

Change of Command at Regiment Oranjerivier

Article and Photos by Regine Lord.

On 14 February 2015, during a parade at the regimental headquarters of Regiment Oranjerivier (ROR), the outgoing Officer Commanding of the regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Jaco Olivier, ceremonially handed over the symbol of command, a silvered 90mm practice round, to his successor and Acting Officer Commanding, Major J.P. Wessels.

During his address to the guests, Lt Col Olivier looked back on his 27 years in the Army, from national service to the Reserve Force and to his time as OC of ROR. He spoke about the value of time, and the importance of achieving a sustainable balance between the various aspects of one's life, citing the words of Brian Dyson, the CEO of Coca Cola:



Photo 1: Members and guests at the change of command parade of Regiment Oranjerivier at Fort Ikapa on 14 February 2015.



Photo 2: Arrival of the command group: Captain Pierre de Villiers and Captain Thembelani Dlakadla accompanied Lt Col J.S. Olivier and Maj J.P. Wessels to the podium.

“Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends and spirit – and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends and spirit – are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they

will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life.”

Deft time management skills are required to balance all these aspects, while fulfilling all one’s duties and responsibilities in both civilian and military life. This is especially true for Reserve Force members.



Photo 5: The outgoing Officer Commanding of ROR, Lt Col J.S. Olivier, addressed the gathering

Lt Col Olivier expressed gratitude for having had an opportunity to make a difference and add value, whether it be to the life of an individual, a unit member or any other person, and to be able to give them the chance to grow within the structures provided. He said: “When I took over command, the Regiment had a relatively small membership, and our main objective was to maximise and increase the number of unit members as well as the effectiveness of our day to day operations. We applied new ideas and methodologies and strived to improve our service levels by applying normal business disciplines. We wanted to create a feeling that ROR is your home and that you belong here.” He closed with the inspiring words of ROR: “Faithful, true and steady – come what may, we are ready”.



Photo 3: Master of Ceremonies Major Philip Wessels ensured that the parade started punctually and ran smoothly



Photo 4: Chaplain P.J. Holder read the moving Tanker's Prayer, which asks for protection when going into combat.

As is tradition in the regiment, Master Warrant Officer Karel Minnie, the Regimental Sergeant Major, lit the Flame of the Armour, whose significance and symbolism was explained by Maj Philip Wessels, the Master of Ceremonies for the event:



The Flame of the Armour symbolises the inextinguishable spirit and energy of the South African Armoured Corps. It is a visual reminder of the fire that burns within each Armour soldier, inspiring him or her to excel, and to advance fearlessly in the face of the enemy. It also embodies the destructive firepower of the Armour, when attacking the enemy in the defence of our country. The stirring Pantserlied – or Song of the Armoured Corps – similarly inspires its members to stand firm and proud, faithful to God, our country and our task.

Photo 6: The SA Army Band Western Cape under Warrant Officer First Class André van Schalkwyk created the perfect musical backdrop to the proceedings.



Photo 7: Lt Col J.S. Olivier ceremonially handed over the symbol of command to Major J.P. Wessels, the Acting Officer Commanding.

The Acting Officer Commanding, Major J.P. Wessels, said: “ROR is a very unique unit with a small amount of personnel. The difference is that a small group of powerful and motivated people are worth more. We would like to improve the image of the Armour and the SA Army more generally to the rest of South Africa, by encouraging even more people

to become involved in festivals, open days, corporate events, and similar. I would also like to get the families of all personnel more involved at the unit, as I believe that the driving force and motivation of any soldier comes from the home. We will



Photo 8: Current and previous Officers Commanding of Regiment Oranjerivier stand proudly in front of the Rooikat: Maj J.P. Wessels, Lt Col J.S. Olivier (2009 to February 2015), Lt Col W.A. Rall (1996 to 2003, and again from 2005 to 2009) and Lt Col. C.G. van Zyl (1989 to 1996).

always strive to be the most effective, organised and professional Reserve Force Unit in the Armour Corps. We will do our utmost to live up to the Code of Conduct of Uniformed Members and to keep it part of our daily striving towards perfection. I am an avid believer in transformation and will therefore support the transformation in all assets of the unit to the best of my ability. ROR will make every effort to supply the best support to our immediate Headquarters as well as to the bigger SA Army."

