

Defence Force Imbizo and Static Display at Nomzamo in The Strand: Defence Review Committee engages with Western Cape communities

Article and photos supplied by Mrs Regine Lord.

On Saturday, 15 September 2012, the Defence Review Committee (DRC) held the final *imbizo* of their public participation process at Nomzamo community hall near The Strand outside Cape Town. An important role in this event was played by various Regular and Reserve Force units of the SANDF in the Western Cape, which set up a static display outside the hall to give the community an opportunity to interact with the soldiers.



Photo 1: The convoy of military vehicles assembles at Fort iKapa in the pre-dawn darkness before sunrise.

Early Saturday morning, in the pre-dawn darkness before sunrise, the soldiers who would be participating in the event were preparing to depart in a convoy from Fort iKapa in Goodwood. Convoy commander Lieutenant Bothman from Cape Field Artillery (CFA) ensured that all the military vehicles had lined up in the correct sequence, and Lieutenant-Colonel Johan Conradie of the Defence Reserve Provincial Office of the Western Cape (DRPOWC), which was responsible for coordinating the display, among other things, gave a final briefing to the men. Escorted by the Military Police, under the command of WO2 Andy Keet, with their blue lights and sirens, the convoy made its way to the community of Nomzamo in The Strand. Their arrival was observed

with much excitement by the local residents. A large group of spectators of all ages soon assembled all along the perimeter of the open area adjoining the community hall.

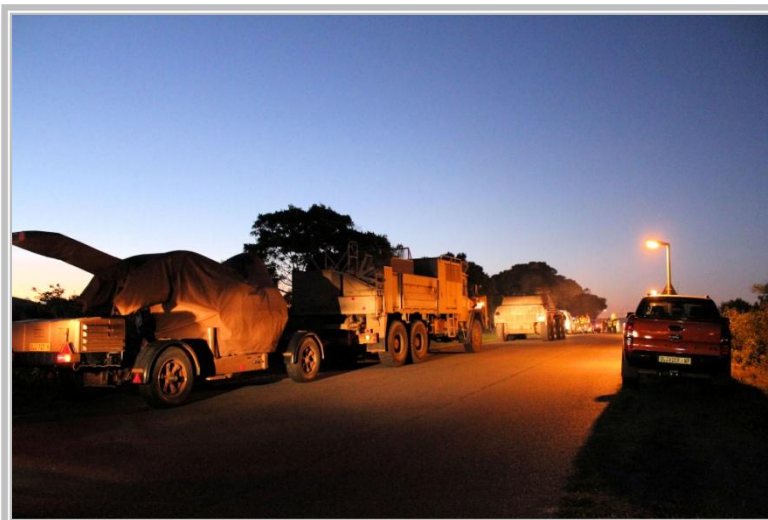


Photo 2: The Rooikat armoured vehicle is followed by the Oerlikon 35 mm anti-aircraft cannon of the Cape Garrison Artillery, towed by a SAMIL 100 gun tractor

The Regiment Oranje Rivier led the way with their powerful Rooikat armoured vehicle, driven by MWO Karel Minnie, Captain Pierre de Villiers and Lieutenant Dlakadla. Next to them parked the heavy SAMIL 100 gun tractor of Cape Garrison Artillery (CGA),

which was towing their Oerlikon 35 mm twin-barrel quick-firing anti-aircraft cannon. The troops quickly disembarked and immediately began to set up the mighty cannon with impressive efficiency and speed.



Photo 3: Lt Col Johan Conradie of the Defence Reserve Provincial Office Western Cape briefs the soldiers and Military Police who will be driving in the convoy

Soldiers from the Regiment Westelike Provincie (RWP) and the Cape Town Rifles (Dukes) parked alongside and unfurled their camouflage nets, draping these over a Mamba (an armoured personnel carrier that is used by the Dukes) and a Casspir (a landmine-protected personnel carrier). The Casspir was provided by 9 SAI Bn based at Eersterivier, and the 15 KVA generator by Western Cape Signal Unit based at Youngsfield.

The impressive static display was completed by the SAMIL 20 gun tractor from Cape Field Artillery, towing one of their 25-pounder guns. These guns are traditionally used to fire salutes at ceremonial and annual occasions, such as the Opening of Parliament, Remembrance Day and the Gunners Memorial Service. They also regularly participate in the performance of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, which is one of the highlights of the Cape Town Military Tattoo that is held at the Castle of Good Hope.

