

"I was born in Pretoria, and as regards language, that helped me. But when I joined the SADF after leaving school, that's when I became bilingual. I wasn't before joining the SADF.

"In my time in the SADF it has always been predominantly Afrikaans — the permanent force ratio is perhaps 70-30. But I have not become Afrikanerised. It's not something I could claim for myself. But I have greater insight into the Afrikaner than many of my countrymen.

"There have been the Rogerses, the Edwardses, the Frasers and so on. I can mention many names in the upper echelons.

"To me the major factor is that the Defence Force is not attuned that way. If it was, it would be looking for trouble because of the question of racial, cultural, political and religious affiliations. It is not just the question of English churches. This is a heterogeneous society. So if the Defence Force becomes cliquy it is looking for trouble.

"I'm glad to say that the opposite is true. We take pride in being the one big organisation which can get people together. So there is no place for pettiness or sectarianism.

"People from the US and UK have asked me: Taking into account the fact that there is a greater percentage of Afrikaans-speakers in the officer corps and therefore automatically more conservatism, what hope do you see for the Defence Force to move in the direction of enlightenment?

"And being English-speaking, I have to correct them by saying: You're stating that as a fact. I grant you the majority is Afrikaans-speaking, but why prejudge the Afrikaner as necessarily conservative?

"When it comes to mixing people the Defence Force has a head start on the rest of the country. It has the privilege of putting them all together.

"The trouble is that people come along with pre-conceived ideas. It is a pity, but these ideas got into the minds of English-speakers, and so for a long period in the Fifties and Sixties few of them joined the Permanent Force.

"Now it's slowly being rectified. I think the percentage of English-speakers has increased. But because Afrikaans-speakers were predominant in recent history there is no doubt that the English language doesn't come fully into its own. Obviously the 50-50 language principle doesn't either, and it's incumbent on the SADF to rectify this.

"In my mind it's not an unwillingness on the part of the Afrikaner to do something about this. Many an Afrikaner has a complex about English — for example, often he can't get his "is's" and "are's" right . . . We have a definite policy of language tests, but I think we too easily assume people are more proficient in English than they are.

"So you get a young Afrikaans-speaking corporal who has to address a bunch of men from the Cape Town Highlanders or the Cape Town Rifles (Dukes), and he is frightened.

"If more English-speakers joined the Per-

WO1 J J C HOLLIDAY



John Holliday . . . first in the post

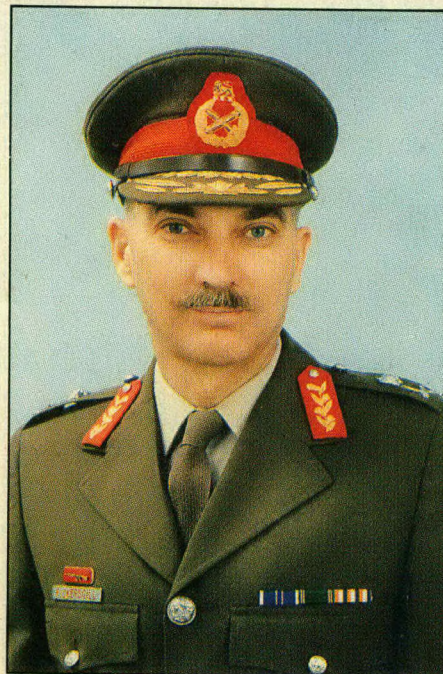
John James Clarke Holliday, first Sergeant Major of the SADF, must be one of the last full-time members to wear service ribbons from World War 2. It is an indication of the span of his long career and the immense wealth of experience he can bring to his new appointment.

Born on October 16 1927, Holliday is an armour specialist who joined the Army while still a schoolboy. He got his first rank — lance corporal — at the age of 19 in 1946, as an instructor at 1 Special Service Battalion. He stayed there until he became an instructor at the Army Gymnasium in 1962. He later served as Squadron Sergeant Major at OFS Command, and later Northern Transvaal Command.

In 1969 he became Command Sergeant Major of Northern Transvaal Command and in July 1984 Sergeant Major of the Army.

