

“Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner!”

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Gun Display at Cape Field Artillery Gun Park.



The Cape Field Artillery Saluting Troop's 25-pounder GV1 guns.

On Saturday 27 May 2017, during a Change of Office Ceremony held at the Cape Field Artillery Gun Park, Fort Ikapa, Major General Roy Cecil Andersen as outgoing General of the Gunners (GoG) handed over the tokens of office to his successor, Major General (now Lt General) Jabulani Sydney Mbuli.

Attending the event were Brigadier General Khaya Makina, GOC SA Army Artillery Formation, Brigadier General Sandile Hlongwa, GOC Air Defence Artillery Formation, Major General Nontobeko Mpaxa, Chief Director Force Preparation, on behalf of the Chief of the SA Army, Gnr Dominic Hoole, chairman of the Gunners' Association, and Mr Carl Kies, CEO of Reutech Radar Systems.

The commanding officers of Cape Garrison Artillery (Lieutenant Colonel J.J. Visser) and Cape Field Artillery (Major J. Nel) and Lieutenant Colonel Johan Conradie of the Defence Reserve Provincial Office of the Western Cape were joined by veterans, senior members of the Gunners' Association, officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers.

Several powerful guns and support vehicles were on display. They included an Oerlikon 35mm twin barrelled anti-aircraft gun, deployed with its camouflage netting in a static role, and a Vickers-Armstrong 3.7" Mk3 anti-aircraft gun, dating back to World War II, and

reconditioned in 1989. Next to them stood a Russian 23mm twin-barrelled anti-aircraft gun, captured in Angola during the Bush War and refurbished by Armscor for use in the then SADF. It was still in its Eastern Bloc (Warsaw Pact) colours (green with a red star). Support vehicles included a SAMIL 100 6x6 gun tractor, several smaller gun tractors, a command post on the back of a SAMIL 100, an electricity generator and a SAMHS ambulance.

The entrance to the hangar, where the function was going to take place, was flanked by four 25-pounder GV1 guns. These are regularly fired by the Cape Field Artillery Saluting Troop at military tattoos and parades, Remembrance Day services, the Opening of Parliament and other important ceremonial events. Inside the hangar, tables, chairs and a buffet had been set up for a delicious lunch after the ceremony.

Program Director Colonel P.S. Mokgosi welcomed all the assembled guests and read the Code of Conduct for uniformed members, while everyone stood at attention. Chaplain M. Smit conducted the scripture reading and prayer. Next at the microphone were Brig Gen Sandile Hlongwa – GOC Air Defence Artillery Formation, and Maj Gen Nontobeko Mpaxa – Chief Director, Force Preparation, who was attending the event on behalf of the Chief of the SA Army.





Group photo of Brigadier General Sandile Hlongwa, GOC Air Defence Artillery Formation, Major General Nontobeko Mpaxa, Chief Director Force Preparation, attending the ceremony on behalf of the Chief of the SA Army, and Major General Roy Cecil Andersen, Chief Defence Reserves and outgoing General of the Gunners.



Cape Garrison Artillery Pipes and Drums providing a suitable musical backdrop to the ceremony.

The honorary title of General of the Gunners (GoG) has been in use for more than 30 years. Originally known as 'Master Gunner' (1982 to 1990), and briefly as 'General of the Artillery' (1990 to 1993), the title was changed to 'General of the Gunners' in July 1993. Not only was Maj Gen Andersen the first Reserve Force officer to be appointed as GoG, but he has also been the longest serving one, holding the title from 1 December 2005 until 12 May 2015 (and unofficially for two more years).

The GoG's duties are primarily ceremonial in nature: he looks after the interests of both former and current gunners in the SA Army, attends memorial parades, medal parades, changes of command, and similar events, and promotes the traditions of SA Army Gunners (which include both Field Gunners and Air Defence Artillery).

Maj Gen Andersen as outgoing GoG handed back the tokens of office to Maj Gen Mpaxa, who then handed them formally to his successor, Maj Gen Mbuli.

Maj Gen Andersen spoke of his close involvement with the Gunners with considerable pride, affirming that he had very much enjoyed attending these events and the opportunity to engage and speak with the gunners themselves. He declared, "I may be handing over as General of the Gunners, but I'll always be a Gunner."