Major J.P. Wessels cited the words of Richard Branson as his motivation: "Don't think 'What's the cheapest way to do it, or what's the fastest way to do it?' Think 'What's the most amazing way to do it?'"

Also present at the Change of Command parade were Brigadier General Chris Gildenhuis (previous General Officer Commanding of the Armour Formation and currently the Director of Operations at the Joint Operations Division), Captain (SAN) (Ret) Trunell Morom, Chief Warrant Officer Abel Mabote, Warrant Officer of the SA Army Armour Formation, and the Officers Commanding of several Reserve Force regiments.



Photo 9: Col William O. Jansen, SSO Force Preparation at the SA Army Armour Formation, assisted by Capt T. Dlakadla, handed out the medals.

After the conclusion of the change of command ceremony, the new Officer Commanding, Major J.P. Wessels and the functionary for the event, Colonel William O. Jansen, SSO Force Preparation at the SA Army Armour Formation, were escorted to the podium for the medal parade. The following medals were handed out:



Photo 10: The medal recipients of Regiment Oranjerivier: Lt Col D.H. Marais, Capt R.R.R. Kruger, Cpl G. Pekeur and Cpl. M.S. Jongile.

- Lieutenant Colonel D. H. Marais – Closure Commemoration Medal
- Captain Reinhardt R.R. Kruger – Good Service Medal
- Corporal G. Pekeur – Good Service Medal
- Corporal M.S. Jongile – Good Service Medal
- Lance Corporal V.P. George – General Service Medal (4 Maintenance Unit)

We wish both the outgoing OC and his successor much success for the future.

History of the Regiment

ROR is a Reserve Force armoured regiment, whose mission it is to execute armour and reconnaissance tasks for the South African Army's Armour Formation. The regimental motto is “oculi et aures” (eyes and ears), and the badge, which is worn on the traditional black beret of the Armoured Corps, depicts an eagle with outspread wings.

The Regiment was founded at Upington in the Northwest Cape Province on 12 September 1952, initially as Regiment Noordwes-Kaap, though its name was changed later that year to Regiment Hertzog. JBM Hertzog was a Boer general during the second Anglo-Boer War who later became the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (1924 to 1939). On 1 January 1960, as part of the reorganisation

of the Citizen Force, the name of the regiment was changed to Regiment Oranjerivier.

On 4 May 1966, the Regiment was awarded the Freedom of Access to Upington, and two years later, on 11 June 1968, the Freedom of the town of Keimoes. On 15 November 1974, it became the armoured car regiment of 71 Infantry Brigade, which was part of 7 South African Division, and in 1975, the ROR headquarters were relocated to Cape Town. ROR was mobilised, together with other units of the 71 Infantry Brigade, to serve in Southern Angola during Operation Savannah (1975-76).

Around that time, the Marmon-Herrington armoured cars they had used previously were replaced by the highly mobile Eland Mk7 light armoured car (referred to as Noddy cars). These were well suited to the terrain at the border between northern Namibia and southern Angola, where the regiment was deployed during the South African Border War and the Angolan Civil War.

On 2 November 1990, ROR was honoured with the Rooikat Floating Trophy (the first time this trophy had been awarded) as the best unit in the SA Armoured Corps.

Nowadays, ROR uses the Rooikat armoured vehicle as their prime mission equipment. The Rooikat was custom-designed and built in South Africa for combat reconnaissance and for search-and-destroy missions, as well as to give combat support. It accommodates a driver in the hull, and a commander, gunner and loader in the turret. Capable of travelling at up to 120 kph on the open road and 30 to 60 kph across rough terrain, it can climb gradients of 70 degrees, traverse gradients of 30 degrees, cross 2 metre wide trenches at a crawl and ford water up to 1.5 m deep.