The post of Sergeant Major of the Army is a comparatively recent one, having been instituted in 1970 only (the first incumbent was the legendary WO1 Ockert Snyman, who died recently). Obviously Snyman and his successors have made the appointment work, because this year the new post of Sergeant Major of the SADF was created, and Holliday was appointed.

manent Force (PF) and more English-speaking youngsters found themselves in leader training, the situation would be improved. It's a pity more English-speakers don't want to be part of it. They have themselves to blame for the situation. So I ask them to come forward. And there is no doubt we in the PF must pay more attention to the language problem.



R M Pickersgill . . . English Methodist

"Something which has been very good in the Defence Force in the past 10 years has been the atmosphere in the top structure. There has been good cohesion and a spirit which encouraged a man to express himself in his own language.

"We respect each other's language, and I've never had a problem in expressing myself as an English-speaker. In any case, when speaking we all switch across from one language to the other for better expression. It's no trouble.

"Hopefully this is happening throughout the SADF. That way we can form this multitude into a cohesive organisation."

On his religion: As a Roman Catholic, Gleeson belongs to a church which has been outspoken in his condemnation of the South African government and its employment of the SADF. But he does not experience an inner conflict which could require him to choose between the church into which he was born and the profession he has chosen to follow.

"I've never felt the need to change my religion. If I've been guilty of backsliding, it's not been to please my superiors or the SADF, because the SADF is broad-minded in its outlook on religion. It has more than 100 denominations, and 33 churches are permanently represented by chaplains. Every man can practise his religion according to his beliefs. So I've never stood back for my religion.

"The Defence Force has some good basic rules — don't discuss politics or religion in the mess. I've always practised my religion in

my private life. The present Chaplain-General was my chaplain in SWA, and although we had different religious backgrounds I have great respect for him.

"Reconciliation is based on Christian values, and if one looks at the religious code of

the Defence Force there is much in common. The Defence Force pays much attention to the religious aspects of military service and tries to apply some of the principles, and so there is no problem reconciling all the different denominations.

"If a Permanent Force member suffers a religious conflict he is free to leave, and the Defence Force has also gone out of its way to accommodate people who had problems.

"But in my own case I have no conflict of conscience." ■

Old and strong



Ready to roll ... an infantryman waits, R4 assault rifle at the ready

Is the South African Army the strongest in sub-Saharan Africa? It depends on how you juggle the figures

If the yardstick is merely numbers, the SA Army is the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, since fully mobilised it would be able to field about 300 000 men; whereas its nearest rival, Ethiopia, has but 220 000 (Nigeria, surprisingly, has a modest ground force of 94 000).

But statistics are not enough. Both SA and Ethiopia have considerable numbers of part-time reservist troops. To make any sort of analysis one has to consider qualitative factors such as level of training, staff efficiency, command efficiency, logistical backup and that great but vital intangible, morale and fighting spirit.

It is certainly the oldest army in Africa if one takes its development back to its roots. The history books say the SA Army dates from 1912, when it was put together from the odds and ends of the various more or less willing bedfellows in the new Union of SA. But it is directly descended from the mercenary company soldiers Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape in 1652, and many of its present characteristics can be traced back several hundred years.

Two interesting aspects that still characterise South African defence thinking were there from the very beginning.

Firstly, to save money, the size of the regular force was kept well below its requirements, the intention being that in time of trouble its ranks would be swelled by the levying of militia from the civilian population.

Goodwill — and "feel"

Secondly, stress was laid on cultivating the goodwill of the indigenous population. This last was accomplished partly by exerting rigid discipline on the hard-bitten mercenaries (in the 18th Century, for example, any soldier who got into the Castle after retreat had been sounded was thrashed by the sergeant of the guard).

Apart from things like conscription, the soldiers of today have inherited something more intangible but equally important: a "feel" for mobile warfare involving maximum use of initiative and downright ingenuity.

South African history this century abounds with examples. General Jan Smuts's famous dash to Namaqualand in 1902 is one example; another is General Jaap van Deventer's epic trek to Kondoa Irangi during World War 1's East African campaign.

Brigadier Dan Pienaar, the son of a com-

SA ARMY STRENGTH

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|--|
| Full-time members: 76 000 | | consisting of: | |
| Permanent Force | | 18 000 | |
| National Servicemen | | 58 000 | |
| Part-time members: 280 000 | | consisting of: | |
| Citizen Force | | 140 000 | |
| Commando Force | | 140 000 | |
| Source: The International Institute of Strategic Studies in "The Military Balance, 1986/7." | | | |

mando fighter, was entirely in his element with his ultra-mobile bush columns during

the Abyssinian campaign, and so, almost 35 years later, was Colonel Koos van Heerden in his swift advance up the Angolan coast in which he covered 3 000 km in 33 days of movement, fighting along the way.

