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Editorial

Following the [SIGLA](#)¹ webinar on [Expeditionary Logistics and Southern African Operations: What Next for the South African Military?](#) held at the South African Military Academy in February 2024, this special issue focusses on the broad theme of Expeditionary Logistics and Southern African Operations. It also considers in general terms whether militaries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) particularly the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) – are “fit for purpose” over expeditionary distances in Africa.

With respect to the SANDF in particular, one broad conclusion reached by many of our special edition authors, is that there is a marked difference between the unique logistics doctrine of the SANDF (and “what works in Africa”) and the need to stay on a par with research, logistics doctrine, and best practice of modern militaries, especially those in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Despite this tension, considering the logistic challenges that the SANDF experienced in multiple deployments since 2013,² there is a clear need to implement better logistics doctrine and systems in the SANDF. Research and doctrine development will be important elements in this process.

The term “expeditionary logistics” is generally applied to sustainment occurring far enough from a domestic support base to require sustainment over longer distances with increased time intervals. Since logistic and financial capacity for expeditionary operations in this sub-region is limited, the optimal use of scarce resources to prepare forces and sustain them during operations is critical. There is thus a need for further research on operational and expeditionary logistics in Southern Africa, particularly in terms of case studies, and a future perspective.

While all the authors who contributed to this special issue either have a military background, or are still serving as senior military officers, the articles in this special issue can be divided into two general groups. While the first four articles are predominantly academic or research articles, the last two contributions involve research combined with personal accounts from a practitioner’s perspective reflecting unique data and personal reflections.

Ronald Ti used the case study of the Russo–Ukraine War (since 2022) to derive logistics implications for Southern Africa with reference to the use of uncrewed aerial systems as surveillance and weapons platforms, the extension of the “last logistic mile”, the denial of

airspace, restricted medical support and the growing use of civilian contractors in current warfare. This article provides an important conceptual foundation on current logistics, supply chain management, military logistics and other key concepts in this regard.

Abel Esterhuysen and Evert Jordaan give a holistic perspective of SANDF logistics with reference to expeditionary operations since 1994. The authors provide conceptual clarity on resources and logistics from an operational perspective, and highlight the importance of logistics as a key indicator of the efficacy of a defence organisation and military power. They also explain that political ideology has a significant influence on logistics doctrine and the adaptability of armed forces during operations. The influence of the ambitious, revolutionary politico-ideological policies of the African National Congress on national planning priorities, foreign policy, socio-economic objectives, key industries and funding for defence is discussed. In particular, the tension between this political thinking and the inherited Western logistics system of the SANDF is highlighted.

Roy Marais and Wouter de Bruin analysed the difficulties involved in sustaining expeditionary forces in Africa, from a South African (SA) perspective. In their article, they explain the concept of logistics as well as military supply chain management, and performance-based logistics. They outline how logistics in the SA military evolved with reference to the Border War, the establishment of the SANDF, and its involvement in peace support operations in sub-Saharan Africa. The authors argue that, although the SANDF coped well supporting peace operations, the effectiveness of the SANDF logistic system was held back by centralised procurement and acquisition systems, restructuring according to business principles, and a dichotomy between logistics doctrine and practice. Marais and De Bruin argue that logisticians should be involved in the entire planning and execution phases of expeditionary operations to ensure that any strategy is viable by supporting material demands.

Leon Steyn's article reflects a historical perspective of the development of the South African Navy (SAN), its roles, interdepartmental support, and naval operations in the Southern Ocean from 1947 to 2016. The expeditionary-type capabilities and Southern Ocean operations of the SAN and its forerunner, the South African Naval Forces (SANF), are the focus. Steyn considers the Southern Ocean as the "third" ocean in which the SAN should be able to operate, not only to protect the exclusive economic zone of South Africa, but also to fulfil international obligations under the Antarctica Treaty.

