

# SADF taking flak...



□ Soldier wearing Israeli-style flakjacket

Military jackets issue affects everyone with sons in uniform, says MP

By Geoff Sifrin

THE SADF has rejected an offer to buy life-saving bullet-proof flakjackets for its troops serving on the border and refuses to say why.

A businessman has said he offered to sell combat-proven Israeli-style flakjackets to the Defence Force, but was turned down. He said no reasons were given.

Approached by the Sunday Tribune, an SADF spokesman gave the following reply: "It is SADF policy not to comment in any way on allegations about or answer questions on the acquisition or sale of armaments or equipment.

This week the PFP's Myburgh, said the SADF is about an issue which interests Africans, and especially the army.

"Regarding Defence Force security nature, we need to discuss. Only then will we know who can judge issues for Myburgh.

He stressed that people needed to be reassured that every effort was being made to safeguard the lives of South African troops, and refusing to comment on an issue like flakjackets was counter-productive for the morale of parents with sons in the Army.

If the SADF's silence on such matters was to protect international suppliers, it was even worse, he added.

"Such a situation indicates even more clearly why we need to get our house in order politically, so that people will be able to trade with us freely."

It is mandatory for Israeli soldiers in frontline positions in Lebanon to wear flakjackets, and their effectiveness in minimising the number of fatal chest and stomach injuries has been statistically proven.

Graham Whiteing, director of an Edenvale security equipment supplier, explained there were two types of military flakjacket used for the protection of infantry soldiers. The basic material used in both was Kevlar Aramid, a tough fibrous strand five times stronger than steel which was used in motor tyres.

The first was a lightweight jacket which would protect soldiers against fragmentation wounds from grenades and shells, and from hand guns. The second was a heavier jacket with pouches over the vital organ areas into which ceramic plate inserts could be fitted. Such a jacket containing three ceramic inserts covering the upper and lower chest and upper back would weigh about nine kilograms. A jacket like this would stop bullets from AK 47 and R1 rifles.

The price of a heavy jacket with ceramic inserts would be about R1 800, said Whiteing. In the civilian sector, vests made from Kevlar are available for about R500. These can be worn underneath normal clothes and would protect the user from most hand guns.

There are, however, differences between the Israeli context and South Africa which could affect the issue. In the Israeli army's operations the soldiers are mostly moving around in jeeps and other vehicles.

In South Africa, soldiers often go on long foot patrols through the bush, which could make the discomfort and weight of a flakjacket a prime disadvantage.

By Carina le Grange

Though some churches have welcomed the South African Defence Force's recommendations to accommodate conscientious objectors, a spokesman for the South African Council of Churches said last week that the proposed legislation would drive young men out of the country.

"Under the appearance of providing an alternative for conscientious objectors, the SADF is trying to drive these young men out of the country," the Rev R D J Robertson said, according to a report by The Star's Durban correspondent.

Supporting this view, the general secretary of the Christian education and youth department of the Methodist Church, Mr Paul Graham, said: "The church cannot accept a privilege for its own members which has not been given to all others. The length of service and penalties for non-religious objectors are grossly excessive and unacceptable to many young people, who will continue to feel that the only recourse is to leave the country."

#### RESPONSE

In accordance with the provincial synod resolution taken last November, the Church of the Province of South

# SADF view on objectors is deplored by SACC

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Africa also does not see its way clear to supporting the recommendations entirely.

"The distinction between a political and a religious objector, which the new proposals by the Naude Commission seem to suggest, is not acceptable to the CPSA. Therefore, in accordance with its synod resolution, the CPSA cannot in any way support these recommendations in their entirety. But the Anglican Church will be making a full re-

sponse to these proposals to the relevant authorities in due course," said the liaison officer, the Rev Winston Ndongwane.

The synod resolution recorded the CPSA's appreciation that the SADF was giving attention to the matter of conscientious objectors. It also recognised the right of all people, Christian and non-Christian, to object conscientiously to service in national defence forces for moral, ethical and religious reasons.

Most churches approached by The Star last week had not had the opportunity to study the proposals drawn up by the Defence Force Committee under the chairmanship of the Chaplain-General-Designate, Brigadier Chris Naude, before they met Defence Force representatives at Voortrekkerhoogte on Wednesday.