Old philosophy

Today the commando spirit lives on in the South African Army. But now its horsemen are the mechanised infantry in their Ratel fighting vehicles — trained to travel fast, hit hard and move on to fight again. The tools may have changed, but the philosophy lives on. ■

Our largest organisation

The largest direct employer of manpower in South Africa is not the general manager of SATS or any of his ranking executives. It is the Chief of the Army

When Lieutenant General "Kat" Liebenberg gets his dander up in his neat office at Army Headquarters off Pretoria's Potgieter Street, he sends a tremor through what is — if all its parts were to be summoned together — the largest single organisation in the entire Republic.

Its structure is also one of the most complicated because, unlike any other organisation, it has a number of divergent tasks to fulfil.

The Army has more people under its command — although not all at the same time — than the other three services rolled together.

er. Exactly how many is a closely-guarded secret and has been for years, but local and foreign military observers agree on the basic figures, which state that the Army's total mobilisable strength is in the region of 360 000 men and women of all races —

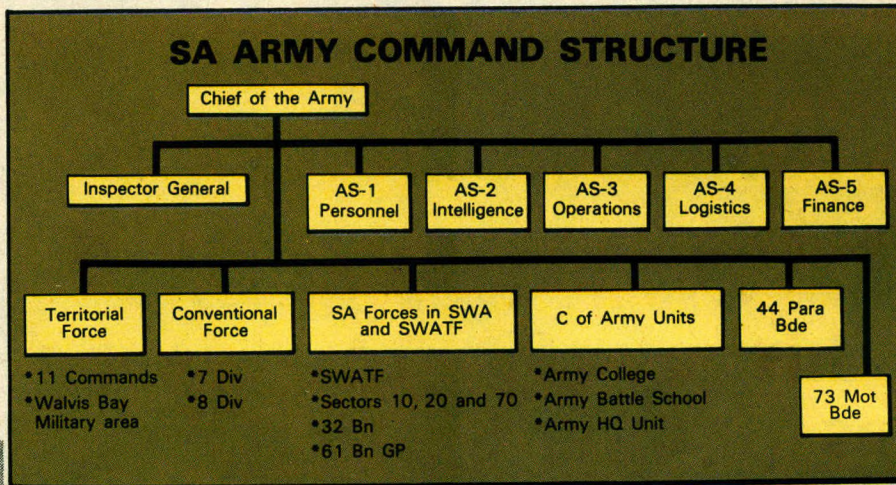
although, since most of it is part-time, a universal simultaneous call-up of reserves would wreck the economy.

A true assessment of the Army's potential cannot be made unless its manpower is divided into the various categories:

The Army has about 76 000 full-time members, divided into two groups:

The Permanent Force (PF).

There are about 18 000 PF members — including about 1 000 women. Interestingly, about 5 500, or roughly one-third of the 17 000 or so male members, are either black or coloured, receiving



Troops on the march ... problems with a mass call-up

equal pay and fringe benefits, with no ceiling on promotion (the highest-ranking officer who is not white is presently a colonel.)

National Servicemen

The number of national servicemen varies from year to year, depending on how many white males reach military age, and on how many black and coloured two-year volunteers join up, but usually there are around 58 000 of them in service, each serving two years of full-time duty.

This includes the 15 000-odd recruits doing six months of basic and advanced training at any given stage, plus selected "junior leaders" undergoing anything up to six months of officer or non-commissioned officer instruction in the second half of their year's service.

The national servicemen are used for a wide variety of tasks. Graduates and others who come in with specialised skills are usually given a shorter basic training, and imme-

diately deployed on tasks where their skills are needed. Others are used for everything else, from clerical work to commanding Ratel infantry fighting vehicles or Eland armoured cars in one of the nine infantry battalions.

In actual fact the full-time Army is unhealthy dependent on the ubiquitous national servicemen for its normal functioning. Without them its administrative machinery would grind to a halt, and it would have virtually no fighting forces.

