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Chief of the SA Air Force message

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The official website of the SA Air Force is: www.af.mil.za

The front page depicts the Air Force Day celebrations on 1 February 2007 where awards and trophies were presented to those units and squadrons of the South African Air Force which excelled in performance and achievements during 2006.

Read the complete story and award results on pages 6 to 8.
Since my last message to readers of AD ASTRA there have been many instances of excellence in the Air Force. Our Warrant Officers have been at the forefront of this drive towards excellence and, recently, at the Warrant Officer Achiever of the Year Function, no less than 17 Achievers competed for the prestigious WO Achiever of the Year award. My congratulations go to WO1 Papole of 68 Air School for winning this honour, as well as to all the other recipients. In addition to this, a further token of excellence was given to the NCO Achiever of the Year. 15 NCOs were nominated for this award and my congratulations go to FSgt Molo for winning the Achiever Trophy, and to all the other recipients. A record number – 315 in all – of young members of the Air Force successfully completed the first basic military training course of 2007 and appeared in an impressive passing-out parade on 12 April 2007. Congratulations to Amn N. Tshaka, the best student overall, and also to the winners of the five other awards which were presented on that day.

Air Force personnel have continually worked towards making life better, not only for the people of our country, but also for those of countries around us. We recently saw the completion of OPERATION LITCHI 2, the purpose of which was to assist Mozambique after the devastating floods that occurred there earlier this year. This operation was purely a relief-aid operation and the Air Force worked very closely with the United Nations and associated relief organisations based in Mozambique. Many hours were flown to distribute food and personnel who, amongst other things, ensured the availability of safe and clean drinking water. A second disaster struck Mozambique when the ammunition dump outside Maputo exploded, causing loss of life in the surrounding settlements. Once again the Air Force provided sufficient air mobility to ensure that specialists arrived at the scene of the disaster in the shortest time possible and that new supplies were continuously delivered.

Operations such as these and many others do not just happen of their own accord; on the contrary, many hours of hard work go into ensuring the success of these operations. The Air Force, being a system, demands that each little portion of the system contributes effectively to the success of every operation. My appreciation, and also that of all members of the Air Force Command Council (previously known as the Air Force Board), go to all Air Force personnel who have worked unselfishly to ensure the success of these operations.

I was recently very embarrassed by an incident involving the theft of money from AFB Waterkloof, mainly because both civilian and military citizens asked me how it was possible to have a break-in at an air force base. It is important to concede that security and a low-crime environment are not the responsibility of the protection personnel or the officer commanding alone. Security and crime prevention are the responsibility of each member of the Air Force, and therefore I urge you to become involved. The general lack of discipline prevailing in the Air Force at present cannot and will not be tolerated, and all I expect from you is your continued assistance and motivation to ensure that incidents of this nature do not recur.

We have recently decided to increase the number of high season holiday accommodation units available to Air Force Fund members. We decided on the time-share option and selected only prime facilities for use during the high season. I trust that this new initiative will be put to good use by many Air Force Fund members and that they will enjoy their well-earned holidays.

Let’s continue striving for excellence!
Once there was a little acorn that wanted to be the best acorn in the world. It went to acorn meetings and attended acorn classes where it discovered that the ultimate goal for an acorn was to grow into a mighty oak tree. This would require even more study.

So the acorn enrolled at the University of OAKlahoma, read all the books and articles available on the subject, and started an oak leaf collection. All its studies indicated that the only way to reach its goal of becoming an oak tree was to give up its identity as an acorn – something the acorn was not ready to do.

So it spoke to a butterfly and a frog about the situation. Both told the acorn that they had been through the same dilemma and were happy now that they had risked taking a chance. This was still not enough proof for the acorn and it spent many more years studying, meditating, visiting gurus and the like.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity of frustration and disappointments, the little acorn gave up its attachment and let itself fall to the ground.

Later, the acorn awoke and, to its amazement, found itself transformed into a grand oak tree. Over the years, many would come to the mighty oak to listen to its stories of how great it is to let go of old ideas, to have the courage to venture beyond the imaginary limits that we impose on ourselves, and to realise that all the wonders we seek are within ourselves.

The oak tree would always end its teachings with: “To follow your heart and your bliss is OAK -ay!”

Two of our editorial committee members have left. We at AD ASTRA wish to thank both of them for their guidance and commitment towards the magazine and we know that both of them will grow into mighty oak trees. Brig Gen Portia Sibiya, Director Corporate Staff Services, has been appointed as the new Defence Attaché in France and Lt Col Frans Schoombee is now pursuing a career in the music industry.

We welcome the following new members on board the editorial committee:

Col Eugene Motati, Acting Director Corporate Staff Services; Lt Col Dinky Mokwebo, Acting Senior Staff Officer Corporate Communication; and Lt Col Surelda van Zyl, Staff Officer Internal Communication.

AD ASTRA continues to incorporate the NYALA magazine and the “Know your Generals” series – read on p.5 about Maj Gen Des Barker – Chief Director Force Preparation – who does an excellent job of preparing our Air Force. On 1 February 2007 we celebrated the South African Air Force’s (SAAF’s) 87th birthday – we are proud to be the 2nd oldest Air Force in the World. Congratulations to all SAAF Units and Sections on their outstanding achievements – see pages 6 to 8.

The SA Air Force is continuously busy with Force Preparation in order to provide peace support to the government’s peace-keeping initiatives on the African continent. However, there is one base with a different force preparation mission.

At Air Force Base Makhado, the fighter base of the SA Air Force, the emphasis of force preparation is on the maintenance of a peace-enforcement capability. In a time of diplomatically induced peace on the continent, the necessity of a fighter capability for the SA Air Force is often questioned. As the leader of the peace effort in Africa, South Africa should have the resources to act firmly and quickly against any entity which aggressively endangers the peace-keeping process. Read more on this exceptional base on p.12.

I am sure that you are going to enjoy reading the 2nd edition of 2007 of AD ASTRA, just as much as we did when we put this edition together. Happy reading!

Until next time. PER ASPERA AD ASTRA

(Acorn story with acknowledgement to Bits & Pieces, Winter 2004 Special Edition)
Where did you get your specific interest in aviation safety?
Irrespective of one’s role in the SAAF, each member is personally responsible, not only for his/her safety, but also for that of the Air Force’s equipment. Professional organisations are judged by their ability to accomplish their tasks safely - in other words they are highly reliable organisations. That is what the SAAF is. Safety is inculturated into an airman from day one. We often talk of maintaining standards, but what we are in fact talking about is getting the job done correctly and safely – that is called ‘professionalism’.

