



# WHALE COAST FLIER

Newsletter of the South African Air Force Association Whale Coast Branch

Volume 5, Issue 3

08 May 2024



*Buccaneers (Painting by Derrick Dickens – 1963)*

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK/UIT DIE REDAKTEUR SE PEN

Ons vertrou dat al ons lede, hul vriende en familie 'n aangename en geseënde Paasfees saam geniet het en dat diegene wat die besige binnelandse roetes oor hierdie tydperk aangedurf het, nou weer veilig tuis is.

Coverage in this edition is loaded with news on the past and some on the present.

The first event covered in this edition is about the end of an era for the Atlas/Denel Cheetah fighter aircraft with its last formal flight in April. Speaking about the end of an era in the month of April, it was also the last flight of a 24 Squadron Buccaneer.

A Sabre Pilot Reunion event was held in April, in Pretoria and was well-attended by several veteran pilots, including some of those who attended the very first Sabre course presented in South Africa in 1956.

'n Boorling van Caledon en vlieënier tydens die Tweede Wêreloorlog, maak geskiedenis toe hy die "DFC" van die koning van Engeland ontvang het. Lees meer hieroor in 'n nuusberig wat uitgereik is in Maart 2024 en wat aangeheg is by hierdie uitgawe.

There was extensive coverage in the written and electronic media over the past months regarding the combat readiness of the SA Air Force and whether it can or cannot fulfill its role in air support.

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Operation MERLYN, also known as the “The Nine Days of War” over period 01-09 April 1989, was an operation that confirmed the importance of air support during operations. Read more about his later.

We also include an insert from *defenceWeb* on the sad situation with regards to the status of the SAAF Memorial at Bays Hill in ThabaTshwane.

Vanuit Walviskus tuisbodem, sal hierdie uitgawe ons tak se gebruiklike braaivleis-kuier insluit, wat aangebied was by die Hermanus Old Boys Klub, op 03 Mei 2024. Ons sluit soos gewoonlik, 'n paar foto's in van nóg 'n gesellige én hierdie keer, 'n baie spesiale geleentheid.

Until next time, stay safe and stay healthy!

## WEAL AND WOE

**Wellbeing of our members.** To those members who are battling illness or are recovering from surgeries, we uphold you all in our thoughts and prayers.



## BROKKIES/SNIPPETS

**SAAF Sabre Pilots Reunion: 10 April 2024.** This memorable event was held at the Centurion Country Club, organized by Willie van der Lingen, Toby Adelaar, Doc Malan, John Boardman and Friends.





# SAAF Sabre Pilots Reunion

## 10 April 2024













First SAAF Sabre Course in SA (Nov 1956)  
L to R: Lt Butch Bester, Lt Dawie Fourie, Lt Jean de Wet (he had flown Sabres in Korea), 2/Lt John Boardman, Lt Cff Melville (standing on ladder), Lt Dennis Earp, 2/Lt Pål Bothma (sitting on wing), Lt Buks Crafford, Capt Dizzy Deans, Lt Solly Jacobs & Capt Tommy Vanston. (Cff Melville in insert)



1 Squadron 1965  
Back L to R : Lieb Liebenberg, Bitch Bester (OC), Paul Naser, LAF Henning, Kiewiet Geldenhuys, Zach Repsoldt, Mike Copeland, Dick Henry, Toby Adelaar, Alan Day.  
Front L to R : Willie van der Lingen, Rob Bartlett, Willie Ernst, Blondie Cilliers, Lou Schleinger, Jan Guyt, Kiep Kieser, Ian Roos.



2 Squadron 1961  
Front : Sakkie vd Merwe, Buks Crafford, Cliff Melville, John Boardman, Jan v Loggerenberg  
Back L to R : Gus Ferguson, Vossie Vosloo, Paul Bothma, Klaus Göbel, Charl Fourie, Attie van Schalkwyk, Doc Malan











Some familiar faces that the Editor recognized on photos taken during the event was among others, Paul Bothma, Mac van der Merwe, Piet Viviers, Pierre Steyn, Dries Marais, John Boardman, Mitz Maritz and Ben Arnoldi.

A slide show of the event was compiled by Karl Jensen. The slide show included a photo of the first Sabre course in South Africa in November 1956, a photo of members of 1 Squadron in 1965 and a photo of 2 Squadron in 1961.

***A copy of this slide show can be obtained from the Editor, on request.***

### **60 Squadron Demonstration: In-flight refuelling - 12 May 1990.**

A 60 Sqn B707 Tanker/ELINT – Cmdt Piet van Schalkwyk trailed by 1 Sqn Mirage F1AZ, Cmdt Norman Minne (Starboard side), 24 Sqn Buccaneer S MK50, Cmdt Pikkie Siebrits (Centre) and 5 Sqn Cheetah E, Cmdt Renier Keet (Port side) in the baskets.

This photo was taken on **12 May 1990** at the end of weapons demonstration at the Tooth Rock Range near Saldanha.

This was the first time and most probably the only time that a Mirage F1, Buccaneer and Cheetah simultaneously refuelled from the B707.



***Photo: Courtesy of Daan Conradie ex-5 Sqn Pilot. Credit to Johan Conradie***

**WW2 SA Air Force Veteran, received the DFC from the King: 31 March 1947 Voortrekkerhoogte (now named Thaba Tshwane).** On 27 March 2024, the *Hermanus Times* (Mitzi Buys) published an interesting story on Captain (Capt) Canzius van Blommestein, who was born in the Overberg (Caledon), on 13 December 1918. In January 1940, at the age of 21, he enlisted as a volunteer for the Allies. Read the full story in ***Enclosure 1***.