While the Military Police secured the perimeter of the open area, the soldiers from the various regiments finished setting up their various displays in record time – evidence of good teamwork. As soon as the static displays had been inspected and approved by Lt Col Conradie, the spectators who had been curiously watching all the preparations from a distance, were invited to take a closer look.

A huge crowd immediately gathered around the Rooikat, clambering all over the powerful vehicle under the watchful supervision of Lt Dlakadla. Initially, the children were jostling for position in their eagerness to climb on top of the



Photo 4: Lt Col Conradie greets the members of Inferno private security company who have been tasked with controlling access to the venue

Rooikat, but Lt Dlakadla quickly got them to line up in neat and orderly rows, and to wait patiently for their turn. His friendly but firm manner of dealing with them immediately instilled respect and admiration.

Another popular display was the 25-pounder gun of the CFA, with both children and adults queuing up in eager anticipation for a chance to look through the sights. The spectators also enjoyed climbing aboard the Mamba and the Casspir, taking turns to sit inside these vehicles.

Hundreds of copies of magazines, including the latest Reserve Force Volunteer of Winter 2012, were handed out that day. The younger children particularly enjoyed looking at the colourful pictures, and proudly showed off their copies of these magazines.



Photo 5: The Community Hall in Nomzamo outside the Strand hosts the Defence Review Committee's final public *imbizo*

An event of this nature requires the support, cooperation and coordination of a whole range of groups and individuals. They included: the South African Police Service, the Public Order Police, the Police from the local community of Lwandle, the Dog Unit, the Traffic Department, and the Military Police (responsible for marking the route, escorting the convoy and crime prevention).



Photo 6: The South African Police Service and the Public Order Police have set up a venue operations centre on the field outside the Community Hall

They assisted with access control, registration, crowd control and handing out the food parcels at the end of the meeting. Lt Col Conradie from the DRPOWC was responsible for the coordination of all the military support that was required to ensure the successful presentation of this *imbizo*.

In addition, Inferno, a private security company based in Goodwood, controlled access to the perimeter of the hall.

The Army Support Base Western Cape (ASBWC) supported the vehicle movement with a recovery service. Medical assistance to the military personnel was given by the Area Military Health Unit Western Cape (AMHUWC), while Metro provided medical support to the civilians

attending the event. Signallers from 3 Electrical Workshop prepared the sound and audio equipment, and recorded the event to create an accurate reference of the discussions of the day. The South African Navy Public Relations section, under the command of Commander Greyling van den Berg, oversaw the collection of community members by bus from the various pick-up points in District 6, Langa, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Nomzamo, Lwandle, Helderberg, Gordons

Bay and The Strand. Up to 960 people had been invited, and close on 800 ultimately attended this event.



Photo 7: WO2 Andy Keet instructs the Military Police to secure the perimeter of the field while the displays are being set up

The members of the DRC who attended the meeting were Mr Roelf Meyer (chairman), Dr Moses Khanyile (member of the Resource Group), Brigadier General John Gibbs (Deputy Chief Director Defence Reserves), Rear Admiral Alan Green (of the SA Navy, Director of Strategy in the SANDF) and Mr Tefo Keketsi (programme director

for the day). The secretariat that supported the committee at Nomzamo consisted of Mr Sagaren Naidoo, Mr Evert Jordaan, Ms Clemmy Makaepa, Mr Lucas Mutheiwana and Ms Hessie Botman. Other VIPs included members of the Defence Provincial Liaison Council Western Cape and councillors from various areas.

Before the day's formal programme began, the members of the DRC were shown around the static displays of the various participating regiments. The members of the committee were pleasantly surprised, as they had not expected such a large and impressive display. The personnel on duty at the various displays were praised by all of the committee members for their high standards and professional behaviour. The committee members remarked that their reception, the quality of the displays and the number of people from the community who participated in this event made this final *imbizo* the best they had attended. This



Photo 8: The soldiers of Cape Garrison Artillery skilfully set up their Oerlikon 35 mm anti-aircraft cannon with precision and teamwork

certainly is a feather in the cap of the Reserves and an indication of the cohesion and cooperation of the Reserves in the Western Cape.

All the visitors and spectators were given an unexpected treat in the form of a thrilling performance by the sixteen men and women of the Cape Field Artillery Pipes and Drums. Looking very smart in their scarlet Royal Stewart tartans, brilliantly white shirts and black vests, they were led out by Pipe Major Staff Sergeant Andrew Imrie. Forming into a circle, the group was quickly surrounded by inquisitive children and teenagers, many of whom had



Photo 9: The CFA soldiers drape camouflage netting over their 25-pounder gun, which stands alongside their SAMIL 20 gun tractor

not heard the sound of skirling bagpipes before. The more fearless little ones pushed themselves to the front for a better view. Everyone was listening with rapt attention to the thumping beats of the drums, and gazing in fascination at the drummers who twirled their sticks with impressive dexterity and in perfect coordination with each other. Judging from the cheering and the applause, this was definitely an appreciative audience!