Tell us about your experiences as a test pilot.
Outside of operational wartime flying, there is no other type of flying that can provide such adrenalin and job satisfaction. It may be dangerous at times, especially when the aircraft is taken for ‘first flight’, whether it is a completely new aircraft, or even a new weapon or avionics system. But truth be told, engineering and pre-test analysis help one consider most of the possible hazards and danger areas and worst-case scenarios. The task of the test pilot is then to fly the test plan with the backing of all the support personnel that add to the intellectual capacity to resolve most emergencies that could occur and making flight testing significantly safer than in the earlier years of aviation.

What was the most terrifying moment in your career?
During a weapons clearance programme of a locally designed ‘retard bomb, the retard chute opened while still under the wing of a Cheetah C at 550 knots and 500 ft above ground level. This asymmetric force meant that I had no control over the aircraft at approximately minus 4g, while rotating at about 180°/second – fortunately, in an upward trajectory away from the ground. Due to the high negative g forces, I was unable to eject and had to ‘ride the wild horse’ until the acceleration forces had reduced to a level at which I could jettison the bombs.

Where did you get your passion for flying?
I am an ‘air force brat’. My father, like his father before him, was in the South African Air Force (SAAF). In fact, my grandfather was the 20th member of the SAAF at its inception in 1920. I remember as a young child, in my prayers, asking the good Lord to let me become a pilot one day – and nothing has changed this viewpoint. After 38 years in the SAAF, I would not change my flying job in the Air Force for any other job. It is about a PASSION for aviation, not a passion for a pay cheque.

Please elaborate on your career highlights.
Except for three years as the Air Adviser to the South African High Commission in London, I have been ‘in the cockpit’. What more could a military pilot ask for?

Which aircraft type ratings do you have and how many flying hours do you have on them?
I have flown all fixed-wing aircraft on the SAAF inventory since the 1960s, except the Buccaneer and the Transall, mainly in the test flight environment. I have amassed a total of approximately 6 700 flying hours, of which more than 6 000 are on fast jets. Also, I have had the opportunity to fly the Mig-29 in Russia, the L-159 in the Czech Republic, the BAE Systems Hawk 100 in the UK, and many more. I still fly the Cheetah and occasionally the Museum’s Mirage F1AZ. The only other adrenalin I would like to generate is to operate a fighter off an aircraft carrier.

You have also written a book and had articles published in aerospace journals; please tell us about them.
Yes, I have written a book titled ‘Zero Error Margin’, which is essentially an analysis of the safety hazards and the fickleness of human judgement in the highly dynamic environment of the low-level display flying arena. In addition, I have published more than fifty papers on flight testing and flight safety, both locally and internationally.

What do you foresee for the future of the Air Force?
The future of the SAAF is in the hands of the youth serving this Air Force today. It is in their hands and I can’t answer for their future performance. What I can say is that if they show dedicated commitment, professionalism, patriotism and passion for defending our country, the future is bright. On the other hand, if they find that their only reason to serve in the SAAF is to earn a salary, the Air Force is indeed doomed. Modern air forces require highly skilled, motivated and knowledgeable people, able to lay their lives on the line if necessary. It requires every single person to ‘pull his/her weight’ and to be prepared to do more than their duty. If you can’t be proud of your air force, best you look for another job somewhere else where you will have pride, because that is the only way in which job satisfaction can be derived.

What is your life philosophy?
Unless you were born “with a silver spoon in your mouth”, success only comes through hard work. Another rule: “Never turn down a combat assignment.”

What unique contribution would you like to make to the future of the SAAF?
To take a force-prepared Air Force through the current recapitalisation dip in order to maximise the use of the strategic defence packages.

*(A retard bomb is slowed down by a parachute after release)*
Although the initial plan was to celebrate the event with outdoor summer sports activities, the weather conditions would not allow this. However, this presented AFB Overberg staff members with the opportunity to play indoor games.

The sport activities for the day included badminton, squash, pool, darts, table tennis, flight simulator and chess. Fingerboard dominos and monopoly were played for recreation – no points were awarded.

To make participation more interesting and manageable, participants were divided into four zones. Zone one included Sickbay, 525 Squadron, MPA, the Mess and MT workshops. Zone two included Q-stores, the Fire Section, ATC and Ground System Section. Zone three comprised Hangars and Workshops. Zone four included Admin, Operations, CMI, Bulk Fuel and the "Lang-gang".

For each activity each zone accumulated points. The team with the highest total for each activity received one point. Two points were awarded for the second highest, three points for the third highest and four points for the fourth highest. The zone that accumulated the lowest points overall won the competition. The results will be released at the end of 2007.

The 2007 Air Force Day Parade celebrations were held with fanfare at Swartkop airfield, while members of Air Force Base (AFB) Overberg celebrated the day with sports activities at their base at Bredasdorp in the Western Cape.

The spectators of Tshwane Greater Metro, among them students from 10 schools in Tshwane, were entertained by spectacular air displays of the Silver Falcons aerobatic team and a flypast of an Oryx, A109 Agusta LUH, CASA and Hawks.

In an interview with AD ASTRA, Mrs Winnie Netshivhazhulu, a teacher from Abel Motshoane High School in Winterveld, said her students were very excited to be part of the celebrations. "Most pupils and teachers from my school have never been to Air Force functions before. We feel proud to be part of the annual Air Force Day parade," she said.

The parade included a career exhibition for learners who are interested in joining the SAAF. Students were advised to concentrate on subjects such as Mathematics and Science, as that would enhance their chances of becoming pilots in the SAAF.

Addressing guests, Chief of the Air Force (CAF), Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, said 62% of the members who received their respective SAAF flying badges in 2006 were black. The training reflected the size and distribution of the South African population.

Describing all the 2006 SAAF activities with pride, CAF told the gathering that 85 Combat Flying School had relocated from AFB Hoedspruit to AFB Makhado. About four months ago the Minister of Defence, Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, had formally opened the school at its new location and participated in a symbolic handing-over of the Hawk Mk 120 to the SAAF.

At Air Force Base Overberg, Air Force Day was celebrated with summer sports games at its sport fields on 9 February 2007.

