

Close collaboration between Reserve and Regular Force units ensures successful and high-quality FIBUA training at Fort iKapa and SAS Wingfield

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Photo 1: The old air traffic control tower at Wingfield

On Friday morning, 5 May 2012, a group consisting of military personnel and media representatives arrived at SAS Wingfield to be welcomed by Capt L.J. Monakedi (Exercise coordinator) and Lt V.M. Mbatha (FIBUA learning programme coordinator) of the School of Infantry in Oudtshoorn. Guests that attended included the OC School of Infantry, Col S.B. Nombewu, the

RSM School of Infantry, MWO R. McKenzie, the Commander Special Training Techniques Wing, Maj A. Matheus, SO1 Force Preparations (Reserves) Western Cape, Lt Col J.U. van der Westhuijzen, and the Acting Officer Commanding of the Cape Town Rifles (Dukes), Maj F.S. Marais. The visitors had been invited to attend a thrilling demonstration that marked the culmination of an intensive practical FIBUA training course at Fort iKapa and SAS Wingfield in Cape Town.

The year before, in April 2011, a ground-breaking military training programme for units and personnel of the Reserve Force had taken place at SAS Wingfield. Known as FIBUA (Fighting In Built-Up Areas) training, its goal is to prepare soldiers for the specific challenges posed by conflict in built-up urban areas. Such challenges include the complexity of the urban terrain, with buildings

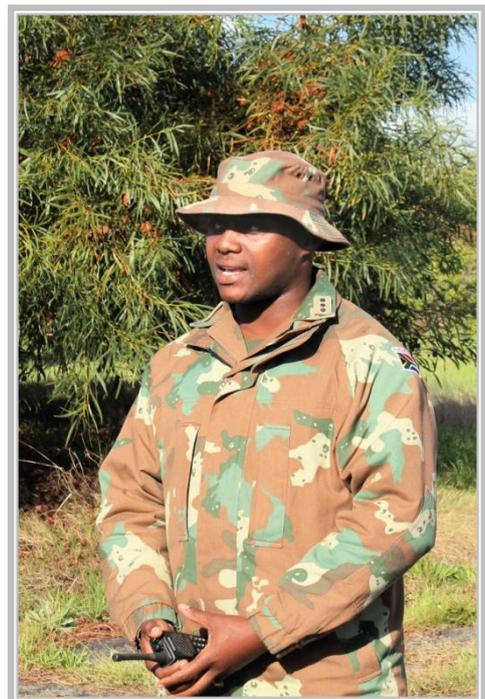


Photo 2: Captain L.J. Monakedi (Exercise coordinator) welcomes the visitors

offering enhanced cover for combatants on both sides, and greater possibilities for concealment of snipers and placement of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as well as limiting fields of view and lines of fire. The presence of civilians is another complicating factor, particularly when civilians are used intentionally as shields; moreover, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate quickly between civilians and combatants.



Photo 3: Lieutenant V.M. Mbatha (FIBUA learning programme coordinator) with Lt Col Uys van der Westhuijzen explains the purpose of the training

In such an environment, there is no room for errors, and split-second decisions have to be made. Consequently, constant vigilance, strict discipline and accurate communication are essential for keeping own-force casualties – and collateral damage – down to a minimum. It commonly has a high fatality rate. This type of urban warfare has become increasingly common in the last decades; the United States military, the British military and the Israel Defence Force all train their soldiers extensively in urban warfare to prepare their respective armed forces for fighting in such conditions. It is new to most Reserve Force personnel currently serving in the South African National Defence Force.

Last year, the Cape Town Rifles (Dukes), the oldest Reserve Force regiment in the Western Cape, were chosen to play a leading role in the training, which was facilitated by 1 Parachute



Photo 4: Major W.R. Krummeck (Exercise commander) gives the tactical briefing to the visitors

Battalion (based at Tempe, Bloemfontein). 1 Para Bn is the only Regular parachute battalion in the SANDF, and its members were the first Regular Force unit in the country to complete comprehensive FIBUA training. They had come down to Cape Town to share their theoretical knowledge and practical

experience with CTR.

