Training of FNLA units planned

The seventeenth article on the prelude to the participation of the South African Defence Force in the Angolan Civil War:

In order to ensure that the weapons would be utilised properly, it was decided to also provide training. Commandant D.J. Breytenbach, the founder of 1 Reconnaissance Commando, was placed under the command of Brigadier Schoeman specifically for this purpose. He was appointed at the head of a training programme which he had to select himself. He started this part of his task even before he left Pretoria. He arrived at 1 Military Area on 28 August 1975 and already had a training programme ready which he discussed on 29 August with Brigadier Schoeman, Commandant Knoetze and high ranking FNLA representatives.

For the sake of secrecy it could not be treated as a normal operation. As few people as possible were informed about it. It was emphasised that the operation had to be controlled separately from the normal headquarters facilities and that liaison with Army Headquarters could not occur through the normal channels. As a cover story, the FNLA soldiers were told that the training personnel were mercenaries, which they believed.

After initially considering Bwabwata in South-West Africa, it was decided to establish the training base at Mpupa. Mpupa was located on the Quito River, and was linked to Calai, D'Firico, and Vila Nova de Armada by road. There was also a runway for planes and was therefore ideal for training purposes. Mpupa had previously been a Portuguese military base for about a battalion and even though the camp was dirty and neglected, it turned out very useful after improvement.

It was planned that within about two weeks, the first group of 200 FNLA-soldiers would have been trained as a mortar platoon, a Vickers-machinegun platoon, as well as three platoons proficient in basic infantry tactics.

this first group would then be followed by second and third groups of 200 each, etcetera, until battalion-strength is reached. For this purpose the

(Continued on page 2)
Training of FNLA units planned
(Continued from page 1)

FNLA would send their best soldiers to Mpupa. It was also planned to mount Vickers machine-guns on captured Land Rovers, Land Cruisers and Jeeps for close support during battles. It would also provide support to stopper groups. Personnel would also be trained for these specific tasks. Training started on 15 September.

Commandant had presented a complete training programme during the meeting at Rundo on 29 August 1975. This occurred after Maj.-Gen. Viljoen and Commandant Knoetze had left the meeting because they had to return to Pretoria. He and Brigadier Schoeman worked out the details and also discussed it with Commandant P. du Preez. This detailed planning was itemised in a letter dated 3 September 1975, from Commandant Breytenbach to Brigadier J.J. Geldenhuys, who was then Director of Operations with the Chief of the Army.

It is clear from this letter that Commandant Breytenbach was convinced that only arming and training the FNLA would not be sufficient, and that operations would have to be conducted under the leadership of South African officers. “Personally, I think,” he wrote, “that the success of the operation depends on good control right down to the lowest level, i.e., under white South African control, as well as logistical support.”

In fact, this was also the request made by the FNLA representatives during the conference: “They requested, even before we could suggest it, that we should support them not only with training, but also with the actual planning and control of operations.” (SADF Archives)

As the war progressed, he foresaw the creation of more battalion groups. Because the Angolans would gain in experience and because there may be more Portuguese joining to fill key positions, he considered it unlikely that South African participation would need to necessarily increase.

Commandant Breytenbach held the opinion that the first trained battalion could be used to capture cities like Moçamedes, Sá de Bandeira (Lubango), and even Lobito. Thereafter, securing Nova Lisboa (Huambo) and Silva Porto (Bié) could also be considered. Captured areas would need to be secured, and activities normalised through proper administration. Here the Portuguese could be of great value. Finally, the creation of the militia from the local population, were envisaged.