The aim of the summer sports day was to enable AFB Overberg members to obtain maximum participation in the spirit of friendliness through sport and to improve on their individual fitness.
South African Air Force honours

Air Force Prestige Awards 2006

During a splendid display of men, women and aircraft at the South African Air Force Prestige Awards for 2006 at Swartkop airfield in Pretoria, various air bases and units were honoured with the following awards:

**Air Force Prestige Unit of the Year**

- Awarded to Air Force Base Ysterplaat
- The award goes to the unit that excels at all levels in all tasks and operations in the South African Air Force

**Air Force Reserve Squadron of the Year**

- Gold awarded to 104 Squadron, Air Force Base Waterkloof
- Silver awarded to 111 Squadron, Air Force Base Waterkloof
- Bronze awarded to 102 Squadron, Air Force Base Waterkloof

**Air Force Aviation Safety Award**

- Gold awarded to Air Force Base Ysterplaat
- Silver awarded to 80 Air Navigation School
- Bronze awarded to 35 Squadron

**Royal Air Force Training Award**

- Gold awarded to the South African Air Force College
- Silver awarded to Air Force Command & Control School
- Bronze awarded to Directorate Aviation Safety

**Fire and Rescue Services of the Year**

- Gold awarded to Air Force Base Langebaanweg
- Silver awarded to Air Force Base Bloemspruit
- Bronze awarded to Air Force Base Ysterplaat

**Air Force Protection Squadron of the Year**

- Gold awarded to 502 Protection Squadron, Air Force Base Ysterplaat

**Air Force Support Unit of the Year**

- Gold awarded to the Air Publication Service Centre, Air Force Base Waterkloof

**Air Force Air Servicing Unit of the Year**

- Gold awarded to 2 Air Servicing Unit, Air Force Base Langebaanweg
- Silver awarded to 6 Air Servicing Unit, Air Force Base Bloemspruit
- Bronze awarded to 2 Air Servicing Unit (Detached), Air Force Base Ysterplaat

**Air Command Directorate of the Year**

- Gold awarded to the Directorate Technical Support Services
- Silver awarded to the Directorate Helicopter Systems
- Bronze awarded to the Directorate Air Transport & Maritime Systems

**Air Force Sword of Peace**

- Gold awarded to Lowveld Air Space Control Sector, Air Force Base Hoedspruit
- Silver awarded to 22 Squadron, Air Force Base Ysterplaat
- Bronze awarded to Air Force Base Ysterplaat

**Air Force Air Servicing Unit of the Year**

- Gold awarded to 22 Air Servicing Unit, Air Force Base Ysterplaat
- Silver awarded to 35 Air Servicing Unit, Air Force Base Ysterplaat
- Bronze awarded to 87 Helicopter Flying School, Air Force Base Bloemspruit

**Air Force Base of the Year**

- Gold awarded to Air Force Base Langebaanweg
- Silver awarded to Air Force Base Ysterplaat
- Bronze awarded to Air Force Base Makhado

**Air Force Reserve Squadron of the Year**

- Gold awarded to 526 Protection Squadron, Air Force Base Langebaanweg
- Silver awarded to 525 Protection Squadron, Air Force Base Overberg
- Bronze awarded to 525 Protection Squadron, Air Force Base Overberg

**Air Force Permanent Flying Unit of the Year**

- Gold awarded to 15 Squadron, Air Force Base Durban
- Silver awarded to 22 Squadron, Air Force Base Ysterplaat
- Bronze awarded to Air Force Base Ysterplaat

- Photograph of trophies by members from 5 Air Servicing Unit, AFB Waterkloof -

ad astra - second edition 2007
The Chief of the South African Air Force (SAAF), Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, briefed the media on the status of the SAAF's aircraft during a gathering at Air Force Base Makhado on 9 March 2007. He was accompanied by senior officers Maj Gen Mandla Mangethe (General Officer Commanding Air Command) and Maj Gen Des Barker (Chief Director Force Preparation).

In his brief, Chief of the Air Force (CAF) referred to aging aircraft and said that repairs were on the verge of being completed. Of the nine C130s in the inventory of the SAAF, six had already been modified and were available for service. Of the remaining three, two were still in the avionic modification phase, while the other was undergoing fatigue tests. These aircraft would be utilised by the SA Air Force until 2015.

Furthermore, 16 of the 30 Agusta A109 Light Utility Helicopters had already been delivered. The A109 can operate in all weather conditions and has a night-vision capability. CAF stated that the upgrading on all radar and control installations include navigation aids and sensors, as well as acquisition of side-by-side training aircraft to simplify pilot training.

He noted that the A109, as an introductory helicopter, was complex for students to fly, and that because of a shortage of instructors, it had been decided to outsource basic helicopter flying to Starlight Aviation in Durban in July 2006. The first 8 students had successfully completed the rotary wing conversion course and were on Oryx conversion.

Lt Gen Gagiano said that the SAAF fully participated in the peace-support initiatives, elections and international exercises in Burundi, the Comoros, the DRC, Madagascar, Sudan and Tanzania. Furthermore, Oryx helicopters from 87 Helicopter Flying School had rescued 35 people who were trapped by heavy snowfalls in Lesotho, and recently a BK117 helicopter had conducted a search-and-rescue mission in the Eastern Cape, when severe floods occurred. CAF pointed out that the main runway at AFB Waterkloof would undergo major reconstruction from July 2007. The project would probably take eighteen months. During this process, Swartkop would support AFB Waterkloof with the air traffic load.

In addition to the briefing, the media and SA Air Force representatives also visited the annual camp for the disabled, which is hosted by 515 Squadron at AFB Makhado. The first camp was held in 1987 as an initiative of Sgt Pierre Els, because there was no national service for disabled children in those years. This year, 86 children and 11 educators from 9 schools participated in the camp, which was held at Lianga Lodge. The cost amounted to R25 000 and was fully sponsored by the Friends of the SAAF.

Amongst the SAAF delegation was Maj Gen M.M.M. Mangethe

Disabled children greet CAF upon his arrival at Lianga Lodge

Some of the disabled children participating in teamwork

Members of the media were invited to view exhibitions at Air Force Base Makhado

The Chief of the South African Air Force, Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, addressed a media gathering at Air Force Base Makhado on 9 March 2007
“Fighter pilots have to rove in the area allotted to them in anyway they like, and when they spot an enemy they attack and shoot them down – anything else is rubbish”

Baron Von Richthofen - 1916

This statement, made more than 90 years ago, still holds true as to what the fundamental role and function of the fighter pilot is today. However, in this age of continually changing tactics and techniques, it is vital that fighter pilots stay abreast of the times, in both thinking and technology, in order to remain the hunter and not become the hunted, irrespective of what limitations the current situation may impose.