The Army has about 280 000 part-time members. They consist of:

The Citizen Force (CF)

There are about 140 000 CF members. Most are obligated to serve 720 days in five two-year cycles (30 days in the first year, 90 in the second), while a vitally important sprinkling, usually senior officers and NCOs, are volunteers who have stayed on after completing their time.

Numerically the volunteers are not a large element, but they represent a vital pool of experience and training, and senior Army officers freely admit that without the volunteer element, the CF would cease to function effectively.

The CF mans a great variety of units, from

parachute battalions right down to mobile shower units. More importantly, it provides all but a tiny fraction of the manpower for the country's entire conventional warfare force.

In addition, it has a great number of lightly armed infantry battalions trained to perform counter-insurgency and internal-security tasks wherever they are needed.

Commando Force

The Commando Force also has about 140 000 members, most of them obligated to serve 1 000 days at the rate of 50 days a year maximum. As in the CF, the backbone of the ComForce is made up of the senior volunteer element.

The ComForce is dedicated to local counter-insurgency and internal security; lately it has been reinforced in some areas by drafts of "Dad's Army" members (older men serving 12 days a year).

Barring members of "Dad's Army" (a phrase heartily disliked by the military authorities, but seemingly inextricably rooted in the common parlance). ComForce members receive the same training as the CF; the difference is that they are "area-bound," meaning that they serve in their local areas only. ■

HOW IT WORKS

Structure of SA army

Territorial Force:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| a. Ten regional command areas: | Headquarters |
| Far North Command | Pietersburg |
| Eastern Transvaal Command | Nelspruit |
| North-Western Command | Potchefstroom |
| Northern Transvaal Command | Voorrekkerhoogte |
| Witwatersrand Command | Johannesburg |
| Natal Command | Durban |
| Orange Free State Command | Bloemfontein |
| Eastern Province Command | Port Elizabeth |
| Western Province Command | Cape Town |
| Northern Cape Command | Kimberley |
| b. Walvis Bay Military Area | Walvis Bay |

2. Conventional Force:

- 7 Infantry Division
- 8 Mechanised Division
- 73 Motorised Brigade
- 44 Parachute Brigade

3. SA Forces in SWA/Namibia:

Sectors 10, 20 and 70

- 32 Battalion
- 61 Mechanised Battalion Group
- Support and headquarters elements

| | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 101 Battalion | Ovamboland |
| 102 Battalion | Kaokoland |
| 1 Battalion | West Caprivi |
| 2 Battalion | Kavango |
| 203 Battalion | Bushmanland |
| 701 Battalion | East Caprivi |
| 911 Battalion | Windhoek |
| 912 Battalion | Windhoek |
| (Regt Erongo) | |
| 913 Battalion | Windhoek |
| (Regt Namutoni) | |
| 91 Armoured Car Regt | Windhoek |
| (Regt Windhoek) | |
| 1 SWA Signal Regt | Windhoek |
| 1 SWA Provost Unit | Windhoek |
| 91 Field Regt | Windhoek |
| 91 Maintenance | Windhoek |
| Area Force Units | (Various) |
| 112 Commando Sqn | (Various) |

4. SWA Territory Force:

All ground units resident in SWA/Namibia except 61 Mechanised Battalion Group and 32 Battalion, which still retain SADF identity

5. Chief of the Army Units:

The Army Battle School, the SA Army College, Army Headquarters Unit, various corps schools

Sources: 1985 SADF Yearbook

"SA War Machine" SADF statements

The five elements

The Army's structure has five distinct elements, each of which stems from some actual, theoretical or perceived requirement or set of circumstances

Two of the Army's five elements, the Territorial Force and the Conventional Force, derive directly from the Army's two main tasks, as laid down in the Defence Act.

The Territorial Force

The Army's most important task is to combat insurgency and act in aid of the civil power, as represented by the SA Police, in the maintenance of internal security, law and order if this should become necessary.

These tasks should be seen in the correct perspective because there are actually two aspects.

The first is the combating of insurgency. What it amounts to is a border-security function. In many countries, ranging from West Germany and Israel to Angola, East Germany and the Soviet Union, there is a separate border guard force which in most cases does not fall under either the ministry of defence or the ministry of police.

In South Africa there is no such dispensation. Border security is handled by the Army, with some police input. It is a simple ques-

tion of manpower. At about 46 000 men and women to handle both criminal and internal security matters for a total population of about 26m, the SAP is under-staffed by at least 40%.