In April this year, instructors from the School of Infantry taught approximately 45 troops the techniques required to fight in an urban environment. All the learners came from various regular



Photo 5: Platoon 1 clears and secures the old terminal building for utilisation as Company HQ and Medical Post

and reserve units from all over the country, but the instructors came from the Infantry School. Most of the participants were in fact, instructors in a different field of expertise than FIBUA, but who were now being trained as instructors in a FIBUA environment, with the intention being that they would in turn train their own troops.

Other regiments that participated in the training, in order to simulate what they would need to do in a real situation in this kind of environment were 71 Signal Unit, 30 Field Workshop and 3 Medical Battalion Group. No other units were involved, except for the Cape Town Rifles (Dukes) regiment, who provided one platoon that operated jointly with the learner group from Oudtshoorn, as part of the exercise.

- 71 Signal Unit provided the rear link (communication) to enable the attacking element to call in extra support, should they need it during the battle, as well as to provide a means of communication between the Battalion HQ and the deployed forces.
- 30 Field Workshop demonstrated their capability to recover vehicles on the battlefield, as well as their capability to repair these vehicles by using their small workshop on the truck.
- 3 Medical Battalion Group provided the Ops Medics for this exercise, demonstrating their capability to stabilise an injured soldier whilst the fight is still raging, to extract



Photo 6: Mambas – armoured personnel carriers – and SAMIL trucks safely deliver the troops of Platoon 2 to the action

him to a safe environment behind his own forces, and to prepare the injured soldier for a casevac (casualty evacuation) by means of either helicopter or field ambulance to a proper medical facility in the rear area.

During the training period, most of the troops and their instructors stayed at Fort iKapa, making their way across to SAS Wingfield for the practical exercises. Their days began very early each morning with a challenging urban obstacle course that became increasingly tougher and longer as the days passed and as the troops' levels of fitness, agility and stamina improved. They learned how to do street patrols, as well as street-



Photo 7: The operational medics do a tactical evacuation of the injured soldier (Photo by L/Cpl Leon Wessels)

battle drills, and how to approach, enter and secure the different types of buildings in house-clearing drills. They practiced grenade drills and shooting at targets inside the buildings. They also rehearsed sniper drills, and what to do when a sniper fired at them from another building, as well as to pursue, stop and search a moving suspect bus. They gained practical experience in using communications equipment whilst under simulated battle conditions.

Their arduous training culminated in an exciting demonstration, complete with pyrotechnics and plenty of loud explosions, on Friday, 05 May 2012, in front of the OC School of Infantry, Col. S.B. Nombewu and other guests.



Photo 8: Shielded by the swirling clouds emitted by smoke grenades, Platoon 2 approaches Building 2

Major Warren Krummeck, a Reserve member and the commander of Exercise Lebedo, presented the operational plan, using aerial photographs to illustrate the mission: First, Platoon 1 had to clear and secure the old terminal building, Building 1, for utilisation as Company HQ and Medical Post,

while direct and suppressive fire would be executed on Buildings 2 and 3, on the far side of a large open area. Once Building 1 had been secured, Platoon 2 would move in and seize control of Buildings 2 and 3, clearing them of rebel/enemy elements on the main supply route to Groba



Photo 9: Once inside the building, the combat teams proceed to clear and secure every room, using smoke grenades to conceal themselves and stun grenades to disorient any rebels/enemy soldiers

Dollar Town, before establishing defensive positions around the key road intersection. Platoon 1 consisted mainly of the new learners, i.e. troops from different units, whereas Platoon 2 consisted mainly of troops from the Dukes, who had participated in last year's training.

Once the tactical briefing had ended, the group of visitors were escorted closer to the large multi-

level building (Building 1). During the earlier part of the 20th century, this had been an air traffic control tower, part of the old airport that used to be located here. Primarily a civilian airport in the early days, it was also used by military planes during World War II; it remained in use until about 1954, when DF Malan Airport (now Cape Town International Airport) became Cape Town's main civilian airport. Years later, the area was taken over by the South African Navy, which is still in charge of this vast sprawling compound known as SAS Wingfield.

In the north-western sector of this base, and near the old air traffic control tower, are numerous buildings of different sizes and configurations that, in recent years, have fallen into a state of disrepair. Nevertheless, these derelict old structures, separated by open areas and partly overgrown with dense shrubs and high grass, can still be put to good use: they are ideally suited to training troops.