**International Museum Day- 18 May 2024.** This event will be hosted by Friends of the Museum at Air Force Base Ysterplaat and will include a Career Expo. Entrance is free.



## **SAAF/SAAFA**

### **SAAF**

**Operation MERLYN.** Brig Gen McGill Alexander delivered a Paper at the Conference on "South Africa at War in the Twentieth Century," South African Military Academy, Saldanha, 04-06 September 2000. We quote the following from this paper regarding Airborne Operations.

**Introduction.** Airborne operations entail the delivery of ground troops and their equipment by air to their area of operations. They can also include the subsequent support of these troops and their equipment by air. Historically, and by definition, this would encompass delivery by fixed-wing powered aircraft, by glider, by parachute or by helicopter.

Almost any troops can be delivered by most of these means. However, the technical expertise and physical as well as psychological demands required by parachuting have resulted in specialist troops being selected and trained for this role. Some of the material advantages of using parachute troops, or paratroops, are: the enormous strategic reach provided by the long-distance transport aircraft used to convey them; the considerable payload which these aircraft are capable of carrying; the speed with which the parachute force can deploy; and the fact that no infrastructure such as airfields are required for their arrival. Perhaps most attractively to cash-strapped governments, the light equipment scales of parachute units' make them economical to establish and maintain.

There are also less tangible advantages: the soldiers selected are invariably volunteers with a willingness or even desire to tackle challenges; their selection and training produces tough, confident and aggressive troops, psychologically geared to face superior odds and to function independently from other units; and their initiative and self-reliance combined with a high level of physical fitness makes them suitable for a number of different and demanding roles.

On the downside, paratroops require an exceptionally high standard of leadership and discipline to prevent them running amok, as happened with the French in Algeria and the Canadians in Somalia. They also need to be kept constructively busy to maintain a firm grip of control over them. Their limited fire-support and lack of armoured protection makes them vulnerable to heavy conventional forces and their tactical mobility on the ground is often restricted to movement on foot. Also, their lines of logistical re-supply and casualty evacuation are at best tenuous, whilst their ability to act independently and effectively is seldom for longer than two or three days.

Airborne operations are, by their very nature, particularly apt for the application of the strategy of the indirect approach. Furthermore, the very concept of vertical envelopment facilitates the acquisition of the element of surprise in military operations. This is especially so in Africa, where financial constraints make it generally impossible for rebel groupings and even national governments to deploy sophisticated and integrated radar and anti-aircraft systems.

South Africa carried out numerous airborne operations during the latter part of the last century. In doing so, a significant level of expertise was built up in this field. Political, organisational and personnel changes, however, resulting from the process of integration which produced the new South African National Defence Force (SANDF) have substantially altered this level.

The aim of this paper is therefore to consider the SANDF's potential to carry out airborne operations as it enters the new millenium. This is done by identifying the types of airborne operations executed by South Africa during the twentieth century and assessing their military value. The current ability of the SANDF to undertake airborne operations is then estimated.

Although operational delivery by fixed wing aircraft, parachute and helicopter are considered, the actions are limited to those of specialist parachute units, excluding special forces. Many helicopter and some air-landed operations have been carried out by non-parachute units, but these are seen as beyond the scope of this paper. Because their organisation, tactics, and equipment are specifically tailored for the aircraft (both fixed and rotary-wing) which they use, the parachute units are seen as the exponents of airborne operations in the strictest sense.

On pages 76-77 of the article, the author makes mention of air support during Operation MERLYN and as follows:

“Early on 1 April 1989 these SWAPO groups clashed with lightly manned police patrols. Heavy contacts erupted all along the border, resulting in serious casualties on both sides. The UN Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) did not have the resources to counter this breach by SWAPO, and after several days of bloody fighting, the UN authorised the release of six South African battalions to go to the assistance of the badly mauled police. In South Africa, 44 Parachute Brigade was alerted to prepare 14 Parachute Battalion Group for deployment as of one of these. At the time, most of the battalion group's elements were exercising at the Army Battle School in the Northern Cape. One company was at Ondangwa, ostensibly as the resident Fire Force, but in fact confined to the base. Other elements were in Pretoria and Bloemfontein.

After several days of anxious waiting, the brigade commander was given the order to deploy his battalion group to Namibia. **At 03H00 on 7 April 1989 six C-130 and two C-160 aircraft took off from Pretoria.** Landing at Sishen in the Northern Cape to collect the bulk of 14 Parachute Battalion Group, they went on to land at Ondangwa. There the artillery battery was detached to assist in the defence of the town of Oshakati. Most of the rest of the battalion, as well as the brigade headquarters, were flown to the isolated base of Ehomba in the Kaokoveld. There an air landed operation was carried out on the tiny dirt airstrip.

Within 14 hours of having been given the order to go, the whole battalion group was deployed on operations. They had flown a total distance of 1600kms and had carried out three landings in the process. Only two days remained before a cease-fire was implemented. During that time the paratroopers, together with another under-strength infantry battalion that had been mobilised and whom they had reinforced, conducted Fire Force operations, search and destroy patrols and "pseudo" operations in the rugged Zebra Mountains. Twenty guerrillas were killed and a further 20 captured.

After the cease-fire the paratroopers remained in Namibia for several weeks, manning UN supervised assembly points at which the SWAPO guerrillas were meant to report. Predictably, none reported.

