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Training Centre at Zaria. It was on this type of aircraft that the fourteen pilots of this group received their initial flying training.

MK / APLA DISPLAY

The need for more sizeable artifacts, especially representative aircraft types was recognized.

A disposed of Cessna 152; very similar in appearance to the Cessna 150; was identified and obtained for the museum.

*Captain L. Steyn
Research Officer
SAAF Museum*



This particular aircraft was operated by the Aero-Club De Libreville in Gabon, before it found its way to South Africa. The aircraft was initially identified for a possible rebuilt, but found in too bad a condition and eventually relegated to a dusty corner of a hangar at Wonderboom Airport.

The technical team of the SAAF Museum assessed the condition of the Cessna as suitable for static display purposes and no time was wasted to collect the aircraft at Wonderboom. She was delivered to the museum at Swartkop by road on Monday 12 March 2007. The Cessna will now be refurbished and re-painted to represent one of the Nigerian aircraft in which the Class of 1977 was trained.





Seated in front of the aircraft (from left to right)

Titus Sithole (now residing Australia), Major Dlamini (SA Army), Brig Gen Raymond Fihla (Defence Intelligence retired), Mass Ngobese (deceased), Maj Gen G. Malinga (SAAF – Chief of Joint Operations), Sipiwe Cele, CO P.K. Gaelisewe, Maj Gen T. Ntsibande (SAAF – Chief of Logistics), Maj Gen M.M.M. Mangethe (SAAF – General Officer Commanding Air Command)

Standing in front of the aircraft (from left to right)

Maj Gen H.A. Bhembe (SAAF – Chief Director Force Development and Support), Brig Gen W. Nkonyeni (Commandant War College), N.G. Njingana (SA Army), Maj Gen N.L.J. Ngema (SAAF – Chief Director Air Policy and Plans), Robert Buqwana (Canada), Gordon “Zero” Goba, Lt Col M.M. Seroto (SAAF Reserves)

Standing behind the aircraft (from left to right)

Christopher Kote (deceased), Themba Nkenene (deceased), Lt Col Kumalo (deceased), Mr Tshaka Komane (deceased), William Rankolegodi (deceased)

**Twenty-two cadres were sent for training, but only twenty-one appear on the photo. The missing member is M. Lebello, who was withdrawn from the course at an early stage.*

Readers are welcome to contact the SAAF Museum, Research Officer with any additional information, artifacts or memorabilia from this period.
Contact Captain Leon Steyn at 012 351 2282 or 073 255 2467.