Fortunately, in the early 1980s, there was foresight to realise that, owing to political and economic embargos, a programme had to be put in place to manufacture a fighter aircraft locally, independent of international inputs, that would ensure air superiority in the Southern African skies. Hence began the Mirage III upgrade programme that ultimately saw the introduction of the Cheetah family of aircraft.

In 1986 the first production version of the delta-winged Cheetah was rolled out publicly by what was then the Atlas Aircraft Corporation, now known as Denel Aviation. This multi-role aircraft was developed in response to a United Nations arms embargo between 1977 and 1994 and was to provide the SAAF with an effective strike fighter capability into the 21st century. At first glance the Cheetah appears to be a slightly modified Mirage III; however, with nearly 50% of the airframe being replaced and the addition of two manoeuvrability-enhancing canards, new avionics and weapons systems, an in-flight refueling probe, as well as a more powerful engine, the new aircraft was arguably one of the world’s most capable combat aircraft.

The sleek grey Cheetah D attack aircraft was the first variant unveiled in 1986. It was a 2-seater upgraded version of the Mirage IIIDZ and IIID2Z delta-wing trainers, and soon went into service with 89 Combat Flying School at AF B Pietersburg in the Cheetah conversion and fighter/ground attack training role. Approximately 15 years later the Cheetah D received an upgrade to make the transition to Cheetah C a lot more manageable. This modification saw her getting an avionics upgrade, subtle structural improvements, as well as a new engine. A year later, in 1987, the Cheetah D was to be joined by her single-seat sister, the Cheetah E. The Cheetah E, based on the Mirage IIIEZ, is a single-seat, multi-role, all-weather fighter version of the Cheetah D and was well suited for its role as a supersonic strike fighter. Due to the fact that the Cheetah E was a single-seat fighter, the navigation/attack systems were modified for solo management and operation. In 1988 these new combat aircraft were sent to AFB Louis Trichardt (now known as AFB Makhado) to begin service with 5 Squadron. All of the Cheetah Es were retired from active service by the early 90s and were replaced by the ultimate Mirage III upgrade, the Cheetah C.

The Cheetah C represents the ultimate level of sophistication in the Mirage III upgrade programme. With major system upgrades and subtle airframe improvements, it is a worthy successor to the Cheetah E. The modification to the long and droopy nose of the Cheetah D and E to a more aesthetically-pleasing one is probably the most notable difference between the aircraft externally. However, a single piece curved windscreen, replacing the 3-segment windscreen of the older variants, is another good indication. As one ventures into the pilot’s seat of the Cheetah C, the differences between the variants become much more apparent. The state-of-the-art cockpit avionics and the Hands-on Throttle-and-Stick (HOTAS) system is a good giveaway as to what sophistication the pilot has available to him or her. A potent multi-function pulse Doppler radar, as well as an advanced Electronic Warfare suite, adds to this aircraft’s qualification to be the advanced strike fighter that it is. This Cheetah C was fitted with the Snecma Atar 09K50, unlike the previous versions that fitted with the 09C, which makes it a pilot’s dream at high speed with good supersonic acceleration. 2 Squadron at AFB Makhado, which merged with 5 Squadron upon its move from AFB Hoedspruit, became the lucky recipient of 36 Cheetah Cs in early 1993. The Cheetah C, along with the Cheetah D, still enjoys active service at the Squadron today.

The Cheetah aircraft, in all its variants, is one of ambiguities. An airframe based on a 1960’s design carries state-of-the-art avionics that make it a formidable opponent. It has the capability to fly at Mach 2, but can fly straight and level at 100 kts, stall turn at...
zero knots and "pull through" from incredibly low heights. As a pilot's dream it can become a challenge, especially in the low speed ranges (below 300 kts). With an approach speed equivalent to the space shuttle - 190 kts - it is most certainly an aircraft that must be respected. Without a doubt it is one of the legendary SAAF aircraft that has that innate ability to make men out of boys or women out of girls! 

**CHEETAH C**

**Manufacturer:** Atlas / Denel Aircraft

**Dimensions**
- Length: 15.80 m
- Height: 4.55 m
- Wingspan: 8.22 m
- Canard span: 3.73 m

**Weight**
- Basic weight: 8 210 kg
- Clean configuration: 10 735 kg
- Max take-off weight: 16 200 kg

**Flight envelope**
- Max indicated speed: 750 K
- Max Mach No: 2.0
- Service ceiling: 50 000 ft
- Rate of climb: 15 000 ft/min

**Engine**
- Engine: Snecma Atar 09K50
- Length: 6.3 m
- Weight: 1 580 kg
- Thrust: 10 500 lbs
- Thrust with * A/B: 15 050 lbs
- Fuel consumption: 150 l/min
- Fuel consumption * (A/B): 300 l/min

* A/B = Afterburner

**CHEETAH D**

**Manufacturer:** Atlas / Denel Aircraft

**Dimensions**
- Length: 15.80 m
- Height: 4.55 m
- Wingspan: 8.22 m
- Canard span: 3.73 m

**Weight**
- Basic weight: 7 633 kg
- Clean configuration: 9 960 kg
- Max take-off weight: 13 600 kg

**Flight envelope**
- Max indicated speed: 750 K
- Max Mach No: 2.0
- Service ceiling: 50 000 ft
- Rate of climb: 15 000 ft/min

**Engine**
- Engine: Snecma Atar 09K50
- Length: 6.3 m
- Weight: 1 580 kg
- Thrust: 10 500 lbs
- Thrust with * A/B: 15 050 lbs
- Fuel consumption: 101 l/min
- Fuel consumption * (A/B): 294 l/min

* A/B = Afterburner
South Africa's Fighter Base of Excellence

Air Force Base Makhado

- Contribution by 102 Sqn by Lt Col Brink Schlesinger; Article by Maj James du Toit and Ms Hanrie Greebe
- Photographs supplied by photographers, 3 ASU, Maj James du Toit, WO2 Christo Crous and Ms Hanrie Greebe
- Historical photograph courtesy of SAAF Museum, Swartkop

Directorate Combat Systems

Directorate Combat Systems (DCS) is responsible for overseeing fighter-related systems at Air Force Base (AFB) Makhado. DCS was established on 1 April 1999 as part of the new structures in the Air Command of the SANDF. From January 1999 until final establishment Col C. Gagiano acted as Director, when Brig Gen B. D. Hauptfleisch was promoted to this rank after his return from duty in the USSR as military attache' and then officially appointed in the post of Director Combat Systems. Brig Gen Hauptfleisch retired at the end of 2001 and was followed by Brig Gen O. A. Schur. He served in the post until 31 January 2005, when Brig Gen P. du Plessis took over the reins, and he is still presently the incumbent of the post.