At 10am, to mark the formal start of the *imbizo*, the CFA Pipes and Drums played inside the large community hall, much to the delight of the approximately 800 people who had already taken their seats inside. The programme director, Mr Tefo Keketsi, welcomed all the attendees to the *imbizo*, and directed the singing of the South African National Anthem.



Photo 10: Once all the static displays have been prepared, Lt Col Conradie gives a final briefing to the troops

Mr Roelf Meyer briefly summarised the background to the Defence Review of 2012. On 13 July 2011, during the first meeting of the DRC, which was held at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu (the previous Minister of Defence and Military Veterans), provided the committee with their mandate and terms of reference and appointed the members of the committee.

In the succeeding months, the DRC looked closely at the current state of the SANDF and its role in South Africa and beyond, in preparation for defining the thematic areas and drafting an initial Defence Review 2012. On 12 April 2012, Minister Sisulu made public this draft document.



Photo 11: Members of the public clamor excitedly all over the Rooikat armoured vehicle of Regiment Oranje Rivier – this is clearly one of the most popular displays

Since then, the DRC has conducted a thorough consultation process with stakeholders and the public in all the provinces of South Africa; their final public *imbizo* was the one held at Nomzamo on 15 September 2012. In the coming months, the DRC will prepare the final document and present it to the Minister for approval.

The previous Defence Review of 1998 focused on the integration of both the statutory and non-statutory armed forces

after the negotiated transition to a democracy in 1994. It thus addressed matters of transformation and the normalisation of security relations in the Southern African region. It also provided the first policy foundations for a Defence Force in a democratic state. Initially, there had been little emphasis on deploying the SANDF on peacekeeping operations to ensure regional security, but this situation has changed significantly in recent years, with South Africa taking on a much greater responsibility for ensuring peace and stability in the region and on the African continent.

The purpose of conducting the public participation process – and of this *imbizo* at Nomzamo – was to ask the public what they expected from the SANDF in the future.

Mr Meyer explained: “The Defence Force doesn’t belong to one person or a committee or even the general staff of the Defence Force. It belongs to all of us as South Africans, because we expect a Defence Force that can protect us and keep us safe. And that is why it is so important for us to hear your voices and to hear your opinions, but also to give you an opportunity to ask questions.”



Photo 12: Mr Roelf Meyer, Chairman of the DRC, and Brigadier General John Gibbs, Deputy Chief Director Defence Reserves, warmly greet the troops from the various regiments

Thereafter, Mr Moses Khanyile presented a strategic overview of the draft Defence Review 2012 that had been made public by the Minister. He explained that they had identified five strategic defence goals and fifteen high-level defence tasks. The five goals included: defending and protecting South Africa, its people and important national interests; safeguarding the country and its people through border safeguarding, supporting the police service and fulfilling the country's



Photo 13: The Cape Field Artillery Pipes and Drums surprise the community with a stirring performance

treaty obligations; promoting regional and continental peace and stability and contributing to South Africa's international agenda; supporting civil authorities in terms of crisis, need or turmoil, and contributing to the developmental priorities of South Africa; and assuring civil control over the SANDF and the accountable utilisation of defence resources.

Many of the attendees expressed gratitude to the committee for taking the time to consult with the community and to listen to their questions. However, the overall sense was one of



Photo 14: The band is immediately surrounded by curious spectators; the youngsters reward the drummers and pipers with much cheering and applause

disappointment and frustration that the SANDF could not help them to tackle the problems of violent crime and gangsterism by working more closely together with the police, in whom they had lost faith and confidence.

During the question and answer sessions, the most frequent topics raised dealt with the pressing social issues of crime, drug abuse and gangsterism, which are so prevalent in the Western Cape, particularly among the poorer

communities. Highly emotional pleas were made for the Army to be deployed on the streets to assist the police in combating these problems, as they felt that the police was unable to deal with the situation effectively. They complained that many members of the police were corrupt and not doing their duty; they added that drug abuse was out of control and that the drugs lords were quite literally getting away with murder. They appealed to the SANDF to help them.