Eventually the brigade headquarters and 14 Parachute Battalion Group were withdrawn, leaving only the company at Ondangwa, ostensibly a Fire Force, but in effect confined to base and unable to operate at all. **Operation MERLYN had been an outstanding example of the rapid projection of a balanced force by air in response to a crisis situation.** Sadly, senior military men in the SADF attached little significance to the potential of this capability at the time. This capability was thus one of the first casualties of the rationalisation process that began in the early 1990s.

The last South African combat element to withdraw from Namibia was the Fire Force company at Ondangwa, a CF company from 4 Parachute Battalion. The paratroopers had been the first Army

combat elements into Namibia in August 1966, and were the last out on 4 June 1989. In November 1989 Namibia gained its independence under an elected SWAPO government.”

*Brig Gen McGill Alexander*

Read the Afrikaans version, as told by Hermann Labuschagne in ***Enclosure 2***.

***The complete Paper as well as the original and English version of Operation MERLYN can be made available on request.***



**The end of an era: The final formation flight of the Atlas/Denel Cheetah fighter at AFB Makhado on 02 April 2008.** A Youtube video posted by Ryno Joubert titled “*Cheetah Phase Out – 02 April 2008, AFB Makhado*”, provides full coverage of this historical event (forwarded by Theuns Prinsloo to the Editor on 09 April 2024).

Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, Chief of the SA Air Force at the time, also participated in the formalities.



*Photos: Ryno Joubert*



*Photo: Dean Wingrin*



Dean Wingrin posted an article on the SAAF Unofficial Website on the Cheetah D. Herewith some extracts from the article:

**“ The Airforce Aircraft Retired Cheetah D.**

Period of Service: 1986 - 2008

Description:

South Africa performed an update to their Mirages along the lines of that of the Kfir and incorporating some Israeli-built kit. In 1986, Atlas Aircraft Corporation of South Africa rolled out a refurbished Mirage III machine named the "Cheetah".

Improvements to the Cheetah featured:

- Structural upgrades to "zero-life" the airframe.
- Kfir-like canards, nose strakes, and dogtooth wing.
- An Atar 09K-50 engine, built under license in South Africa for the country's Mirage F1 fighters. The Cheetah featured larger engine intakes to ensure the necessary airflow.
- Two additional stores pylons under the intake ducts, for a total of seven pylons.
- A fixed refueling probe, mounted over the right air intake.
- A Martin-Baker Mark 10L ejection seat.
- New avionics, the majority of Israeli origin but with some elements built in South Africa, mostly packed into an extended nose.

The first aircraft to be converted was a Mirage III D2Z (airframe number 845) from April 1983. It is not known publicly when its conversion was completed, but when the type was officially unveiled to the public on July 16, 1986, the type was already in service with 89 Combat Flying School, although it was only declared operational the next year. In order to bring the airframes back to "zero hours" flown, some 50% of components were replaced. Also fitted was a new main wing spar, a "drooping" leading edge and a dog-tooth incision on each main wing. “

“The Cheetah D is the sole two-seater variant, and is mainly used operationally as a training aircraft for pilots converting to the Cheetah C, though it does have a secondary attack capability, including the ability to deliver precision-guided munitions (PGMs). Under Project Recipient, 10 of the remaining 13 Cheetah Ds were re-engined with the Atar 09k50C-11, replacing their original Atar 09C engines. The three not upgraded have been withdrawn from use. The Cheetah D's avionics were also upgraded, to bring them on par with the avionics in the Cheetah C, while the original three piece front windshield has been replaced with a one-piece wraparound version.

The type was phased out on 1 April 2008 pending the introduction of the Gripen. “

“Although the two-seat Cheetah is generally referred to as the Cheetah D, they are more strictly known as the Cheetah B, D or D2, depending on the Mirage III airframe they were modified from.”

*Dean Wingrin – SAAF Unofficial Website*



**Last flight of a 24 Squadron (Sqn) Buccaneer.** April 1991 was the last flight of a 24 Sqn Buccaneer when Bucc 416 was delivered to the SAAF Museum at Ysterplaat by Cmdt Pikkie Siebrits and Capt Russel Ellis.

Theo de Munnink (SAAFA Whale Coast Branch) recalls the following from this event:

“I remember the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1991 very well. It was an auspicious day when Pikkie Siebrits (OC 24 Sqn) and Russel Ellis (navigator) landed at AFB Ysterplaat to deliver Buccaneer 416 to the SAAF Museum here. It was also great to have Gen Bob Rogers, the 1st OC of 24 Sqn when it equipped with the Buccaneer, to welcome Pikkie and Russel with a glass of bubbly. It was however, also a sad day as that was also the last flight of the Buccaneers of 24 Sqn that had served our country with such distinction for 26 years.

I was particularly pleased that Bucc 416 had come to the Cape Town branch of the SAAF Museum at Ysterplaat as this was the aircraft that Gen Mike Muller and I had ferried from Lossiemouth in Scotland to AFB Waterkloof in 1965. The aircraft did the ferry without one snag and has held a special place in our hearts ever since.

Johan Conradie covers the ferry of Buccaneers fully in detail in Book One – The Beginning of his fantastic series of five books covering the Buccaneer in service with the SAAF. The series “*The Buccaneers of 24 Squadron*” is certainly one covering the life of the Buccaneer on the squadron in remarkable detail. The delivery of Bucc 416 to AFB Ysterplaat is also covered fully in Johan’s Book Four – The Final Phase – Volume 2.”

Read the complete and most interesting story, shared by Theo de Munnink in ***Enclosure 3***.

