

Change of Command at Regiment Oranjerivier

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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:

"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 of Reserve Force members.

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 him/her the chance to grow within the structures provided.



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.

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".

As is tradition in the regiment, Master Warrant Officer Karel Minnie, the Regimental Sergeant Major, lit the Flame of the Armour of which the significance and symbolism were 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 *Pantsierlied* – or Song of the Armoured Corps – similarly inspires its members to stand firm and proud, faithful to God, our country and our task.



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





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

The Acting Officer Commanding, Major J.P. Wessels, said: "ROR is a very unique unit with a small number 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 with 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 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 aspects 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.



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

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 Gildenhuys (previous General Officer Commanding of the SA Army Armour Formation and currently the Director of Operations at the Joint Operations Division), Captain (Ret) (SAN) Trunell Morom, Chief Warrant Officer Abel Mabote, Warrant Officer of the SA Army Armour Formation, and the Officers Commanding of several Reserve Force regiments.

Upon 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:

- **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.



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





The Master of Ceremonies, Major Philip Wessels, ensured that the parade started punctually and ran smoothly.



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

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 Entry 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 its 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. 