The piece ended on an optimistic note. “There had been a report of strong military build-up by the MPLA, supported by Russians, Cubans, Chinese, etc., but we seriously feel that if we can provide leadership down to a reasonably low level, we could ensure that the FNLA would win and act in a disciplined way.” (SADF Archives)

As a result, the following personnel were appointed under Commandant Breytenbach: Captain J.P. Dippenaar in command of B Company, Second Lieutenant J.C. (Corrie or Comé) van Wyk in command of A Company, and the Portuguese, D.F. (Danny) Roxo in command of C Company. In command of the support weapons and also at platoon level, were Sergeants M.L. (Vingers) Kruger, F. van Dijk, P.G. Soeiro, J.C.P. de Ribeiro and Almerindo Mourão da Costa. The last three were Portuguese. (By February 1980, with the exception of one, these personnel were all out of action. Captain Dippenaar lost his sight and his hands were badly hurt in an explosion on 29 May 1979. Sergeants P.G. Soeiro and José de Ribeiro were in a mine incident in which the first died of his wounds on the 24th and the other on 26th August 1976. A few short weeks later, Danny Roxo also died in a similar way. Thereafter, Sergeant M.L. Kruger was killed in action on 29 October 1977, Captain J.C. van Wyk fell on 23 May 1979, and Sergeant A.M. de Costa died in clashes with SWAPO during the weekend of 23-24 February 1980.)
Featured Equipment:
The PMD-6, PMD-7 and PMD-7ts anti-personnel mines

The Soviet PMD-6, of similar design to the Czech plastic PT-Mi-D, is an anti-personnel blast mine consisting of a wooden two-piece casing, the top folding on to the bottom, containing a 200 gm block of TNT and a pull-type MUV fuse which projects through intersecting apertures cut in one end of both casing sections. Although it is possible to use this mine with a tripwire, it is more effective to set the lid so that a soldier can set off the mine by stepping on it (or placing something on top of it). In this way, the striker-retaining pin is pulled out by the downward movement of the edge of the cover. In a similar manner, it is possible to booby-trap the PMD-6 by attaching a cord or wire to the striker-retaining pin and anchoring the other end of the string to the ground. This mine is of such simple design that it is perfectly feasible to make one in the field and, consequently, although the explosive power will remain about the same, the dimensions may vary slightly. Pressure required to detonate these mines varies from 1 kg to 9 kg. The PMD-7 and PMD-7ts Soviet blast anti-personnel mines are identical except that the lower casing of later model is cut out of a single wooden block. The working principles and method of employment are the same as those of the PMD-6, which is larger and heavier and contains more TNT (200 gm as against only 75 gm). Again, the amount of pressure needed to detonate the mine can vary from 1 kg to 9 kg.

From “Brassey’s Infantry Weapons of the Warsaw Pact Armies”, edited by J.I.H. Owen

Specifications

<table>
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<th>Country of Origin:</th>
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The PMD-6 and PMD-7ts anti-personnel mines

“It is perfectly feasible to make one in the field.”
This is the twenty-seventh part of a 50-part series taken from “We did not see it even in Afghanistan. Memoirs of a participant of the Angolan war (1986-1988)”, by Lieutenant Colonel Igor Anatolevich Zhdarkin

With you, Geronimo, no one will kill you. By now, everybody knows you.”

The inhabitants there spoke no Portuguese

The main thing is that the Angolans greeted me first and only then other our specialists.

One time, the following occurred. We had arrived at the next village. The Angolan who translated from Portuguese into the local language was with us as usual. I again became suspicious – “And no one right now is going to kill us?” And he said to me, “With you, Geronimo, no one will kill you. By now, everybody knows you.” I was, however, frightened.

To be continued next week in Part 28...

Images with kind permission from Igor Ignatovich © 2011
Historical Account: Operation Hooper: The second attack on Tumpo Part 3

Extract taken with the author’s permission from: “War In Angola - The Final South African Phase”, by Helmoed-Römer Heitman.

At 13h25 Muller’s force came into an area that had been cleared by Fapla to give a good field of fire. Muller deployed his force into combat formation and prepared to cross this terrain by bounds, asking the artillery observers to guide him as he approached the objective. Tim Rudman had seen a radar scanner above the trees and reported it to Theo Wilken who, back from leave, was the forward artillery co-ordinator. He passed it to Charles Fuchs, who engaged it with the G-5s. Fuchs also engaged two other radars seen by the forward elements, and a BM-21 spotted on the west bank.