**SAAF Memorial off-limits.** Kim Helfrich, *defenceWeb* reported the following on 16 April 2024:

“Acts of vandalism and desecration” mean the SA Air Force (SAAF) memorial on Bays Hill immediately north of what is now the Air Force Mobile Deployment Wing (AF MDW) is off-limits and will not be used for an annual memorial service.”

Read the complete article attached hereto as ***Enclosure 4***.



## **SAAFA**

### **SAAFA Memorabilia**

The BEC would like to remind members again that the following SAAFA items can be acquired from the National Office:

- SAAFA Ties.
- Flight Caps.
- Pocket Badges.

Those that are interested in any of these items must please contact the Branch Secretary in this regard, for him to place an order at SAAFA National Office.

**Whale Coast Branch Braai – Old Boys Club: 03 May 2024.** This event, as always, was thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance. This time round the branch hosted what can be called, for lack of a better word, “a historical moment”.

Among the guests in attendance, were Lt Col James du Toit, Curator of the SAAF Museum at AFB Ysterplaat and wife Lucinda, as well as Peter Dickens, MOTHS Old Bill Seagull Shellhole and wife Karen. Peter’s late father, Derrick Dickens happened to be a keen artist who painted a formidable range of war planes that includes SA Air Force- and Royal Air Force aircraft.

James addressed all in attendance and provided a brief background of his Air Force career, up to his recent double-hat appointment, being Curator of the Museum, as well as the Corporate Communication Officer for the Western- and Eastern Cape regions. James then elaborated about the role of SAAF Museums, with particular reference to AFB Ysterplaat Museum.

The highlight of the day was when Peter, after sharing the historical overview of his father’s work, made the announcement that he will be donating all the paintings that were on display at Old Boys Club, to the SAAF Museum.

This wonderful news was well acknowledged with a warm round of applause!









**Chris Viviers, aircrew member of "Pelican 16" next to the painting of Shackleton 1716 and his first attendance at a Whale Coast Branch luncheon**



**A unique painting of a Shackleton – undercarriage down**



**Branch Chairman with Peter & Karen Dickens**



**Branch Chairman with James du Toit and Peter Dickens**

**(Photo images provided by Johan Pentz, André Pentz and Itel Zürich)**

It surely was an honour and privilege for Whale Coast Branch to facilitate this generous donation to the Museum.



## SCHEDULED BRANCH ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

The following activities are scheduled for May 2024:

- **BEC Meeting**: 15 May 2024.
- **AFB Overberg Memorial Service**: 17 May 2024.
- **SAAFA Annual Congress - Wilderness**: 23-26 May 2024.



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*The Editorial Committee would appreciate contributions from the Members of SAAFA Whale Coast Branch and extends their thanks for all contributions received. Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor or of SAAFA National Executive or of the Branch Executive Committee. The Editor reserves the right to amend or reject any editorial matter submitted for publication.*

HERMANUS TIMES – 27 MARCH 2024

# King gave Cpt Canzius van Blommestein a DFC

Mitzi Buys

Not many Caledonians can claim having met royalty, let alone having a prestigious medal pinned to their chest by a king, but this is exactly what happened to World War II veteran Captain Canzius van Blommestein when he received the coveted Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) from King George VI on 31 March 1947 at a ceremony at Voortrekkerhoogte (now named Thaba Tshwane).

Pieter van Blommestein, who has a long and interesting history with Caledon ("Heidehof – ons het daar gewoon", *Hermanus Times*, 28 June 2023) told *Hermanus Times* this time around about his uncle's life and his remarkable achievements during the Second World War.

"Canzius was born in Caledon on 13 December 1918. He was my father's youngest brother. He matriculated when he was not yet 17 years old, and instead of joining the family business he worked at a local bank in Caledon. In January 1940, at the age of 21, he enlisted as a volunteer for the Allies and went by ship from Durban to Mombasa in East Africa," says Pieter.

Canzius initially joined the 12 Bomber Squadron as a gunner, but later progressed to observer (navigator) in various other squadrons. While in East Africa he got badly burnt in an accident on the ground, and spent some time in a hospital in Nairobi before returning to South Africa. Once recovered he went back to North Africa for active duty, which included Egypt, Sicily and Italy. He was in Italy when the war ended in 1945.

As Canzius never resigned from his job when he volunteered to join the Air Force he returned to Caledon to work at the bank, who then wanted to transfer him to Johannesburg. He had been away for five years and wanted to spend time with his family, so he resigned from his job and joined his elder brother Pietie's business in Hermanus. Apart from the coveted DFC Van



Cpt Canzius van Blommestein receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross from King George VI with Group Captain Peter Townsend looking on. The DFC was handed to him at Voortrekkerhoogte on 31 March 1947. The medals are at the bottom of the photograph, with the DFC on the left.

Blommestein was awarded numerous other medals, namely the 1939-1945 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Africa Star with clasp, Italy Star, Africa Service Medal and the War Medal 1939-1945.

An extract from *The London Gazette* of 21 August 1945 reads: "Now on his third tour of operational duty, Captain van Blommestein has throughout displayed great determination and devotion to duty and has set an inspiring example to all."

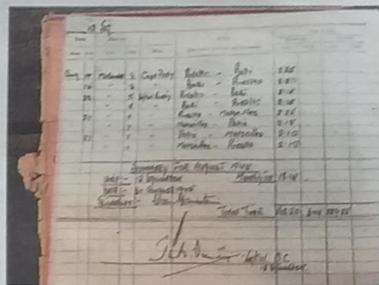
Although the DFC had been awarded to him in 1945, it took some years before it was officially handed to him by King George VI in 1947.