Photo 15: The children form an orderly queue, eagerly waiting for a chance to peer through the sights of the Cape Field Artillery's 25-pounder gun

Mr Meyer firmly summarised the position of the Defence Force in this regard, insisting that soldiers would not be deployed in the communities: “I understand and fully appreciate the point being made about crime in South Africa, but we cannot deploy soldiers to patrol our streets – that will take us back to the time of the military state. I want to emphasise that this is a matter of principle.”

He reiterated that the Police was responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the civilian population inside the country, whereas the Defence Force was “the last line of protection of the safety, security and independence of the Republic of South Africa.”

He reiterated that the Police was responsible for ensuring

When attendees continued to ask what communities needed to do to ensure that the Defence Force would be deployed internally too, or to work together with community policing forums to tackle gangsterism and violent crime, Mr Meyer replied that, “the Defence Force can only be deployed for support of the police service under a special presidential minute or mandate.”



Photo 16: Mr Roelf Meyer with some of the committee members on stage field some difficult questions from the community

He emphasised that, “the commander of a specific military unit can’t just order the soldiers to patrol the streets, because that will lead to a situation where it is free for all and a commander can decide. But if there are special circumstances, then the president of the country can order the Defence Force to support the police.” He cited the Soccer World Cup 2010 as an example, where the police and the military worked together to ensure the safety of people attending the matches, but reiterated that this had been a special case.

Other questions revolved around the integration of the statutory and non-statutory armed forces, the criteria for joining the SANDF and the training given to recruits. Another problem raised

was that of illegal immigrants entering South Africa, even though the Defence Force is responsible for protecting the borders. Mr Meyer reminded attendees that South Africa has extensive borders – 4,400km on land and about 4,000km of coastline – and that the SANDF simply does not have the resources to patrol along all the borders. The situation is complicated by the fact that other agencies are involved too, namely, the South African Police Service and the Department of Home Affairs, which must verify that immigrants are indeed legitimate asylum seekers.



Photo 17: There are around 800 people attending this public imbizo – and they have many questions for the Committee

Attendees also wanted the Defence Force to become more involved with youth and leadership development, perhaps by a short-term compulsory period of military service. They expressed the hope that this would instil in the youth greater discipline and national pride, and that it would teach them to channel their energies into more positive areas.

Brig Gen John Gibbs replied that conscription was unconstitutional, and that the SANDF furthermore lacked the resources to accommodate the 600,000 youngsters who matriculate every year. However, one of their recommendations was that the SANDF should become more involved in youth development and leadership training.

He said: “We see the Defence Force as playing a very big role in creating leadership in the



Photo 18: Translators and secretaries are kept very busy. Capt (SAN) Trunell Morom of the Defence Reserves and Col S.A. Motswadira of Def Reserves Div also listen closely to the proceedings

country, by training people to become leaders. But the Defence Force will not have those people in service full time. We foresee that those surplus members will be part of the Reserve Force system, and that they will be integrated into society as normal citizens of South Africa. It is our intention that, if we instil the right values and ethics in them, they will stand up and help communities with the challenges that these communities face.”

According to Dr Khanyile, the Review was indeed going to highlight the importance of youth development: “The future of our country lies in the investment in the development of our youth.



Photo 19: Under the watchful eyes of Lt Dlakadla of Regiment Oranje Rivier, the youngsters obediently line up in neat rows, patiently waiting their turn to climb aboard the Rooikat

... There are specific programmes for Grade 10 and Grade 11. Then we have programmes for the kids who leave matric to join the Defence Force either directly as soldiers or to go and study. We are proposing that there should be a cadet system as well. In other words, we are saying that the Defence Force has to play a big role in the communities, especially for the youth.”

However, he emphasised that the Defence Force did not offer full-time permanent employment or a lifetime career option. Instead, the youth would be recruited and trained, and serve the country for several years. Thereafter, that they would return to their communities with new and positive skill sets, which would help them to become good and responsible leaders.

The formal programme concluded around 13h30, and by 14h00, the static displays had been dismantled and the convoy of military vehicles was on its way back to Fort iKapa.

The professionalism, discipline and friendliness of the soldiers who attended the event had definitely made a positive impact on the community, and especially on the younger generation, with whom they engaged that day. The community expressed a strong urge to see more of the Defence Force in the communities, and specifically to become involved with the youth, by contributing to youth development, establishing high morals, ethics and discipline among the new generation, and thus fostering nation-building.



Photo 20: The soldiers have made a very positive impression on the younger generation, with their professional and disciplined demeanour, as well as their friendliness and willingness to engage with the youth