The first SSO Combat Operational Systems, Col J.J. Toerien, was followed by Col F. N. Vermaak, and the present incumbent is Col L.A. Bath. All supporting technical personnel who were formerly based at Air Logistics Command were incorporated into the Directorate in terms of the new structures. The first SSO Combat System Engineering and Integrated Log Support to serve in the Directorate was Col Blackie Swart. He retired and was followed by Col S. J. Bothma. He was followed by Col J.J. Botha, who is now being replaced by Lt Col Van den Berg. The first SSO Electronic Warfare in the Directorate was Col G. J. Swanepoel. Col W. L. Cohen took over on 1 January 2005 and is presently still in the post.

A further system of the Directorate consists of the Boeing 707, converted for Aerial Refueling to provide a force-multiplying as well as a strategic intercontinental transport capability. This ensures an extended range and endurance for all the fighter aircraft on inventory in the SAAF. Electronic Warfare (EW) systems on all platforms in the SAAF are managed by SSO EW, Col Bill Cowen, from within this Directorate. The EW Centre resides with 5 Air Servicing Unit at AFB Waterkloof.

Air Force Base Makhado

Twenty kilometres from the foot of the majestic Soutpansberg Mountains, in the Limpopo Province, lies AFB Makhado, the South African Air Force's (SAAF's) fire-air-power base, fondly known as the "Fortress of the North", as depicted in its emblem – Castrum Borealis.

This year, 2007, AFB Makhado will celebrate its 20th birthday, after it opened on 14 October 1987. Strategically, the base is there to support the people of South Africa. It is currently steered by Officer Commanding Brig Gen Chris Delport, a mission controller who took over command from Maj Gen Des Barker in June 2006.

AFB Makhado has the following lodger units: 2 Squadron (Sqn), 85 Combat Flying School (Combat FS), 102 Sqn (Reserve Squadron), 3 Air Servicing Unit (ASU) and 515 Sqn (Security).

AFB Makhado's Military Strategic Objectives are:

- to enhance and maintain comprehensive defensive capabilities;
- to promote peace, security, and stability in the region and on the continent;
- to support the people of South Africa.

It is home to people who are hungry for that energising roar coming from our fighter jets. They must have a passion for fast aircraft, and have the willingness to give up the entertainment and comfort of the big cities – for AFB Makhado is situated in the hot heart of the bushveld, with all its pride and prejudice. Here are dedicated personnel who love their environment, people who are entrusted with the most expensive equipment in the SAAF. These people have to make split-second decisions; they cannot afford a re-think, particularly those men and women in control of the Cheetah and Hawk aircraft. Due to the extremely high-speed manoeuvrings and tactics of these aircraft that are executed in split seconds, there is no room for mistakes.

AFB Makhado is firstly managed and controlled by Director Combat Systems, Brig Gen Pierre du Plessis, but falls directly under Brig Gen Chris Delport, the Officer Commanding. The mission of AFB Makhado is to provide Combat Operations support through a process of total systems integration.

AFB Makhado’s people are always at a 100% readiness to support initiatives of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF); therefore discipline is of the utmost importance to Brig Gen Delport. There are 800 uniformed members, with a total of 1 480 members working and 2 480 staying in the Braambos residential area. Members believe in serving the community through various interaction campaigns,
such as Siyandiza, run by Reserve Force Capt Thakalani. AFB Makhado obtained Freedom of the City of Makhado and will celebrate this freedom again on 07/07/07.

Brig Gen Chris Delport believes that his members should be fit and healthy at all times and is proud of members’ excellent achievements in sport.

AFB Makhado will participate in an Air Power Capability seminar in October 2007, which coincides with the local beer fest, a welcome respite for this water-dry unit.

The Base is facing a few challenges, of which the current water situation is a primary concern. The water supply to AFB Makhado comes from the Sand River and is pumped over 20 kilometres. When one approaches the main entrance to the Base, a traffic light against the wall indicates the level of water. When the light is green, residents may water their gardens on rotation, but beware the red light! Another challenge for the unit is transport on the Base itself – facilities are kilometres apart, which necessitates numerous military vehicles.

Brig Gen Delport is looking forward to a project of building an 18-hole golf course with facilities in the Pufuri Game Reserve behind the residential area. This will provide work for 320 people and is something for the golfers to look forward to, so get those clubs out now and start practising!

General Delport also has a passion for upliftment and renewal. The children of members will benefit from a project through which new five classrooms will be added to the current primary school in the Braambos residential area.

AFB Makhado is also upgrading the facilities at Roodewal bombing range in order to facilitate the hosting of all visiting groups. A hanger will be built, and the accommodation is also being upgraded.

Other facilities at the Base include its own hospital under the strong and friendly management Lt Col Riekie Roos. There are houses, duplexes, simplexes, a sport centre with sports fields, a shop, a hairdresser, messes for all ranks, swimming pools, a recreational park, a Military Police Agency, and even an Environmental Health officer who catches, among other things, snakes, and even an Environmental Health officer with facilities in the Pufuri Game Reserve behind the residential area. This will provide work for 320 people and is something for the golfers to look forward to, so get those clubs out now and start practising!

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The Base interacts with the community on a regular basis and there is also cooperation with local emergency services. This base also manages its own monthly newspaper. All expenses are paid out of their Non-Public funds, so look out for the Observer newsletter.

The Tower

Then there’s the tower - not the Two Towers from the Lord of the Rings, but the only tower and eye of AFB Makhado, currently controlled by merely six air traffic controllers. This is half the strength of the post structure, but they definitely make a difference under the command of Lt Col Pierre Taljaardt. They literally control everything to do with the runway – be it animals on the runway that might be a danger to aircraft, or the aircraft themselves, which they guide safely on and off the runways.