For this reason the SADF and specifically the army has been deployed in certain areas along the borders on northern Natal, the eastern Transvaal and northern Namibia with the primary responsibility of border protection. The SAP however, is still responsible for law enforcement in these areas.

The second aspect of the Territorial Force responsibility is providing aid to the civil authority. What it means in effect is that Army troops can be mobilised to help the police to contain an unrest situation — usually by supplying the needed manpower for such low-key internal security tasks as throwing cordons, manning roadblocks and patrolling. In such an event the police are in overall command.

The Army's well-concealed distaste for this task springs from more than one reason. In the first place it plays hob with training and service schedules that have been planned

years ahead.

Another reason is that as a result of the border war it has become so imbued with the hearts-and-minds philosophy that it is pained to be in a situation where it is often accused of unleashing bully-boys and worse on the townships.

Its response was to set up complaints offices in all large centres (which were later scaled down because complaints were few or non-existent) and to take a pacific line with non-regular members who suffered from conflicts of conscience. This generally flexible approach (coupled with a warning from on high to all services that no troops guilty of misconduct would

The other primary task of the Army is the landward defence of SA against any form of "conventional" aggression. In a nutshell, if any hostile force invades or tries to invade South African territory it will be met, mauled and (all going well) sent reeling back by the mobile, hard-hitting Conventional Force, comprising mechanised and motorised infantry, artillery

The units themselves are totally part-time, while brigade and di-



and heavy and light armour, backed up by the SAAF.

The Conventional Force is organised into two divisions (7th and 8th Division), each commanded by a brigadier and sub-divided into mechanised, motorised and armoured brigades, each commanded by a colonel; and two independent brigades (44 Parachute and 73 Motorised), also commanded by colonels. Each brigade in turn is divided into various regiments, battalions and other units.

The brigades are scattered all over the country in the various command areas. These brigades are in the somewhat peculiar position of having about the same status as lodgers in a boarding house, since they take their orders from the Chief of the Army, via their higher formation headquarters.

In time of all-out emergency all the brigades would be mobilised and join their divisions, with the independent brigades being employed as the Chief of the Army sees fit.

Interestingly, the Conventional Force consists almost entirely of CitForce part-timers.

visional staffs are partly staffed by regular PF members and partly by CitForce men.

The SWA Territory Force

The South West African Territory Force (SWATF), now about 21 000 strong, is manned mainly by Namibians and is fast developing its own identity as a defence force native to Namibia, although it is still under the ultimate control of the SADF (see SWATF).

SA Forces in Namibia

The Army presence in Namibia is a hang-over from the days (starting in the early 1970s) when it bore the main responsibility for the counter-insurgency campaign there.

The Army has been winding down its strength in Namibia for some years, and probably maintains no more than about 5 000 troops there at any given time.

Many of these are command and support elements stationed in three military areas — Sector 10 (Ovamboland), 20 (Kavango) and 70 (Caprivi).

However, the Army also maintains two important fighting units in Namibia. One is the famous/notorious 32 Battalion, originally recruited from displaced Angolan ex-insurgents of the 1975-1976 era and now a key counter-insurgency unit, specialising in long, in-depth patrols.

The other is 61 Mechanised Battalion Group, a conventional warfare unit manned by national servicemen and a thin layer of PF members which has been involved in virtually every "external" operation in the past 10 years.

Chief of the Army Units

Certain military installations, most of them used for advanced training of one kind or another, fall directly under the Chief of the Army.

These include the

be allowed to shelter behind the emergency regulations' indemnity clauses) has taken care of most of its problems. But a bad taste lingers all the same.

The Territorial Force is spread out over 10 command areas or military districts. Each is more or less of divisional status and is headed by a brigadier or major general, who rules over a mix of PF personnel, national servicemen and part-time troops.

The part-timers are organised into formations called groups and consist of various commando units and "non-area-bound" CitForce light battalions. The units are all part-time, while each group headquarters has a small PF element.

Another source of manpower in times of civil unrest on which the OC command can draw are local national service training units, although this is done as little as possible because it tends to disrupt training schedules.

The Territorial Force also includes the Walvis Bay Military Area, a geographical oddity resulting from the fact that due to the vagaries of 19th Century politics Walvis Bay and the area around it belongs to SA and not Namibia.