Canzius's medals went missing, but Pieter, who is passionate about family history, managed to get them back via an interesting detour, the details of which he does not wish to disclose.

The flight logbook was also missing, but Pieter's cousin Wybo van Blommestein found it in the old butchery in Hermanus and handed it to



A young Cpt Canzius van Blommestein in uniform.



The last entry in the logbook.

Pieter.

When asked whether he remembered his uncle Canzius, Pieter replied: "I was eight years old when he died, but he would regularly come and visit his father in Caledon. My sister and I would pop around to *Oupa's* house and see him there. I also remember he had a very nice car, a two-door Pontiac with a hard top."

• Canzius van Blommestein died in Cape Town on 13 April 1956.

**Enclosure 2 to  
Whale Coast Flier  
Volume 5 Issue 3 dd 8 May 2024**

**OPERASIE MERLYN: 01 – 09 APRIL 1989**

***Saamgestel deur Herman Labuschagne (Facebook plasing)***

**1-9 April 1989**

**Operasie Merlyn**

**Die 9-dae oorlog**

**Suid-Afrikaanse Grensoorlog**

**“Verraad lei tot ñ groot sukses”**

***(Vry vertaal en effens verkort deur Kobie Ströh)***

**9-dae Oorlog**

**1 tot 9 April 1989**

**Operasie Merlyn**

**Een van die vreemdste militêre operasies in SA se militêre geskiedenis.**

**WAPENSTILSTAND**

1 April 1989: Die wapenstilstand begin wat ñ einde sou bring aan SA se grensoorlog. Dit agv van UN (Verenigde Nasies) se toetrede en onderhandelings.

In stede van vrede, staking van aanvalle en terugtrekking het die Russies-ondersteunende magte besluit om in die geheim van hierdie geleentheid gebruik te maak om ñ verrassingsaanval op SA magte te loods.

**AGTERGROND**

SA was vir baie jare (23 jaar) in konflik met die gesamentlike magte PLAN/SWAPO (People's Liberation Army of Nmibië), FAPLA (People's Armed Forces of the Liberation of Angola) en hulle bondgenote Kuba en Sov Rep van Rusland. Hierdie was basies ñ verlenging van die Koue Oorlog.

Na al die jare van uitgerekte oorlog was almal moeg en finansiëel gedreineer, veral na langdurige internasionale sanksies teen SA. Die Marxistiese rewolusionêres se geldbron uit Moskou begin ook taan en hulle moed gebreek na hulle geveg op geveg verloor met geen einde in sig nie.

Die ooreenkoms wat UN bereik het en gepaardgaande onttrekking is verwelkom. Offisiëel sal daar geen wenner of verloorder wees nie.

**WAAKSAAMHEID**

Die vyand word nog fyn dopgehou.

By die operasionele hoofkwartiere merk Generaal Chris Serfonten, bekend as Swarhand Serfontein, iets baie verdags op.

Volgens intelligensie lyk dit of die vyandelike magte die grens nader en nie onttrek nie.

Genl Swarhand Serfontein (op 84-jarige ouderdom) verduidelik dat lugfoto's gewys het dat Russiese tenks by Angola hawens afgelaai word en nie opgelaai word nie, asook baie voorrade en ondersteunende infrastruktuur.

Dit lyk verdag en onwaarskynlik, maar die enigste verklaring kan wees dat ñ aanval beplan word.

## **RAPPORTEER**

Genl Swarhand Serfontein het dadelik hoër gesag in kennis gestel wat op hulle beurt SA Regering verwittig het.

Spoedig het ñ helikopter geland met Minister van Buitelandse Sake, Pik Botha, Minister van Verdediging, Magnus Malan, en ander van bevelsmagte aan boord.

Genl Swarhand Serfontein lê sy bewyse voor en versoek dat magte op hoë gereedheid geplaas moet word en voorbereiding getref moet word vir grootskaalse aanval teen hulle.

Die politieke leiers bestudeer die verslae en kondig aan dat hierdie vrese ongegrond is, daar sal nie ñ aanval wees nie.

Die oorblufte Genl Swarhand Serfontein verneem dat hy moet ontspan en nie so onnodig bekommerd moet wees nie.

## **OPDRAG VERONTAGSAAM**

Genl Swarhand Serfontein besluit na hulle vertrek om hulle besluit te ignoreer.

Hy begin haastig om alle beskikbare magte weer op te kommandeer en te her-ontplooi van waar hulle was.

Gelukkig het van die eenhede ook ñ voorgevoel gehad van verraad en het wapens behou en gestoor waar hulle dit maklik kon bereik.

Sommige troepe het selfs ammunisie versteek vir ingeval.

In een geval het ñ vliegtuig vol wapens omgedraai en teruggevlieg.

Hierdie tipe vooruit-denke en beplanning en onafhanklike optrede was een van die redes waarom die SADF (SAW) so ñ gedugte mag was tydens die oorlog.

Sentrale leierskap van SAW was baie sterk, maar op laer vlak was ñ unieke kenmerkende vlak van inisiatief en vasberadenheid.

## **HAASTIGE VOORBEREIDINGS**

Skielik en vinnig is hierdie onttrekking met ñ onkenbare spoed in trurat geplaas.

Na soveel jare is gedetailleerde opdragte nie meer nodig nie.

Magte wat inderhaas bymekaar geskraap is tree instinktief op en weet presies wat om te doen.

Soldate wat opgewonde was om huis toe te gaan, keer kalm en vasberade terug.

Almal op hoë gereedheid.

Hulle grawe hulle in en is gereed om oombliklik op te tree.