Maj Gen R.C. Andersen has served in the armed forces for more than 50 years (he received his 50-year clasp on a parade on Friday 02 July 2017 in Pretoria), having started his national service at

4 Field Regiment in 1966. He steadily rose up through the officer ranks, and saw active service in the SWA/Angola Border War with the Transvaal Horse Artillery (which he commanded) and 72 Bde. He became Senior Staff Officer Artillery and then Senior Staff Officer Operations of 7 Infantry Division in 1984. He was promoted to his current rank of Major General on 1 October 2003, in the post of Chief Defence Reserves at Defence Headquarters, a position he still holds.

In addition to his illustrious military career, Maj Gen Andersen has also had a significant civilian career in business, since becoming a Chartered Accountant in 1972, holding high-ranking positions and directorships in companies like Ernst & Young, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, Liberty Life, SA Breweries, Standard Bank, Aspen Pharmacare, Nampak, Sanlam, Murray and Roberts, Sasfin and Virgin Active South Africa.

His successor, Maj Gen J.S. Mbuli had been inducted as GoG after his appointment by Chief of the SA Army on 10 February 2017, although the official ceremony only took place on Saturday 27 May 2017.

Maj Gen Mbuli began his military career by joining Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1981, soon specialising in anti-aircraft missiles and anti-aircraft guns. He saw extensive active service in Angola, particularly along the Eastern front, fighting against UNITA under Jonas Savimbi. After receiving Special Force Training, he was deployed as an operative in several Southern African countries, including South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland and Botswana, conducting military operations as instructed by Special Operations Machinery. In mid-1991, he was recalled back to Lusaka, Zambia, where he furthered his academic studies, completing certificates and diplomas in accounts and





Maj Gen Andersen and Maj Gen Mbuli walk past the artillery display.



Maj Gen R.C. Andersen firing one of the GV1 guns at Cape Field Artillery Gun Park.

business studies, data processing management, and computer programming.

On his return to South Africa in mid-1995, he integrated into the SANDF, being appointed to the rank of Captain. He steadily rose up through the ranks, completing numerous courses along the way. In January 2015, he was promoted to the rank of Major General as Chief Director Defence Acquisition Management in the Defence Material Division under the Secretary for Defence. In 2017, he has subsequently been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General as Chief of Logistics of the SANDF, with effect from 1 July 2017.

As Maj Gen Mbuli accepted the tokens of office, he acknowledged that he was aware of the responsibility bestowed upon him, and declared that he too felt strongly about keeping alive the traditions and the image of Gunners. He referred to the presence of veterans and ex-service members and asserted that they were a great source of knowledge and experience.

After the official handover, Maj Gen Andersen and Maj Gen Mbuli each fired one round with one of the GV1 guns, set up outside.

The Cape Garrison Artillery Pipes and Drums under Pipe Major Tony Reis provided a fitting musical backdrop for the official handover, with pipes humming, snare drums rattling and bass drum thundering. The CGA Pipes and Drums have grown in recent years – not only in the number of band members, but also in their repertoire of pieces and their marching skills.

In January 2015, a number of young learners, aged 12 to 19 years, joined the Band. They come from the townships, such as Crossroads and Khayelitsha, which poses some logistical challenges, in terms of transport to and from band practice and perfor-

mances. In addition, the youngsters cannot take their uniforms or instruments home with them, for security reasons. Instruments, uniforms and kit are all expensive items; the Band is entirely self-supported and does not receive any funding from the South African National Defence Force, and thus relies heavily on donations.

Despite the challenges, however, these youngsters have matured into well-integrated band members and committed musicians. Being part of the Band has improved their discipline and self-confidence, and they have learned to work with each other as a team, to support and motivate each other, and to find strength in the group. Being surrounded by positive male role models is also having a significant impact on them.

The Band has excelled in various competitions: it came second at the first ever Champion of Champions competition at the South Coast Gathering in Amazimtoti, KZN in April 2016 – with eight new learners playing and competing with the band for the first time, and seven of them wearing their new uniforms for the first time. At the Pretoria Boys Gathering in 2016, they came third; at the Benoni Boys Gathering, also in 2016, they came second, and at the Wynberg Boys Celtic Festival Competition in September, they came first, beating the more experienced Cape Town Highlanders and Cape Field Artillery pipe bands.

Although Maj Gen Mbuli has now taken over as the new General of the Gunners, Maj Gen Andersen, as Chief Defence Reserves and true to his character and long-standing connections forged with the Gunners, will no doubt remain closely involved with them and an active supporter of their functions and events. As he declared in his farewell address: “Once a Gunner, always a Gunner!” 