The Conventional Force



G5 155mm gun firing ... long arm of the Conventional Force

Army Battle School, a vast tract of land in the northern Cape where fighting units regularly sweat and/or shiver their dusty way through arduous training camps; the Army College at Voortrekkerhoogte (formerly the South African Military College), where various advanced officer training courses are held; and the various corps schools like the Infantry School at Oudtshoorn, the Intelligence School at Kimberley and the Artillery School at Potchefstroom.

The Army Headquarters Unit at Pretoria, needless to say, also falls directly under the

Chief of the Army.

It might be asked why such a massive force is needed when the only actual enemies (not counting what might come in a conventional attack) are so thin on the ground.

The Opposition

After all, the ANC's military wing, Umkonto We Sizwe, comprises an estimated 10 000 trained, semi-trained and untrained men, while Swapo is believed to have about 9 000 in various categories of training, of which about 85% are not pointed at the

operational area but are permanently attached to the Angolan armed forces.

The answer is that SA's borders are long and frequently consist of difficult terrain where there is no real state-of-the-art alternative to the man on the ground.

In the case of the ANC it is also a fact that part of its campaign to overthrow the present government consists of fomenting as much nationwide unrest as possible.

This demands eternal manpower-intensive patrol activity whether things are quiet or active. ■

The unknown man

Surprisingly few people, either inside the military or out, know a great deal about Lieutenant General Andre Liebenberg, who took command of it in late 1985

Lt Gen Andre Liebenberg, Chief of the Army, is the unknown man of the four service chiefs. Newspaper clipping files on him are thin. If one wants to find out what makes him tick one has to speak to people who have known and worked with him.

The records show that he is another of the fast-risers among the present generation of senior military officers. Born on April 18 of 1938 at Upington in the Northern Cape, his first taste of the Army came when he enlisted at the Army Gymnasium for a year after leaving school.

After his year's service he enrolled for a law degree at Stellenbosch. Then he rejoined in 1960, and from then on his career moved forward in swift bounds. In July of 1960 he was a candidate-officer at the SA Military College, a year later a platoon commander at Field Training Regiment. In 1964, by now a captain, he became a staff officer in the office of the Director Infantry at Army Headquarters.

There he stayed till 1969 when, with the rank of commandant, he was posted to London as a military attache — often a portent of greater things to come. In 1972 he returned from London to become second in command of the Army Gymnasium. Two years later he was back at Army Headquarters as a Staff Officer.

Seven months later he was given another plum post, that of Director Infantry, and in December 1977, as a colonel, took over the hottest seat in Namibia: Officer Commanding 2 Military Area (now Sector 10) at Oshakati, nerve-centre of the main war against Swapo.

He stayed there till January 1980, when he became Director of Operations at Army Headquarters in the rank of brigadier. Just

over two years later — at the age of only 42 and 22 years after commencing his military career in earnest — he was promoted to major general and General Officer Commanding Special Forces.

There he worked quietly away till July of 1985, when it was announced he would become Chief of the Army on November 1 of that year, in the rank of lieutenant general.

Thus ended the most suspenseful promotion cliff-hanger the Defence Force had seen in years. Weeks of high speculation had resulted in a more or less generally-accepted short list of two — and neither of them was Kat Liebenberg. Yet when the announcement was made, those who know him nodded in approbation of the choice.

Somehow it was typical of the man both friends and enemies call by his nickname — "Kat."

Liebenberg has never been a very public figure, even while occupying fairly high-profile appointments. One of his former subordinates professes admiration while at the same time confessing that in some ways he remained an enigma in spite of a close association lasting most of a year.

Physically he is vastly different from his predecessor, Janie Geldenhuys. Both

are of medium height, but Liebenberg is very broad in the shoulders and distinctly stocky in build. He is prematurely bald and sports a large, sweeping moustache, both of which help to make him look older than his 49 years.

The origin of his nickname Kat is obscured by the mists of time — although it is known to date back to his schooldays — but it appears to be an appropriate one. When Liebenberg moves, they say, he moves fast and quietly, even when he is shuffling papers instead of making war.

A former subordinate says: "Liebenberg doesn't amble around the place. You won't find him taking a stroll from one office to another."

Jocularly known in the corridors of military power by the punful alternative nickname of "die muisvanger" (the mouse-catcher), he is said to be a meticulous planner and organiser — "I was involved with some of the ops he planned," an officer says, "and you couldn't fault them anywhere."

