

# ***FIBUA Training***

## **for the Reserve Force**

– *By: Captain D.J. Barnard, Commander Medical Task Group, 3 Med Bn Gp and Ms R. Lord*  
*Photographs: Second Lieutenant J. Jacobs and Ms R. Lord*

**F**rom 4 to 19 April 2011 a ground-breaking military training programme for units and personnel of the Reserve Force took place at Naval Base Wingfield in Cape Town. This first ever Reserve specialist course commenced with Major Francois Marais as the Company Commander and his very adept Second in Command, Captain John Ecclestone.

The training that was conducted is more commonly known by the acronym FIBUA (Fighting in Built-up Areas), a concept of urban warfare, the face of future operations. It is the capture of dwellings, structures and buildings from hostile forces in surrounding areas en route to and within the objective using necessary force with the objective of losing few or preferably



*Staff Sergeant C. Mohammed and Lance Corporal S.M. Manong from 3 Med Bn Gp treating the “injured member”*





***3 Med Bn Gp members of the Med Task Group  
who participated in Exercise FIBUA with Brigadier General Molefe***

none of own forces, within the rules of engagement.

The essence of FIBUA is combat at close quarters in urban environments, during which it is often extremely difficult to differentiate between hostiles and civilians. There is no room for mistakes, and split-second decisions have to be made. Consequently constant vigilance, strict discipline and accurate communication are essential for keeping own-force casualties down to a minimum.

An exercise of this nature requires many months of liaison, co-ordination and careful planning, not least concerning logistics. In the days prior to

Monday 4 April 2011 the troops participating in the exercise began to assemble. During this time equipment was issued and they were shown their accommodation and messing facilities at the headquarters of the Cape Town Rifles (Dukes) at Fort iKapa, opposite Wingfield. Apart from the Dukes, who supplied the majority of the men and women that participated, the other Reserve Force units that were represented were 3 Para Bn's 'C' Coy, Grahamstown's First City, and 30 Field Workshop. Several FIBUA-trained Regular Force instructors, led by Master Warrant Officer (MWO) Shaun Louw (Regimental Sergeant Major of 1 Parachute Battalion in Bloemfontein) were provided by 1 Parachute Battalion. The learning co-ordinator was Captain



John Ecclestone of the Dukes, with Staff Sergeant Jerry van der Mescht, the combat ready warrant officer.

The real-time medical support was supplied by 3 Medical Bn Group (3 Med Bn Gp) with Captain Deon Barnard as the Medical Task Group Commander. Medical Task Group One from 3 Med Bn Gp Western Cape comprised 18 Operational Emergency Care Practitioners (OECPs), Ambulance Emergency Assistants (AEAs) and Basic Ambulance Assistants (BAAs) along with two members from Area Military Health Unit Western Cape (AMHU WC).

A medical facility was already in operation at Fort iKapa and one was later established at the Airport Tower as part of the final attack and demonstration. Operational Emergency Care Practitioners and Basic Ambulance Assistants,

each with the necessary medical equipment, were deployed to the various platoons participating in the Exercise.

At 06h00 on 4 April 2011 the company set off from Fort iKapa base in Acacia Park on the first stage of the day's training, which would become a daily, but necessary 7 km walk to the training area that included the abandoned Airport Tower at the back of SAS WINGFIELD Naval Base.

The first two weeks of the exercise were devoted to FIBUA developmental training and re-training in various techniques, ranging from urban house clearing, infiltration and walking patrols to the use of various stun grenades and thunderflashes, as well as simulated live ammunition in the form of blanks. It culminated in a replicated, complete company assault – Exercise Ledebo – a realistic FIBUA demonstration.



*3 Med Bn Gp medics treating the injured*





*Injured hostile*

There was much behind-the-scenes planning and preparation before this demonstration, which was witnessed by the guests, selected VIPs, the media (including television) and other stakeholders.

In the designated area a temporary tactical operations headquarters had been constructed under a tree whose low hanging branches concealed it completely from sight. Here an operational briefing was given by Major Marais, assisted by Master Warrant Officer Louw. With the aid of aerial photographs they presented a fictional scenario to the guests. The “situation” centred on an imaginary Central African country named Groba, in which destabilising factions were fighting for control of its economic heartland. As a result of this internal dissension the South African military had been sent in to stabilise and restore peace to the country. As

Major Marais spoke, shouts and intermittent mortar fire could be heard in the distance, as well as fire from light machine-guns and the thump of grenades. This created the impression among the guests that this was indeed a war zone, and the growing tension was palpable.

After the briefing the group moved to a vantage point from which they watched three soldiers in full combat gear demonstrate the short version of the obstacle course. They leaped in and out of the control tower’s windows, balanced along window sills, climbed up onto and down from a ledge high above one of the bay windows, and high-stepped through a series of large tyres with their R4 rifles held aloft. The relative ease with which the soldiers completed the course was testimony to the demanding training they had undergone.



Without warning there came the tak-tak-tak of gunfire a few metres away; a sniper had concealed himself beneath some wire fencing and palm fronds. 'Mortar bombs' landed nearby while smoke grenades emitted billowing clouds of green smoke. The South African forces, armed with R4 rifles, light machine-guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, launched an attack on the control tower, gradually moving up the different levels and clearing each room as a couple of 'hostiles' in civilian clothes sprinted across the open area, away from the fighting.

The air was filled with shouts: "Door right! Window left! Cover me! Grenade! One thousand, two thousand, three thousand!" BOOM! One explosion after another rocked the building, while the high-pitched tak-tak-tak of the R4s competed with the deeper rapid-fire ta-ta-ta of LMGs as soldiers swarmed all over the four-storey building. Some took up defensive positions on top of the roof while others secured the rooms inside. Suddenly they came under fire. Another sniper had concealed himself on the top floor of a nearby two-storey building. The reaction was immediate, with some troops returning fire and forcing the sniper to take cover, while their

comrades used their covering fire to launch a counter-assault. But one of the soldiers had been wounded! Within seconds a team of ops medics took charge of the situation, assessed the seriousness of the wounds and stabilised the patient.

Minimal injuries were sustained during the exercise, with only a few bruises and cuts, the occasional insect bite and a practice grenade exploding prematurely, which caused the loss of some skin on a member's hand. The Emergency Medical Centre facility treated the normal daily ailments, ranging from influenza to sunburn. Three very realistic trauma wound simulations were carried out and performed by the Medical Personnel on the ground, skilfully supplied by the talents of the "Creature and Squirring Artery Shop" of Lieutenant Colonel Cliff Maddix.

Once the exercise was over Major General Nkabinde thanked all those who participated. He praised them for their commitment to the Reserves, their discipline and willingness to take time off work to undergo this rigorous but extremely valuable training which, he assured them, had been a resounding success.



*Smoke billows from a building as troops move in for the assault*