Biography – Lt Col J.S. Olivier

Lt Col Jaco Solomon Olivier was born in Bellville and matriculated at Paarl Gimnasium High School in 1984. He completed his National Service from 1988 to 1989 at 1 Special Service Battalion and the School of Armour in Bloemfontein. He completed his Junior Leader Course in 1988 and was promoted to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. He did his border duty on the Namibian border from December 1988 to April 1989.

On his return to South Africa, he was appointed as Ops Off at Group 36, Ladybrand from June 1989 till December 1989. The main focus of the deployment was border protection between Lesotho and South Africa. After completion of his National Service in 1990, he was allocated to ROR. He was appointed as 2IC in 2006 under the command of Lt Col Willem Rall, and in March 2009, succeeded Lt Col Rall to become the Officer Commanding until December 2014.

Lt Col Olivier received the following medals during his career: Pro Patria, General Service, Unitas, and John Chard.

Lt Col Olivier enrolled at Tygerberg College (now Northlink College) and completed the following 3 accredited IAC Diplomas from the Institute of Administration and Commerce: IAC Company Secretary, IAC Business Administration and IAC Internal Auditing & Accounting. He is currently a Full member of the Institute of Accounting, as well as a registered Accounting Officer and Tax Practitioner. He started his career at SARS in 1990 and during his ten-and-a-half years of service, he was promoted to Audit Manager at the Bellville branch. In 2000, he took up a position at the Shoprite Checkers Group of Companies' Head Office in Brackenfell, where he was appointed as the Group's VAT Accountant. He held this position for 10 years, until 2011, when he was promoted to Group Payroll Manager in HR; as such, he is responsible for managing and overseeing the entire Group of Companies' payroll. He looks forward to concentrating on his current position held within the company, and taking advantage of career opportunities as they arise.

Lt Col Olivier and his wife Amelda have two sons: Jaco, who is a 3rd year Chemical Engineering student at the University of Stellenbosch, and Marné, who is a Grade 12 student at Stellenberg High School.

Biography – Maj J.P. Wessels

Maj Joachim Paulus Wessels was born in Vredendal on the West Coast and matriculated at Middelburg High School in 1990.

Maj Wessels completed his National Service from 1991 to 1992. During his time at the School of Armour, he was a training instructor at the Regimental Training wing. He fulfilled various other posts at the School as adjutant to Brig Gen Chris Gildenhuis (previous General Officer Commanding of the Armour Formation), as well as being the adjutant of Brig Gen André Retief (current General Officer Commanding of the Armour Formation). Maj Wessels furthered his career by studying at the Military Academy till 1998, when he obtained his degree in Industrial Psychology. He continued his studies at the University of Stellenbosch to obtain his Honours Degree. During his studies, he also filled the post as Carnival Chairperson at the University. He is currently a member of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and a registered psychometrist.

Maj Wessels returned to the School of Armour in 1999 and thereafter was transferred to the Armour Formation Headquarters in Pretoria, where he was appointed as Senior Officer Renewal Services. He completed his military career in 2001 after spending 10 years in the Permanent Force. Maj Wessels then took a break from the Defence Force and joined the Reserve Force (ROR) while under the command of Lt Col Willem Rall. Maj Wessels filled the post as 2IC of the unit under the command of Lt Col Jaco Olivier. He completed his Regimental Commanders Course in 2012.

Maj Wessels has received the General Service, Unitas and John Chard medals. He has also received various certificates of commendation during his career.

Maj Wessels was the General Manager Guarding at Coin Security Group for 10 years. Since 2009, he has been appointed as the National Business Development and Marketing Manager of Security Management Solutions, a company that specialises in technologically advanced security systems. Maj Wessels is also a part-time Lecturer in Marketing Communication at Northlink College.

Maj Wessels is happily married to Yolandé, a Hospitality Lecturer at Northlink College.