The nine churches which attended the top-level confidential talks were the Ned Geref

Kerk, Gereformeerde Kerk, Roman Catholic Church, Church of the Province of South Africa, Apostolic Faith Mission, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, Congregational Church and Baptist Church.

After the meeting Mr Robertson expressed his dissatisfaction, saying: "The meeting was a briefing — there was no consultation or discussion — and whereas the Defence Force had spent two years drawing up its proposals, the churches had only a week to lodge written comments before they are put before Parliament and legislation is rushed through."

#### GROUPINGS

"They say they have made the proposals in response to representations from the churches, but in my opinion they are not taking the churches seriously."

The Naude Committee, identifying four groups of conscientious objectors, recommended alternative national service or prison sentences of 1½ times to twice the normal length, including camps, of national service. This effectively means some objectors could spend up to eight years in civilian prison or alternative service.

Mr Robertson also pointed out that the recommendations for non-religious objectors "is on a par with the sentence given for high treason, murder and rape, and exceeds the penalty imposed in communist countries".

The four groups of objectors identified by the Naude Committee are:

● Non-combatants who should be allowed to do military service which does not involve the carrying of arms or weapon training.

#### UNIFORMS

● Non-militarists (those who refuse to wear uniform, but are willing to do work beneficial to the SADF) should be employed out of the military system and not in uniform. Their length in service should be 1½ times the length of military service, including camps.

● Non-militarists unwilling to play any part in the SADF should be required to engage in other forms of national service (as firemen, hospital workers, in forestry) and, corresponding to provisions operating in other countries, their national service should be twice the length of normal national service, including camps.

Objectors on political grounds should not be placed in military detention but jailed for a period twice the length of military service, with no remission for good behaviour.

A special board, on which two SADF members will serve, will examine the sincerity of each case. The committee stipulates that religious objectors must prove that their views are not new and have been held for some time.

# NON-VIOLENCE

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FIRST QUARTER 1983

THE GANDHI FILM is expected on circuit towards the end of April. Obviously you should not miss it; but it is also an opportunity to encourage those who are sceptical about non-violence to see it and to arrange for groups (church, school, 'varsity, youth clubs, Army, etc) to see it and then discuss the message of Gandhi's life.

Jim Forrest, general secretary of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) has written an appreciation of the film and I can supply single copies of this on request for use in publicising the film. Said Einstein: "Future generations will find it hard to believe that such a man ever walked the earth."

MAYFAIR On 11th March it was four years since the Naidus and I moved back into the house from which they had been evicted. Mr Pen Kotze, Minister of Community Development, has now suggested that the Group Areas Board should consider that part of Mayfair for an Indian group area alongside Fordsburg etc which have just been so declared. It is a minor and ambiguous "success" (something like the Defence Amendment Bill - see below) threatening whites with removal / <sup>under</sup> the Group Areas Act and exposing "illegal" tenants in the area to eviction by any future unscrupulous Indian landlords. Property values there have just about trebled!

We need to remember that the extent of non-violent action for justice (either in numbers or in duration) needs to match the extent of the oppressive machinery for any significant change to ensue. Meanwhile the chairperson of ACTSTOP, Cassim Saloojee, hazards a guess that there are now between 12,000 and 15,000 "illegals" in Johannesburg, compared with less than 1,000 four years ago. Our court case is still awaiting a decision by the Attorney-General of the Transvaal - but maybe the Naidus will become "legal" before that!

THE ELOFF COMMISSION Lt Gen P J Coetzee, Chief of Security Police, gave evidence for the SAP in February comprising 128 pages of testimony and more than a thousand pages of annexures. Quite a lot of it had to do with the SACC's attitude to violence (institutional, military and revolutionary) and there were references to non-violence, conscientious objection and civil disobedience. The major contention on non-violence, supported by a misunderstanding of writings by Prof Ben Englebrecht and Dr. John de Gruchy, is that such action provokes more violence and adds to the "spiral of violence". It was not difficult to refute.