Control tower at AFB Makhado

Health and fitness – aspects of contentment

At AFB Makhado sport and health management are interactive aspects of the contentment of the Base’s community. Sport serves not only as an instrument of force preparation, but also unifies serving members and their families. Every Tuesday people from the Base, including the primary school children, assemble in groups on the sport field for power exercises. On Thursdays heart rates are aerobically accelerated to the beat of music. This practice has proved to be successful and popular, as an average of 350 people participate voluntarily in this fitness programme.

The sport facilities at AFB Makhado are well-equipped and maintained. Twenty-two types of sport are actively practised at the Base, of which the gymnasium, soccer and bowls are the most popular. Many kilometres of tarred roads on the Base provide excellent opportunities for athletes and cyclists, and it is notable how many people are out on the road, exercising at 5 in the morning.

In the afternoon personnel from the sport office assist in coaching athletics at the primary school and preparation of the tracks. In a community where sport is one of the main social activities, it is not surprising that people excel. AFB Makhado is proud to have winners such as Capt Catherine Labuschagne, who is the current SANDF triathlon women’s champion. AFB Makhado is the holder of the 2006 award for the fittest base in the SA Air Force.

An excellent 24-hour Health Centre complements the fitness drive at AFB Makhado. Equipped with twelve beds, a dentist, community service doctor, professional health care practitioners, chemist, psychologist, radiology assistant, health inspector, pest controller and ops medics, the Centre offers a comprehensive service to the base. For specialist services, the Health Centre cooperates with doctors in Louis Trichardt, or patients are referred to 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria. To make the Health Service even more user-friendly, a bus provides transportation to 1 Military Hospital on a daily basis.

Professional personnel and neat facilities reassure visitors to the Health Centre that they will be well taken care of – their health is an asset.

2 Squadron

2 Squadron (Sqn) renders Air Combat Operations, and its role is to provide Fighter Pilot training, Counter Air Operations, Offensive Fire Support, Reconnaissance, Autonomous Operations and Electronic Warfare. On 13 May 1940, Maj N.G. Niblock-Stuart, 19 pilots and 24 groundcrew left AFB Waterkloof for Cairo. On 1 June 1940 they began training on Gauntlets at Abu Seur. Another group, under the leadership of Lt S. van Breda Theron, received training on Hurricanes and Furies before leaving for Kenya on 22 May 1940.

It was in Kenya where the Squadron received 2 cheetah cubs as mascots, and the historic name “Flying Cheetahs” was conceived. A last group left on 26 May 1940 by boat for Mombasa. These groups, as part of 1 Sqn, formed the foundation of 2 Sqn.

A crest was designed by Cpl Jack Friedman on 5 September 1940, and on 1 October 1940, 2 Sqn was officially formed, although it had been operating independently from 1 Sqn for months.
2 Sqn went on various deployments and achieved successes around the world, especially in the early 1940s, when they helped stop the enemy’s attack at El Alamein with a counter-attack launched on 23 October 1942. During October and November of 1942, 2 Sqn’s fighter-bombers claimed 26 aircraft destroyed, 6 possibly destroyed and 12 damaged. With the termination of the North African campaign on 13 May 1943, the SAAF No 7 wing (comprising 2 Sqn, 4 Sqn and 5 Sqn) was considered to be home to the best dive bombers in the world. SAAF No 7 wing were involved in many successful operations all over the world, which included: East Africa (The Juba and The Lakes, 1941); Western Desert (Sidi Rezegh, Agedabia, Gazala and El Alamein, 1941 to 1943); French North Africa (El Hamma and Tunis, 1943); Mediterranean, 1943; South East Europe, 1944 to 1945; and Italy (the Sangre and Gothic Line, 1943 to 1945). After the end of World War 2, the Squadron was disbanded after returning to South Africa. 2 Sqn was re-established at AFB Waterkloof in June 1946, using Spitfire MK9s.

Mirages continued to arrive at intervals, and in November 1964 the first dual-seater Mirage IIIBZ arrived at the Squadron. Prior to this arrival, pilots received training in the simulator only. In July 1965 the first Mirage IIIEZ arrived and relieved the load for flying duties. Thereafter, the Dzs, dual for the EZ, arrived. In June 1974 the Mirage IIIR2Z arrived at the Squadron. In 1952 a Cheetah cub was donated to the Squadron by a farmer from the then Northern Transvaal. It added to the lively spirit of the Squadron and later became very effective in interception missions. Afterwards it was given to the Pretoria Zoo, and eventually died on a game farm in October 1972.

The Squadron officially received its colours during a parade at AFB Waterkloof on 3 May 1966. During December 1978, 2 Sqn officially took leave of AFB Waterkloof and moved to AFB Hoedspruit, where they were stationed until the phasing out of the Mirage III in October 1990. On 16 March 1985 the Squadron received the Freedom of the City of Johannesburg.

This Squadron is not involved in peace support, but they are always ready to perform peace enforcement. So these men and women eat, sleep and live to be fighters. A typical day starts at 7 o’clock, when crew have coffee. Here they have an information session, discussing typical aircraft status, shortages, airfield status, radar frequencies and training issues. With current planning before each individual sortie, briefing continues, and only thereafter does the enjoyable part come – flying the mean fast machines. Currently 2 Sqn is training the last two pilots for the Cheetah conversion, and the two lucky members are Capt Ryan Cokayne and Capt J.P. Norden.

“Yes, the frame and motor of the Cheetah are dated, but there will be growth at the
The last two pilots for the Cheetah C conversion are Capt Ryan Cokayne and Capt J.P Norden.

Squadron once the Gripen arrives in May 2008, even if it takes some time for the new aircraft system to be implemented,” says Lt Col Dormehl. So if you think you have the right attitude, discipline, enjoy good health, have good judgement, are passionate, energetic, can take up challenges, and are 20-something, you should apply to become a “vlamgat”. Yes, and we look forward to flying the next 9-ship Cheetah formation, to promote the image of the SAAF and to show the SAAF’s teeth.