Photo 10: Platoon 2 gets ready for the assault on the main hall

A small group of soldiers in full kit, their R4 assault rifles at the ready, sprinted across an open patch of ground, eager to reach the shelter of the wall at the base of the control tower. The first two soldiers swung around, pressing their backs firmly against the wall, as a third used their knees, shoulders and helmet-protected heads as steps to reach the top of the wall with his hands. As soon as he had pulled himself up onto the roof, he swung his rifle back to the ready position, protectively covering his team members, who were helping each other to climb up onto the roof behind him.

As they took up positions on the roof, using their higher vantage point to scan for hostiles on the ground, the remaining members of the platoon ran swiftly across to the multi-level building, hunkering down in a row along its base. The first soldier in the line knelt down in front of an open door, peering into the darkness inside and ready to fire at the first sign of movement. Another soldier quickly removed a stun grenade from its holder, pulled the pin, and threw it into the room. Moments later, a loud explosion echoed through the building. As a smoke grenade rolled across the ground, emitting a scarlet-red cloud of smoke, the soldiers stormed inside the building, shouting loudly and firing their weapons.



Photo 11: Systematically and efficiently, they secure the Main Hall and the adjoining smaller rooms

At the same time, the luminous orange smoke of another grenade on the upstairs balcony concealed the smaller team that was entering the second level through windows whose glass-



Photo 12: They clear and secure the final building

panes had been broken out a long time ago. As the thuds of exploding stun grenades and the staccato rat-tat-tat of R4 assault rifles filled the air, the platoon swarmed through all the rooms of the multi-level building, barging in and out of open doors and windows, and ascending staircases both inside and outside, until every single room had been cleared. A

group of soldiers with light machine guns had made their way up to the topmost level; their objective was to secure the roof and to provide suppressive fire on the enemy that, according to intelligence reports, was sheltering in a cluster of low buildings on the far side of a large open area.



Photo 13: Three Mambas are in hot pursuit of a bus: One of the vehicles overtakes the bus, braking sharply and forcing it to stop, while the other two vehicles stop closely behind to block its retreat.

From their high-level vantage point, they had a clear view of the tarred road that led straight across this open area, and they could clearly see the convoy of Mamba vehicles and SAMIL trucks that were waiting in the distance for their signal. The troops on the high roof provided suppressive fire with their LMGs. As soon as the signal was given, the convoy roared up the road towards the cluster of low buildings, coming

to a stop a short distance away, partially shielded by hardy Port Jackson shrubs.

Soldiers with R4 assault rifles briskly dismounted from the vehicles, immediately starting to fire at the nearest building. Smoke grenades landed on the open piece of ground, and within moments, the air was filled with dense red and orange smoke. Using this as a protective screen to conceal themselves from any hostiles inside the buildings, small teams of soldiers charged towards the nearest open windows, keeping as close to the ground as they could. Throwing a stun grenade into the first room, they waited a few moments for the familiar explosive thud, before climbing through the window one after the other. The low building in which they found themselves was made out of separate but adjoining rooms, some with entrances leading to the outside, on the left or the right. One after the other, the soldiers cleared each room, lobbing in



Photo 14: Amidst dense clouds of colourful smoke, the soldiers dismount from the personnel carriers

stun grenades and smoke grenades before storming in, their rifles rapid-firing as the smoke swirled around them.

On the far side of the low building, the various teams paused briefly to reassemble for the assault on the spacious Main Hall. A moment later, they charged in from both sides, keeping their heads below the levels of the windows, in case any snipers were lurking outside. With practiced precision, they proceeded to clear the smaller rooms on the opposite side, their R4s firing in quick staccato bursts.



Photo 15: Displaying excellent teamwork, the platoon quickly seizes control of the bus

Their final target was a long, low building placed at right angles to the main hall. Covering each other and keeping a wary eye out for any remaining hostiles, the teams approached cautiously through the tall grass, keeping low to the ground and their backs to the walls. Amidst loud shouting, explosions and gunfire, they quickly secured this building too.



Photo 16: The operational medics of 3 Medical Battalion Group treat one of the 'injured' soldiers (Photo by L/Cpl Leon Wessels)

In the meantime, an improvised explosive device had gone off beneath one of the SAMIL trucks in the large open space between the smaller buildings and the old aircraft control tower. The operational medics rushed into action, quickly stabilising the soldier who had been injured, and tactically evacuating him. A recovery vehicle approached the disabled truck, and a crew of motor mechanics from 30 Field Workshop quickly hooked up the

large truck to the back of the recovery vehicle, and towed it to the vehicle holding area behind the tower building where it could be repaired.