### **VYAND ROL NADER**

ñ Groot aanvalsmag beweeg vinnig en stilletjies onder digte bosse nader aan SA se posisie.

Oortuig daarvan dat aanval ñ totale verrassing gaan wees.

### **SA MAGTE GEREED**

Die SA magte is reeds in posisie en gereed om in ñ japtrap op te verdedig.

Die laaste dag van Maart 1989 infiltreer die vyand oor ñ wye gebied van 300 km Die oomblik toe hulle die grens kruis, word alarm gemaak.

Hulle verrassingsaanval wat onstuitbaar en verwoestend sou wees, verander in ñ totale ramp vir hulle.

**1 April 1989** val die eerste skote toe hulle in kontak kom met KOEVOET, die geharde hoogs mobiele polisievegters in hulle Caspirs. Die geveg is intens met ongevalle aan beide kante.

KOEVOET is redelik alleen in hierdie geveg want ñ volskaalse teen-aanval sonder opdrag sal groot politieke gevolge hê.

Daar is desperate nood vir lug-bystand, maar SA helikopters mag nog nie toetree nie. Hulle kon net hulpeloos toekyk en wag vir toestemming.

### **PRETORIA**

Die politieke leiers verneem hierdie skokkende nuus. Die waarskuwing wat hulle afgelag het, is nou ñ werklikheid.

Die sekretaris-generaal van UN word ingelig.

Pik Botha stel voor dat UNTA (Vredesmag) dadelik sal moet ingryp andersins sal SA Magte gemobiliseer moet word.

### **TEEN-AANVAL**

UN gee toestemming aan SADF vir ñ teen-aanval. Gelukkig is almal reeds in posisie, helikopters en grondmagte beweeg in.

Die aanvallers is onverwags in stryd met n goed-voorbereide operasie, bekend as Operasie Merlyn.

Die aanval eindig baie sleg vir die aanvallers.

**Nege dae lank duur die stryd.** Groot verliese aan aanvallers se kant. Minstens 306 sterftes en baie toerusting verloor.

Aan SA kant sneuwel 30 KOEVOET Polisiemanne, 7 SAW soldate en 100 gewond.

## **GROOT LEUENS**

Diplomatiek is vyand in groot moeilikheid en talle leuens en verskonings begin.

Pik Botha verklaar teenoor die pers dat hy vooraf geweet het van die beplande aanval, maar dat die SAW agv van sy eie beplanning en vooruitsig voorbereid en gereed was.

## **EINDE VAN OORLOG**

Nuwe ooreenkoms word bereik deur UN.

Die magte onttrek.

Fidel Castro laat meer as 5000 soldate agter, begrawe in Afrika Grond.

Die res van sy 50 000 troepe keer vernederd terug, hulle reputasie geskend.

6 maande later val die Berlynse Muur en die Koue Oorlog eindig.

Die verkiesing in SWA volg.

SA verkiesing in 1994.

Laaste 2 bastions in Afrika het geval.

## **GENERAAL SWARTHAND SERFONTEIN**

Genl Swarhand Serfontein, 84 jaar oud, steeds formidabele leier met helder stem en wakker oë, sluit sy vertelling af met die volgende woorde:

"Now I have done my part for history.

Thank you for listening.

Now I can close this chapter.

And I don't have to talk about it anymore."

**Verwerking: Kobie Ströh**

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/nvTV2LXhKGDLU3Er/?mibextid=oFDknk>

**Enclosure 3 to  
Whale Coast Flier  
Volume 5 Issue 3 dd 8 May 2024**

**BUCCANEER 416 - A CREW'S TRUSTY BIRD (*Memories shared by Theo de Munnink*)**



***Photo: L to R: Brig Theo de Munnink, Maj Russel Ellis, Cmdt Pikkie Siebrits and Lt Gen Bob Rogers***

I remember the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1991 very well. It was an auspicious day when Pikkie Siebrits (Pilot and OC 24 Sqn) and Russel Ellis (navigator) landed at AFB Ysterplaat to deliver Buccaneer 416 to the SAAF Museum here. It was also great to have Gen Bob Rogers, the 1st OC of 24 Sqn when it equipped with the Buccaneer, to welcome Pikkie and Russel with a glass of bubbly. It was however, also a sad day as that was also the last flight of the Buccaneers of 24 Sqn that had served our country with such distinction for 26 years.

I was particularly pleased that Bucc 416 had come to the Cape Town branch of the SAAF Museum at Ysterplaat as this was the aircraft that Gen Mike Muller and I had ferried from Lossiemouth in Scotland to AFB Waterkloof in 1965. The aircraft did the ferry without one snag and has held a special place in our hearts ever since. Johan Conradie covers the ferry of Buccaneers fully in "Book One – The Beginning" of his fantastic series of five books covering the Buccaneer in service with the SAAF. The series "The Buccaneers of 24 Squadron" is certainly one covering the life of the Buccaneer on the squadron in remarkable detail.

The delivery of Bucc 416 to AFB Ysterplaat is also covered fully in Johan's "Book Four – The Final Phase – Volume 2".

On the morning of 26 Oct 1965 RNAS Lossiemouth was abuzz with activity. On the flight line, 8 SAAF Mk50 Buccaneers were lined up for our departure. All the aircraft had been fitted with large drop tanks as well as a belly tank in the bomb bay. All the aircraft were fuelled up and ready for departure on the long ferry home.

Five C130's of 28 Sqn were also ready to provide support. Some ground crew and equipment had already moved in two of the C130s to our first stop, NAS Yeovilton, in the south of England. Two Shackletons were deployed to provide Search and Rescue for the long legs over the sea. One Shackleton was placed in Bissau on the west coast of Africa and the other one was on standby at Ascension Island.