85 Combat Flying School

DETRIMENTO SUMUS – meaning “Total Destruction”, is the well-known motto welcoming you to the only Fighter flying school of Hawks in the SAAF – 85 Combat FS. Lt Col Daan “Ranger” van der Linde is their passionate Officer Commanding, trying to make sense of all systems that need to be integrated. He currently has numerous frustrated pilots who cannot fly liberally (only a third of hours flown), owing to the following challenges:

- Limited training material for air crew
- Training of student aircrew before completion of OT and E
- Lack of logistical support
- Shortage of pilots
- Minimum training for initial cadre air crew

85 Combat FS started in the mid-1960s as Air Operational School Langebaanweg. On 4 October 1967, Air Operational School relocated to then Pietersburg as Advanced Flying School with the Vampire Mk 52 and Mk 55 until 1972, whereafter they started flying the Impala Mk 1 (Aermacchi MB326M).

Since the early 1960s the Impala Mk I and Mk II jet aircraft have served the SA Air Force continuously.

In January 2005, 85 Combat FS started migrating to AFB Makhado. A highlight, but for many members a sad occasion, was the phasing out of the Impala Mk I and II on 30 November 2005. A new era dawned when the first Hawk Mk 120 arrived at 85 Combat FS Makhado on 9 September 2005.

The typical path of a fighter pilot for training on the SAAF’s Hawk aircraft at 85 Combat FS is as follows. After obtaining wings at Central Flying School Langebaanweg, a selected pilot does the following:

- Hawk Mk 120 Conversion – 3 months (38 hours)
- Fighter Orientation Course – 3 months (35 hours)
- Operational Training Course – 6 months (117 hours)
- Consolidation Phase – 12 months (200 hours)
- Flight Leader Course – 3 months (40 hours)
- Strike Leader Course – 1 month (20 hours)
- Instructors Conversion – 3 months (38 hours)
- Pilot Attack Instructors Course – 1 month (25 hours)
- Strike Navigator

In his or her third year, the fighter pilot is ready for a transfer to 2 Squadron. 85 Combat FS also has some of the best training equipment in the world, being equipped with Computer Based Instruction System (CBIS) and Virtual Aircraft Training System (VATS) and Operational Flight Trainer (OFT).

Competent ground crew ensure that AFB Makhado performs at its peak 24 hours of every day

In 1974 the Mirage III D2Z was introduced, and from 1975 to 1980 the Canadair CL-13B Sabre 6 was flown. In 1980 the Impala Mk 2 (Aermacchi MB326K) served at the Advanced Flying School. In 1982 the name changed to 85 Combat FS. On 1 July 1986, 85 Combat FS had the sole responsibility for training combat pilots. 85 Combat FS did operational service in Angola/South West Africa (Namibia) and received Unit Colours on 4 October 1986, with National Colours in 1989. In September 1992 the Gannet was introduced to the emblem and on 1 January 1993 it combined with 83 Jet Flying School and relocated to AFB Hoedspruit, which included the Silver Falcon Aerobatic Team.

In 1998, with National Colours on 4 October 1988, the emblem was introduced and the first Hawk Mk 120 trainer arrived at 85 Combat FS, featuring the Silver Falcon Aerobatic Team.

A new era dawned when the first Hawk Mk 120 trainer arrived at 85 Combat FS, AFB Makhado, on 9 September 2005.
3 Air Servicing Unit

- Supporting a formidable fighter future -

“The teamwork - it is amazing how much you can accomplish when it doesn’t matter who gets the credit” (Anonymous)

3 Air Servicing Unit (ASU), situated at AFB Makhado, is responsible for the provision of combat aircraft maintenance through sustainable, cost-effective and safe practices. The secret behind 3 ASU’s success in sustaining an effective combat aircraft maintenance capability can be found in their motto, “Tshumusano”, meaning “teamwork”.

Until April 1999 3 ASU was known as Base Aircraft Servicing Section (BASS) and consisted of the armament section, base workshops, wheelbay, engine test cell, Petrol, Oil and Lubricants (POL) and battery repair section. Base workshops included sections such as aircraft welding, fitter-and-turner, as well as sheetmetal. BASS conducted all minor repairs on aircraft, while aircraft servicing were done at the Squadron Aircraft Servicing Section (SASS).

The 3 Air Servicing Unit workshops have an Avionic Section, Ground Support Servicing Section, Aircraft Servicing Section, Simulator Section, Technical Training Section and a Missile Section

had to be transferred to the newly established section to ensure control of runway maintenance and resources. These included the Radio and Radar ground section, Fuel section, Airfield Maintenance section and Fire section. By April 2002, the Carpenter section, as well as Environmental Services, was formally transferred, making 3 ASU an entity that operates purely to core business.

During the last quarter of 2003, the SA Air Force’s strategic decision to transfer the helicopter capability to AFB Hoedspruit resulted in the withdrawal of the helicopter maintenance capability from 3 ASU. Several ASU members were transferred to AFB Hoedspruit and other SAAF Units. It was decided to place the new Hawk aircraft at AFB Makhado. This decision resulted in 3 ASU’s involvement in the planning and prerequisite training of identified Hawk personnel by the beginning of 2004. During 2006 renovations were made in preparation for the Hawk and Gripen and their related equipment, which will be serviced by 3 ASU. The Wheel Bay was one of the first sections to be upgraded and is now able to deliver serviceable Hawk wheels and components to 85 Combat Flying School. The first P-Star servicing on the Hawk was conducted during November 2006.

While 3 ASU is already servicing the Hawk and gearing up for the arrival of the Gripen, the unit still provides maintenance on the Cheetah, which is due to be phased out. Each aircraft type has its own specialised tools and equipment. Looking at the cost-effective way in which space at 3 ASU is utilised, it is evident that the unit is run on sound logistic management principles.

102 Air Force Reserve Squadron

The role and function of 102 Air Force Reserve Squadron is to supply light air support and reconnaissance to the SAAF and Governmental Interest Groups in Limpopo Province. People at 102 Sqn consider themselves honoured and privileged to be an integral part of the flying arm of AFB Makhado. The acceptance, support and assistance rendered to us as civilian pilots are commendable.

As dedicated pilots and loyal officers we are committed to the key values of the SA Air Force. Our motto - “NOS NOBIS FUTURI” (We Are Concerned with the Future) - also reflects the daily life of our members who are all successful entrepreneur, both in the business world and farming environment. The mutual love for flying, especially under military discipline, generates cohesion between members scattered throughout the province.