In personality he and his predecessor differ widely though both of them are given to knock-'em-down bridge sessions.

Like Geldenhuys, he is not an inspired public speaker, but when he addresses a



Kat Liebenberg . . . fast but quiet

planning session or order group, a former associate says, "he's to the point, and you listen to what he says . . . and if you're sitting in an order group with him you had better know what the hell you're talking about."

Liebenberg may not be an eloquent speaker, but he has a reputation as a good communicator. One typical comment is: "He gets his message across; you know exactly what he wants, and at the same time he gives you more than enough opportunity to say 'I don't know what the hell you want'."

After that you're on your own. Liebenberg sets high standards for himself and requires his followers to attain them as well — and then some.

At the time of his appointment a Permanent Force officer who served under Liebenberg commented with considerable relish: "Some people in the Army have got their



Paratroops landing

own ideas about how to do things. But they had better watch out. Kat Liebenberg's going to kick a few arses around here, I'll tell you that."

But Liebenberg apparently has the knack of booting backsides without leaving permanent scars.

"If you don't do your job," says a resident of Defence Headquarters who was often in hot water while serving under Liebenberg as a junior officer, "you'll get a clout. But at the same time he's a human being as well. He doesn't hold a grudge . . .

"I'd sooner be jumped on by about 20 other generals than Kat Liebenberg. Not because he's vicious with you, but because you feel so bad about it — you feel you've dropped him . . . but the man leaves you with

your dignity intact. You still feel like a human being when you walk out of there."

This is where Liebenberg strongly resembles his two predecessors, generals Constant Viljoen and Jan Geldenhuys — concern for his troops, and his ability to inspire loyalty without favouritism or playing to the gallery.

A notoriously hard-nosed and irreverent middle-level officer says: "When you see Kat Liebenberg for the first time you're inclined to see this harsh character sitting there, but I'd work for that guy any day of the week . . .

"There is a humanity about the man. He's a very tough cookie — he's no teddy bear — but at the same time he has an aura about him; it's as if he is asking you to produce without actually asking you, even if you have very little contact with him.

"You don't walk in fear and trembling of him unless he's fighting you, and he's always approachable as far as the welfare of his people is concerned. I'd even be inclined to put it this way: If you scratch a member of the Army, Kat Liebenberg will haemorrhage. That's how he feels about his people; he follows the whole Army philosophy of 'look down'.

"If you want to sum the guy up, I'd say he evokes loyalty just by being around. As a human being, I've got the greatest respect and admiration for him. It borders almost on a brotherly feeling for him." ■

DEDICATED OPERATOR

As Sergeant Major of the Army, WO1 Carl Frederick Rohrbeck is the senior of all the warrant officers in the land forces, trend-setter, diplomat, arbiter, general fount of all wisdom and channel of communication from the lowest ranks to the highest.

As the senior sergeant major of the Army he is close in age to the man to whom he reports, the Chief of the Army, but his career has been considerably different. Rohrbeck is what computer experts would call a "dedicated operator" — he is an Armoured Corps man first, last and always.

Born on May 13, 1937, Rohrbeck joined the Army at 18 in 1955 and was trained at the Army Gymnasium. There he did so well that little more than a year later he was an instructor at the School of Armour in Bloemfontein. Three months later he was transferred as an instructor to the famed 1 Special Service Battalion. There he stayed for almost eight years before being transferred back to the School of Armour.

In 1971 he became a squadron sergeant major at Walvis Bay and stayed there for four years, seeing action with the ubiquitous armoured cars that played such a major role in Operation Savannah, the SADF's nine-month-long incursion into Angola in 1975-1976.

In December 1975, with the shooting war in Angola virtually over, he was appointed squadron sergeant major at 2 Special Service Battalion, but within two weeks he was shifted to become regimental sergeant major of 61 Base Workshop. Then followed stints as the brigade sergeant major of 81 Armoured Brigade, RSM of the School of Armour and the Personnel Services School and Command sergeant major of Northern Transvaal Command before his appointment as Sergeant Major of the Army on May 1 of this year.

A tale of two camps

There have been many reports of how township residents have felt about troops, but none about how the troops felt about the townships.

Here is a troopie's account of two periods of unrest duty he has experienced: one in a hot spot in 1985, one in a quiet area in 1986

In December 1985 we were grouped at Port Elizabeth when we arrived, and then my company, Bravo Company, moved up to Uitenhage. We were two units in the same camp.