Moments later, a large bus came careening along the through-road that bisects the large open area between the buildings, three Mambas in hot pursuit. The driver of the first Mamba floored it to race past the bus, swinging in front of it and forcing it to slam on its brakes. The two Mambas at the rear skidded to a halt, their noses just to the left and right of the back of the bus.

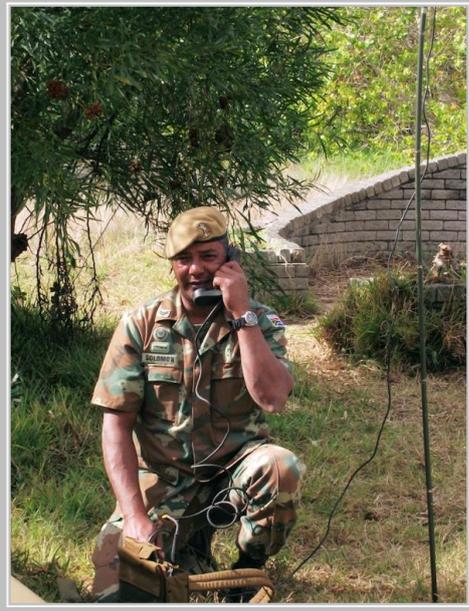


Photo 17: Corporal Solomons of 71 Signal Unit (Photo by L/Cpl Leon Wessels)

Within seconds, troops in full battle dress had disembarked from the three Mambas, and smoke grenades were exploding on either side of the bus.

As the red and yellow clouds of smoke mingled in the chilly autumn air, the soldiers – barely visible through the smoke – approached the bus from both sides. A couple of soldiers turned around, their backs to the bus, and bent their knees so that their team mates could use them as steps to reach the windows. Another team had boarded the bus, quickly taking control of the situation and disabling any enemy/rebel elements, before returning to their transport vehicles and driving off down the road.

This concluded the demonstration. When Col Nombewu addressed the large group of participants, instructors, support staff and invited guests, he was full of praise for those who had successfully completed this gruelling FIBUA training course. Impressed by the excellent quality of the demonstration and the evident skill and professionalism the participating troops displayed, he also emphasised, *“This section of Wingfield Naval Base is absolutely ideal for FIBUA-style training. There is no other range like this in South Africa, and it is imperative that we retain it for future courses.”*

It is hoped that the ‘powers that be’ continue to utilise Wingfield’s ideal facilities for this form of training.

The exercise had also succeeded in demonstrating the excellent



Photo 18: Col. Nombewu praises the troops for the discipline and dedication they displayed in this intensive training



Photo 19: Lt Col Uys van der Westhuijzen (SO1 Force Prep, SA Army Infantry Formation), Col. S.B. Nombewu (OC School of Infantry), MWO R. McKenzie (RSM School of Infantry), Maj Francois Marais (Acting OC, Cape Town Rifles [Dukes]) and Maj A. Matheus (Commander Special Training Techniques Wing)

cooperation between the Regular Force and Reserve Force units, with the Reserve units coordinating, facilitating and supporting the training. It underscored once more that the expansion capabilities of the Reserves can indeed be used to supplement the Regular units, and that such training is bound to improve and enhance the interoperability of the different units. The excellent cooperation and

support that was rendered by the Navy personnel from SAS Wingfield, to ensure that the training could be executed on their premises, did not go unnoticed.

Many factors contribute to the suitability of this training area, amongst others, its close proximity to Ysterplaat Air Force Base for future close air support and trooping exercises in FIBUA training, and also its close proximity to a nearby railway station for possible troop movement. The sheer size of the training area, which can accommodate a battalion in a training situation, and the large variety of buildings, with their different configurations of exit and entrance points, is ideal terrain for FIBUA training, and it is hoped that the area can continue to be used for this purpose. There is no other training area of this nature in South Africa, and its close proximity to the Reserve Force base of Fort iKapa makes it even more ideal.



Photo 20: Group Photo of the Participants of FIBUA 2012