A Beechcraft Baron operated by the SA Air Force Reserve - 102 Squadron

102 Sqn consists of seven pilots and two non-flying members who handle finances, personnel and operations. Twelve aircraft are on strength, ranging from a pressurised Piper Cheyenne Turboprop, Beechcraft Barons, Beechcraft Bonanzas, Cessna 210s and Cessna 182s. The twins are normally utilised for transportation, while the singles are mainly used for reconnaissance and support. If the role and function of Air Force Reserves are redefined to keep up with the changing flying reality, 102 Sqn has 3 helicopters at its disposal for SA Air Force utilisation.

102 Sqn was established in 1963 as a Commando squadron at Wonderboom Airport with Commandant Willie Botha as the first Officer Commanding. It was then moved to AFB Swartkop where Commandant Obie Oberholzer took over the command in 1970. In 1986, 102 Sqn was relocated to AFB Pietersburg with Commandant Phil de Jager as Officer Commanding. At this stage the Squadron had 12 pilots and 11 observers on strength. In 1990 came the first financial cutbacks and more stringent qualifications were put in place in order to be a reserve pilot, which then saw the pilot
numbers dwindle to eight. With the closing down of AFB Pietersburg in 1992, 102 Sqn was relocated to the then new AFB Louis Trichardt, now AFB Makhado, under command of Lt Col Piet Vorster, where he served with distinction until handing over command to the current Officer Commanding, Lt Col Brink Schlesinger, at the beginning of 2001. 102 Sqn has a proud heritage that over the past 10 years, in the annual assessments, has always placed it the top three places of the nine Air Force Reserve Squadrons. At least five compulsory weekend training camps are held annually where members practise their general, instrument and night flying skills under the watchful eyes of dedicated training officers, instructors and pilots of 2 Sqn, AFB Makhado.

Owing to the commitment and interest of AFB Makhado Officer Commanding, Brig Gen Des Barker, a healthy interaction exists between permanent force members of AFB Makhado and 102 Sqn, especially during the debriefing after night flying at our regular braais.

515 Squadron
- Protecting the Fortress of the North -

"SEMPER PARATUS" - “always ready”

In the simmering heat of the northern regions of South Africa, there resides a mighty protection force for the country, always ready, always vigilant...

This is AFB Makhado, home of the SA Air Force fighter community, where the heart of the warrior burns with the flame of eternal readiness. Yet, even the protectors need to be protected. The onus of protecting such valuable investments rests with 515 Squadron (Sqn), which is tasked with the mission to protect combat operations assets through the employment of combat-ready protection resources. The Base regularly participates in exercises and regional shows where assets are deployed away from home territory. At such times 515 Sqn ensures that the assets of the Base, both human and equipment, retain safe integrity. When the Base is visited, the front line engagement is with the Protection Squadron, which maintains a consistent level of professionalism. Visitors immediately feel welcome, yet there is no doubt that 515 Sqn is an iron fist in a velvet glove. As AFB Makhado receives a significant number of international visitors, discipline within 515 Sqn is a key success factor.

The Officer Commanding 515 Sqn, Lt Col Nukeri, says: “It is important that we have to be sharp at all times; we portray the image of the SA Air Force.” Access control to the domestic area of the base is enforced at AFB Makhado, where people still have to sign in when they enter the living area. Col Nukeri says: “This is the only fighter base in the country. People do not see security as important until they lose something. If you make access user-friendly, you compromise your assets.” Professionally trained access-control staff and state-of-the-art equipment are therefore prerequisites for the successful operation of the Squadron. Lt Col Nukeri explains that the Squadron’s target is to have 85% operational readiness.

Since the Base is far from the nearest town, entertainment differs from that at other bases. However, the fact that AFB Makhado is the only fighter base in the country instils a sense of pride in the people who work there; they want to be part of the Fortress of the North. 515 Sqn is engaged in a number of projects, such as the annual camp for the disabled. According to Lt Col Nukeri, the Squadron started the project 20 years ago. Mentally disabled young people are taught basic military skills over a five-day period. Lt Col Nukeri says: “We treat them like any other people and the result is very empowering for them. They end the camp with a parade where the Officer Commanding of the Base hands over medals.”

Furthermore, the Squadron presents a bivouac camp for Grade 11 learners, with the same programme as for the camp for the disabled, but with additional visual weapons safety and identification demonstrations. Personnel from the Squadron also assist with the bi-weekly fitness programme, where the entire base community, school children included, have the opportunity to participate.

This Squadron is an excellent example of how protection of the SA Air Force’s assets is enforced while still making people feel welcome at the base - well done 515 Squadron! ☀

Members from the security squadrons must be vigilant and prepared at all times. Perimeter patrolling at AFB Makhado’s operational area is a key function of the security squadron to ensure that operational resources are protected at all times.

A members from 515 Squadron performing access control at the main entrance of the AFB Makhado operational area
The Commander of the United States Air Force Europe (USAFE), Gen William T. Hobbins, ended his three-day visit to South Africa on 2 March 2007. Gen Hobbins, who was accompanied by his wife and top officials of the USAFE, was in the country at the invitation of the Chief of the Air Force (CAF), Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano.

According to a statement from the office of CAF in the Tshwane Metro, Gen Hobbins (currently based in Germany) was on a goodwill visit to South Africa to discuss air policing and surveillance, tactical command and control interoperability within a multinational environment, as well as participation in Africa Aerospace and Defence 2008.

While in the country, Gen Hobbins visited the South African Air Force Headquarters, AFB Makhado in Limpopo province, AFB Hoedspruit and Kapama Lodge in Mpumalanga.

Meanwhile, the wife of the Commander of USAFE, Mrs Robbin L. Hobbins, visited Phidisa Clinic at 1 Military Hospital in Thaba Tshwane and the Circle of Life community HIV/AIDS support organisation in Silverton, Pretoria, on 1 March 2007.

Brig Gen Dhlomo of 1 Military Hospital welcomed Mrs Hobbins and her entourage at the hospital and briefed them on current events and projects. Her entourage then proceeded to Phidisa Clinic where people with HIV/AIDS are treated. They went to different sections at the Clinic: the laboratory, counselling and procedure rooms. From the Clinic they went to Silverton to the Circle of Life organisation. This organisation works in close collaboration with the local clinics. They provide a place where people living with HIV/AIDS can come and relax in an informal environment and where they can share experiences and problems and build new relationships.

Circle of Life’s Pastor Simons took Mrs Hobbins to two houses in Silverton where children living with HIV/AIDS reside. The American Embassy has been assisting the organisation with funds. Mrs Hobbins said she was touched by the work this organisation has been doing.