Charles Ross's article explores the first involvement of the SANDF in peacekeeping operations in Africa, the doctrinal adjustments it had to make, as well as the lessons learnt from these operations from 1999 to 2003. Ross writes from both a personal and Joint Operations Division perspective, where he served as a senior staff officer for United Nations peace support operations. In these operations, he was closely involved with the logistics planning and memorandum of understanding with the UN in terms of the contribution by the SANDF to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). Ross explains how the SANDF had to adapt to the new

training, equipment and sustainment demands of peacekeeping in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan – against the background of internally focussed defence reforms, integration of former forces, and “corporate” restructuring of the SANDF. Ross also provides background on the establishment of the Joint Operations Division, and the restructuring it required to direct not only domestic operations, but also peacekeeping operations.

Finally, Eeben Barlow provides a unique personal account from the perspective of a leading private military company contractor involved in logistics for expeditionary forces in Africa, following widespread operational experience on the continent through the work of the South African-based private military company – Executive Outcomes (EO) and later STTEP International. Barlow explains how since 1993, EO had to adjust its predominantly SA military logistics doctrine for various operations, starting in Angola. Barlow provides a logistics viewpoint of how EO assisted the Angolan government during operations against UNITA³ forces, and how this experience provided numerous “lessons learnt” to refine EO logistics for subsequent operations in Sierra Leone, Uganda, the Central African Republic, and Nigeria. Barlow presents the operational findings and solutions from private military company logistics as practised by EO and STTEP in Africa, and as contained in his book, *Composite Warfare*.⁴

This issue also features five book reviews. David Jacobs reviewed David Kilcullen and Greg Mills’ book, titled *The Art of War and Peace: Understanding Our Choices in a World at War*. Employing a Clausewitzian perspective, the authors highlight the pervasiveness of battlefield-centric approaches within a complex international strategic context, with ongoing war in, for instance the Middle East, Europe and Africa, and discuss the challenge to turn the use of military force into beneficial political results and enduring peace. Schalk Welgemoed reviewed *Professionals Talk Logistics: Sustaining Strategy and Operations* (edited by Jon Klug & Steve Leonard). This book emphasises the dependence of strategy and operations on logistics (including the supply chain environment), and the influence of technology (such as drones and artificial intelligence) in shaping the modern and future battlefield. This review highlights the tension between operational planners who are driven to project power and manoeuvre forces, and logisticians who must establish balance by indicating the sustainment limitations.

Louis du Toit reviewed *War of Intervention in Angola, Volume 5: Angolan and Cuban Air Forces, 1987–1992* (by Adrien Fontanellaz, Tom Cooper and José Augusto Matos), based on an expeditionary perspective. The review underlines the geographic, logistic, technical and command-and-control difficulties that the Soviets, Cubans and Angolans had to address in order to dominate the skies during this intense phase of the war in southern Angola. Johnny O’Neil reviewed the comprehensive interdisciplinary *Handbook of Military Sciences* (edited by Anders McD Sookermany), which covers various fields in social sciences, engineering and technology.

Point of Failure: British Brigadiers in France and Norway 1940 by Philip McCarty was reviewed by Graeme Plint. This review highlights the wartime careers of 156 brigadiers of the British Army from 1940, using social network analysis. Plint discusses the use of the latter methodology, and the presentation of McCarty's findings regarding the influence of upbringing, training and experience on career advancement in the British Army.

As editors of this issue, we extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to all the authors of articles and book reviews for their scholarship, professionalism and perseverance. This level of commitment enabled us to finalise the peer-reviewed content of this issue over a particularly short period.

Guest Editors

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Endnotes

- ¹ The Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA) is a research institute of Stellenbosch University, located at the Faculty of Military Science, Saldanha, South Africa.
- ² These deployments include the Central African Republic intervention in 2013, the SADC Mission in Mozambique from 2021 to 2024 and the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2023 to 2025.
- ³ Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Portuguese: *Uniao Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*).
- ⁴ E Barlow, *Composite Warfare: The Conduct of Successful Ground Force Operations in Africa* (2nd ed.) (Pinetown: 30 Degrees South, 2016); E Barlow, *Composite Warfare: The Conduct of Successful Ground Force Operations in Africa* (2nd ed.) (Pinetown: 30 Degrees South, 2025).