I was given an opportunity on 15th March to respond to the SADF and SAP submissions as they concern the work of the Commission on Violence and Non-Violence of the SACC. (and managed to get it into 44 pages with 100 pages of annexures!). Including cross-questioning it took a whole day and was a chance to present the pacifist position which the SACC allows and sustains as part of its witness. I can supply portions of that evidence on request, but would need to ask 10c per page for anything more than 20 pages. The sections were:

- My personal concern about Conscientious Objection and Non-Violence
- History of Conscientious Objection
- Motivation of Conscientious Objection (including a distinction between pacifists, Just War objectors and "political" objectors)
- Conscientious Objection in South Africa
- Chaplains
- Manpower, Volksleër and Morale
- "Irresponsibility" (relating to a charge made by the SADF)
- Commission on Violence and Non-Violence
- Non-Violence and Civil Disobedience

IFOR Anita Kromberg is now working as a staff person of the IFOR and will be going to Europe and N.America for internship training over the next four months. On her return she hopes to set up an office and equipment is needed e.g. typewriter, duplicator, filing cabinet, desk, cupboard, bookshelves, addressograph, etc. Let me know if you have anything to offer.

GOING OVERSEAS yourself? We've had notices of some events of interest in Eurppe.

May 20 -23 Youth Convention in Cologne. Theme "Yes to Life - No to Killing"

May 30 - June 5 Non-Violence Trainers Gathering at Morestal, France.

August 3-12th Study Camp in English at the Community of the Ark's La Fleyssiere centre near Montpellier, France.

Details on request.

### CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

Billy Paddock, mentioned in last News Letter, commenced his year of civil imprisonment on 17th December at Pretoria Central Prison.

Etienne Essory, a pacifist who has no formal religious affiliation, was sentenced to four months civil imprisonment with ignominious discharge on 11th January 1983. He had completed his initial training of two years and done two camps, including 8 months on "the border", when he came to the conclusion that he could no longer morally take part in the violence embodied in military service. He went immediately to prison.

Adrian Paterson, an Anglican pacifist currently completing a Ph D in Metallurgy, was given a four month sentence of civil imprisonment with ignominious discharge on 20th January 1983, for refusing the July 1982 call-up for his initial training. He is at present at liberty pending the confirmation and review of his sentence.

Peter Hathorn, who described his objection as a "moral decision informed by a political understanding of the South African situation", was sentenced on 22nd March 1983 to two years civil imprisonment with ignominious discharge for refusing the January 1983 call-up for his initial training, and he is detained at Voortrekkerhoogte pending confirmation of the sentence.

Note that Paterson and Hathorn committed exactly the same offence. It is significant that at Paterson's trial, without being asked to do so, the Court Martial accepted his genuineness and in giving judgment made the remarkable statement (for a CM) that "what he believes is properly founded on the Word of God, and this is his personal right." At Hathorn's trial, despite two requests from his legal representative, the Court Martial made no finding on his genuineness, It asked no questions of him or his witnesses and imposed the maximum sentence on a first offender. It looks as if the procedures of the new Defence Amendment Bill are being anticipated.

Charles Yeats was released in Pietermaritzburg on 15th February and Michael Viveiros was released from Polsmoor Prison in Cape Town on 22nd February 1983.

There are currently about 350 Jehovah's Witnesses in Detention Barracks for the three year once-only sentence.

Addresses for correspondence:

Billy Paddock	32 Entabeni Rd, Sarnia, Pinetown 3600
Etienne Essory	78 Maryland Ave., Glen Ashley 4051
Adrian Paterson	2 Burg Rd., Rondebosch 7700
Peter Hathorn	Detention Barracks, Voortrekkerhoogte 0143 (for the few weeks before he is transferred to prison) Thereafter: 20 Richmond Park, Kloof, 3600.
Charles Yeats	c/o Diakonia, Box 1879, Durban 4000.
Michael Viveiros	c/o 5 Ferndown, Grant St., Kenilworth 7700

Statements made by Etienne Essory and Adrian Paterson are available on request, but I do not have Peter Hathorn's.

DEFENCE AMENDMENT BILL 1983 This Bill, consisting almost entirely of legislation on conscientious objection, is at present under debate in Parliament and, since it is being amended in the process, will require adequate study before comment is made. I hope to do so in the second quarter News Letter. It is encouraging to see the extent of public and press attention given to it, but worrying to hear the confusion surrounding the issues it purports to deal with.

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