We worked on a system of 12 hours on, 12 hours off, 12 hours stand-by. Within that period we were called off stand-by about three times, so the standby system worked.

We're a conventional battalion and it was our first riot camp. It wasn't our place, definitely. Firstly the leader group didn't seem to understand how we fitted into the greater pattern, and the chaps that were actually on the Buffel were still thinking more border coin (counter insurgency) ops than internal security.

Conditions there were pretty much an eye-opener for most of the chaps . . . the poverty

was considerable and our guys were shocked by it. You see, originally they took us through New Brighton, through the seamier side of it, and I think it shocked quite a few people, made them wonder what we were doing there and so on.

Most people had seen it in the paper and read about it, but the smell of it, the other kind of senses, became more of a reality.

There were quite a number of people that I had hardly expected to feel that way, who were far more sympathetic to the blacks' plight after that . . . I think many people went home with a new insight.

After a while they became a bit more blasé; their attitude changed when their sympathy changed a little. And what made the sympathy change, I think, was a realisation that these people weren't unhappy. They

TOWNSHIP TROOPS

Addressing women guests at a Western Province Command Army Ladies' Association meeting, Chief of the SADF Jan Geldenhuys said that between 5 000 and 8 000 soldiers were serving in black townships at present. Of these a large percentage were serving in support rather than patrolling posts such as clerks, cooks and signallers.

He added: "Considering the men work in shifts in an area stretching from the Witwatersrand to the western and eastern Cape and Natal, there are only a handful of soldiers backing up other government departments at any time."

Once we found this burnt, charred body in a field outside Kwanobuhle — that really shocked the guys. And there were some stone-throwings that caused injuries. Once we went into a school to see what was going on, and that afternoon the school was burnt down.

On the whole the troops' reaction was



were disgruntled with the lack of money and so on, but they weren't *unhappy* people.

There was a fair amount of unrest. There was a fair amount of stone-throwing incidents, but I think arson and intimidation were the most noticeable.

sympathy for the people who were being intimidated, anger at the people who were doing it and frustration at not being able to pinpoint the wrongdoers, and certainly a lot of apprehension, like when you were just patrolling through the streets and you'd see

these little smiling faces and ask yourself: were they really friendly or were they the comrades?

I think it stems from the old army thing about "know your enemy." In this case we didn't know.

This was obviously also a kind of learning process for the whole army as regards means of communication with the local population. At that stage we were still working on a textbook knowledge of what to look out for, and of course it wasn't anything like that. I think at that stage the intelligence-gathering wasn't very effective.

Yet throughout the time in Uitenhage we were told by the local population, and I think they meant it, that there was a positive feeling towards the Army.

I think the reason why I enjoyed the (1985) camp so much was because it was constructive rather than destructive. We built things and helped the people.

The 1986 camp was a different set-up altogether. Uitenhage had been very active. The attitude of the local population was different too.

As far as it was concerned, I think the leader group was uncountably more prepared for the type of situation we were in. That had been half of our problem at Port Elizabeth.

The feeling (in the township) was more neutral. I certainly didn't have that feeling of anxiety, that I'd had at Port Elizabeth, at all.

I felt good about that camp, I felt that we'd achieved something, and that even if we *hadn't* done something concrete like building houses, at least we could look back and say: "Look, this is how we can operate" ... I think most of the chaps coming back felt that there was hope for the future, if you want to put it that way. ■

The SAAF's strategies

Defence forces as a whole tend to be unproductive, in the sense that they do not actually produce anything, but the SAAF is something of an exception to the rule because its skills and equipment are often pressed into non-military use. But its primary task remains a military one

Unlike the Army, there is nothing deceptive about the strength and structure of the SAAF. It is an almost totally regular force, certainly sub-Saharan Africa's strongest in terms of the number of operational aircraft and pilot quality.

It has been a prime factor in the success achieved in just about every sizeable joint air-ground operation undertaken by the SADF; on more than one occasion it has snatched victory from impending disaster.

Official figures about the SAAF's strength have not been given out for years,

but according to the generally accepted statistics published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies the full-time strength is about 11 000 men and women careerists of the Permanent Force, plus 2 000 national servicemen.

They are backed up by about 25 000 re-

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