After greeting the Base Commander and the crews we had trained with, our group of eight crews prepared for departure. Our OC, Bob Rogers and Nav, John Murphy in 412, with the three other crews in their flight (Jan van Loggerenberg and Paul van Rensburg in 413, Darryl Pienaar and At de Beer in 414 and Wap Cronje and Johan vd Burgh in 415) lifted off just after 09.00. Our four crews (Mike Muller and Theo de Munnink in 416, Martin Jooste en Anton de Klerk in 417, Ben Vorster and Mac vd Merwe in 418 and Koot du Rand and Piet Oosthuizen in 419) departed at 09.40 and after a flypast over Lossie, we set course for Yeovilton where we landed 1hr 20min later. Our aircraft Bucc 416 was serviceable. That evening as we were relaxing in the wardroom, a pilot from Lossiemouth entered in his flying overall and presented our OC, Bob Rogers, with a full set of pictures of our departure, including some that had been framed as well. This lovely gesture was much appreciated and further cemented the friendships we had made during our long stay at NAS Lossiemouth.

On 28 Oct 1965, at 09.40 our flight lifted off at Yeovilton for the flight to our next stop, Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. Soon after lift-off we passed into France Control. I contacted the Controller expecting to give a description of our flight and any info he required. That day French ATC had a strike on, and he told me to next clock in with American controllers in Spain and "Never come back this Frequency"! The rest of the flight was uneventful, and we landed at Las Palmas after a 3hr 30min flight. Bucc 416 was fine.

The two-day stopover was pleasant and on the morning of 30 Oct 65 we were all refreshed and raring to complete the longest leg of the Ferry. Las Palmas to Sal Island in the Cape Verde islands was about 800 nautical miles and from Sal Is. to Ascension Island was a further 1 570 nm. We were airborne at 09.20 and landed in a very hot Sal Island 1hr 55min later. All eight aircraft were refueled, and Bob Rogers departed with his flight at about 14.00 and we followed at 14.20 climbing to 30 000ft. When we were about 350nm out we heard that Bob Rogers and John Murphy in Bucc 412 and Darryl Pienaar and At de Beer in Bucc 414 were returning to Sal Is as 414 had an oxygen problem. The other two aircraft of the first flight, Jan van Loggerenberg and Paul van Rensburg (Bucc 413) and Wap Cronje and Johan vd Burg (Bucc 415) were proceeding on to Ascension Is. I remember feeling pleased that it was not us going back to the furnace that Sal was!

About 400 nm from Sal Is we encountered clouds. Mike Muller ordered our formation to close-up but thicker clouds prevented our No 2, Martin Jooste and Anton de Klerk in Bucc 417 from closing.. Mike Muller then ordered them to do a separation drill (turn 15 degrees to Starboard, maintain for 1 minute then resume original heading). The cloud was quite thick, and Mike asked me to get clearance from Dakar to climb to 34 000ft. After some time, we broke clear in agap. I saw Martin at our 3 o'clock (right of us). I called him and said we were 9 o'clock from him. I saw him begin to turn toward us. When I looked few moments later, I saw Bucc 417 in a steep nose down position. Mike asked them what was happening, and Martin replied he was in a spin. I noted our position and we lost them in cloud again. I heard no further communication from Martin or Anton. Mike ordered our two flight members (Bucc 418) Ben Vorster and Mac vd Merwe and (Bucc 419) Koot du Rand and Piet Oosthuizen to proceed on to Ascension Island.

We began to orbit the area and to descend to sea level for a search. As it was clear that Bucc 417 had gone down I contacted Dakar Control with a Mayday I sent on behalf of 417 and gave them the position of the incident (09 25N. 20 03W) and requested them to contact Bissau to alert Shackleton 1722 for a Search and Rescue mission. Thereafter I called Wide-Awake Tower on Ascension Is to request them to activate our Shackleton 1721 there.

When I called Wide-Awake Tower, Harry Gilliland, one of the SAAF C130 commanders, answered my call and I gave him all the news and position of the incident. He had just switched his radio on to call Waterkloof when he heard me. On reaching low level beneath the clouds, we commenced a square search. We did not see anything (yet we heard later that Martin and Anton had seen us flash past just while they were getting into their dinghies in the sea after ejecting from the aircraft). After searching fruitlessly for an hour, we climbed back up to altitude and set course for Sal Is as we did not have sufficient fuel to reach Ascension Is. We made contact with a Portuguese Air Force DC 6 that was going to pass through the area. I gave them the position and they promised to keep a lookout.

Mike and I landed back at Sal Is having flown for 3hrs 35min on this flight. We were three crews staying the night on Sal Is hoping to hear good news from the search aircraft. Just after dark we received the buoyant news from the Portuguese aircraft that they had spotted a flare in the area. Then HURRAY at 20.13Z Wynand Bloemhof on Shackleton 1722 came up with the report that he had two SARAH (Search and Rescue and Homing) beacon signals. They homed in and after that the two downed crew were covered most of the night by the Shackletons and a C130. A larger 10-man dinghy was dropped for them.

A C130 then conducted a search for a nearby ship that could be diverted to pick up the two airmen in the water. A Dutch liner, the Randfontein, was found. She was on a cruise from Holland to Cape Town. The vessel reached the downed airmen at about 11.00 and they were picked up. Very relieved that our colleagues were safe our three Buccs at Sal Is departed at 0805 early the next day, 1 Nov 65, for the 3hr 50min flight to Ascension Is.

