

Environmental support to military mission

By Lt Col Elsa Daniels,
SO1 Facilities Communication

“Owing to pressures on the utilisation of land and encroachment on military areas, the chances of acquiring alternative land for military training are non-existent. Therefore, the impact of military activities on the environment is one of the major challenges to the future of realistic military training,” according to Commander Adri Liebenberg, the current acting SSO Environmental Services at the Directorate Facilities, Logistics Division.

With eighteen years of service and as the only one of four full-time environmental officers left that was recruited in 1989 with the establishment of a permanent structure for environmental management in the department, Cdr Liebenberg, appointed as the SO1 Environmental Policy, is currently the longest serving member in Environmental Services in the department.

She was born in Gauteng and grew up in Wynberg in the Western Cape Province as the elder of two children. After completing her school career at the Voortrekker High School in Kenilworth in 1983, she attended the University of Stellenbosch, obtaining a Bachelor in Science (BSc) degree in Natural Sciences followed by a BSc Hons degree in Zoology in 1987. In 1988 she started working as an administrative clerk at the Directorate Radiation Control of the Department of National Health, where she was responsible for the registration of non-ionising equipment containing lasers and for the reporting of cases of over-exposure of health workers to x-rays and other types of radiation pollution.

She joined the SA Navy in 1989 and

completed naval induction training and the officers course in 1991. Her first appointment was as Staff Officer Environmental Services at the Navy Office, a position she occupied until 1998. In 1993 she was awarded the Conservamus Floating Trophy for Environmental Services in the DOD for developing the first naval policy on the conservation of the marine environment. Following the transformation process in 1998 Cdr Liebenberg was transferred to the Logistics Division and appointed as SO1 Environmental Policy. In 2000 she was involved in the drafting and promulgation of the Corporate Environmental Policy Statement for Defence and was instrumental in the compilation of the First Edition Environmental Implementation Plan (EIP) for Defence as required by the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), 1998 (Act No 107 of 1998).

Cdr Liebenberg completed the Junior Staff Course at the SA Air Force College in 2002 and the Joint Senior Command and Staff Programme at the SA National War College in 2005. She was the leader of the Environmental Team responsible for initiating a programme on integrating Environmental Considerations during Military Operations in 2003 during Exercise SEBOKA at the SA Army Combat Training Centre near Lohatla. She was also responsible for the development of a comprehensive Guide to Environmental Compliance for Officers Commanding to empower such personnel and their staff to ensure adherence to national and international environmental legislative provisions. For this achievement she was awarded the Conservamus Trophy for the second



**Commander Adri Liebenberg,
Acting SSO Environmental Services.**

time in 2003.

She represents the DOD on the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism ad hoc sub-committee on Environmental Law Reform and is responsible for the development and implementation of an Environmental Management System for Defence. During 2006 she was appointed as the SA project leader for the development of a joint guidebook on Integrated Waste Management in conjunction with the United States DOD under the auspices of the Environmental Security Working Group of the US-SA Defence Committee.

Cdr Liebenberg says: "Environmental personnel are first and foremost soldiers and this contributes substantially to delivering effective environmental support to the military mission. The number of female members currently involved in managing the environment makes a definite difference in ensuring the sustainable utilisation of military training areas. A positive "never say die" attitude combined with a pro-active approach to achieving goals will provide the platform for a successful career in Military Integrated Environmental Management." The rest is up to ourselves ... 