At Ascension Is we heard that Wap Cronje and Johan vd Burgh had, had an undercarriage problem in Bucc 415 when they wanted to land and only had three reds. Wappie eventually got three greens and they landed safely but the ground crew spent until 02.00 in the morning repairing (or was it manufacturing?) the wheel latches.

On the morning of 2 Nov 1965, we were preparing for the longest single leg of the ferry. The distance from Ascension Is to Luanda is about 1 650nm, virtually due East from Ascension Is. When Bob Rogers and John Murphy in 412 were preparing to leave, Bob reported he had a X-hatch indication on his fuel tank pressurisation. This would have needed the bomb bay tank to be removed and the fuel panel to be taken out to replace the vent valve before replacing and sealing the whole lot. Neels Theron, one of the ground crew, told Cmdt Rogers to hang on. Another ground crew member helped him onto the port wing, and he walked across to the area where the fuel tank was and started kicking the area near the dorsal fin as hard as he could. After the fifth kick, Bob said to him the valve's dolls eye had changed to Black- problem solved and we could all leave. Our Flight took off at 08.20Z. On route to Luanda, Koot du Rand in 419 reported that his bomb bay tank was not transferring fuel to the main tanks. Fortunately it soon seemed to recover, and transfer had started, albeit slowly. As they continued it recovered and was not a problem anymore. By 12.20 we were safely on the ground in Luanda with the seven Buccs. Our aircraft, 416, was still running smoothly without any problems on the ferry.

Finally, on 3 Nov 1965, the last leg lay ahead. The seven aircraft were all ready to go home. Our flight lifted off at 10.20. Three hours later the two flights flew past the Waterkloof tower twice and came it to land on home soil for the first time. Cmdt Bob Rogers was the first to land at Air Force Station Waterkloof to a large reception. It was also a great reunion for some families who had not seen their dear ones for many months.

We were all happy to be home – sorry that we had lost 417 but thankful that Martin and Anton had been safely rescued.

Mike Muller and I had grown to have a **special feeling** for the trusty bird that had brought us home with nary a problem – **Bucc 416**.



*Maj Mike Muller and Capt Theo de Munnink flying Bucc 416 – 21 September 1965*



*Cmdt Bob Rogers and Cdr Flying saying goodbyes on 27 Oct 1965*



*Maj Mike Muller steps into Bucc 416 with Sgt Linne Ericsson to assist with strap-in on 27 Oct 65*



*Capt Theo de Munnink steps into Bucc 416 with Sgt Linne Ericsson to assist with strap-in on 27 Oct 65*



Anton de Klerk and Martin Jooste at Lossie 1965



*Back L to R: Piet Oosthuizen, Koot du Rand, Wappie Cronje, At de Beer, Darryl Pienaar, Ben Vorster, Johan vd Burgh.  
Front L to R: Paul van Rensburg, Theo de Munnink, Jan van Loggerenberg, Mike Muller, Bob Rogers, John Murphy, Mac vd Merwe.*

Photo taken at Luanda on 2 Nov 65

*Photos above from the book series: "Buccaneers of 24 Squadron" "Book One – The beginning" by Johan Conradie*

## **SAAF memorial off-limits**

*Kim Helfrich - 16th April 2024*



*SAAF Memorial on Bays Hill.*

“Acts of vandalism and desecration” mean the SA Air Force (SAAF) memorial on Bays Hill immediately north of what is now the Air Force Mobile Deployment Wing (AF MDW) is off-limits and will not be used for an annual memorial service.

SAAF Association (SAAFA) National President Mike Louw writes in the association’s latest newsletter the “sacredness” of the SAAF Memorial, rarely the target of those intent on vandalism, ended in November when it was “vandalised and parts of it desecrated”.

The memorial is co-owned by Lieutenant General Wiseman Mbambo’s service and the SAAFA with both meeting post the November “attack” (as it was put to defenceWeb by a SAAF pensioner).

“It was mutually agreed that the memorial and its surrounds will remain out of bounds for all until such time as the terrain can be properly secured. In the interim, the SAAF will continue to co-ordinate and oversee the repair and complete renovation of the memorial,” Louw informed SAAFA members.

Indications are the May memorial service will take place in one of the hangars of what is the oldest SAAF base, with Hangar 5 the probable venue.

When the vandalism became public, defenceWeb approached the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Directorate Corporate Communication (DCC) for input as to who is responsible for guarding and sentry duty at the memorial, outside the MADW perimeter wall. To date there has been no response.

As to who is tasked with security, a retired SAAF general told defenceWeb it was previously the responsibility of Air Force Base (AFB) Swartkop’s, now AF MDW’s, SAAF security squadron. He could shed no light on what the current status is.

The memorial was unveiled on 1 September 1963 by the then State President Charles “Blackie” Swart following an architectural design competition which drew 38 entries. The shape of the memorial in three wings crossing over one another is intended to symbolise flight. The wings cover separate rooms housing a chapel, a caretaker’s office and a machine room. The hall between the wings is home to a cenotaph as the memorial centrepiece with rolls of honour.

When democracy came to South Africa, those whose responsibility the memorial is, took note and a commemorative stone with an eternal flame was put into place on the main walkway to the memorial. It lists the Azanian Peoples’ Liberation Army (APLA), Bophuthatswana Air Force, Ciskei Defence Force Air Wing, uMkhonto We Sizwe, the SAAF, Transkei Defence Force Air Wing and the Venda Defence Force Air Wing.

***defenceWeb – 16 April 2024***