At 13h55 the force was only some 3 000 metres from the bridge. A miner-roller detonated several anti-personnel mines, and Fapla immediately opened fire with 23 mm guns and 120 mm mortars, D-30s and BM-21 s. Muller replied with 81 mm mortar fire and, by 14h02, Fapla resistance began to crumble.

Soon after this first contact, at 14h22, one of the tanks detonated an anti-tank mine, and Fapla opened fire with anti-tank weapons from the front and the left flank. The South Africans and Unita now found themselves stopped by a high-density minefield on ground slightly lower than the surrounding terrain on which the Fapla anti-tank weapons were deployed. Three other tanks soon detonated mines, although only one suffered immobilising damage to a track. Fapla was now firing from the front and both flanks with B-10s, AGS-17s and various other weapons, including at least three Sagger anti-tank missiles fired from the west bank.

Muller pulled his force back slightly, redeploying to engage to the front and both flanks, and initiated a fire belt action against the Fapla elements around them. A forty-five minute fire-fight followed.

A forty-five minute fire-fight followed, during which all but the 23 mm guns and 120 mm mortars were silenced. The direct fire of the Olifants, Ratel-90s and the infantry of Unita’s 3rd Regular Battalion on the Fapla positions oppo-site them, was supplemented by the Ratel-81s. They engaged observed and sus-pected Fapla positions and put some 500 bombs on them in a short time. The artillery also began firing at various Fapla positions. Muller’s Ratel was grazed across the nose by a 23 mm projectile. Another Ratel was hit in a back wheel by a 23 mm round and one of its antennae was shot off. Others were also hit, but none were penetrated. Tim Rudman was lucky when a 120 mm mortar bomb exploded in a tree just above his cupola. He had just shut his hatch and was unhurt. Some of the Unita infantry still sitting on the back of his tank were killed or wounded, and his machine-gun was blown off the turret roof.

The South Africans and Unita had hardly begun firing, when Fapla artillery began to place accurate fire on them. Eighteen Fapla gun positions were identified, and the artillery switched its attention to them. With only six guns then available, there were none left for close support, which left the troops in contact entirely depend-ent on their mortars. Their direct fire and the fire of the 81 mm mortars proved adequate to the situation, and the opposing Fapla positions were silenced one by one. The tanks and the Ratel-90s fired some twenty to thirty rounds each in this clash, and the Ratel-20s averaged 200 rounds of 20 mm. Once the bulk of the opposing direct-fire weapons had been silenced, Muller slowly pulled his force back some 2 000 metres to be clear of the killing ground. At 14h28 the force again drew fire from a flank, causing Muller to pull back far-ther. One 23 mm gun that was bothering them (Continued on page 7)
"WE'VE GOT A RUSSIAN!" Part 2

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Charlie Company had deployed inside a treeline bordering an open chana (savannah) when they observed enemy vehicles moving through the trees on the far side of it. Van Staden again advised HQ, but as the result of confusing reports from other sources, he again received an order not to fire for fear of killing friendly forces.

"Well, when two BRDMs moved out of the far treeline with about 20 troops, all of them shouting 'Avanca!' (Forward!) in Portuguese, we definitely knew they were FAPLA," Van Staden said. "I moved the company up the side of the chana into a better am-bush position, with eight RPGs in the centre to face the side of the advancing enemy. At that point I received another order from HQ not to fire. As they came abreast of our position the first FAPLA soldier saw us and his eyes bugged out, then he just looked straight ahead and kept on walking without even telling his own people." Charlie Company watched impotently as the enemy moved past them.

The FAPLA unit was still within range when Van Staden received the order to withdraw again. He pulled his company back to the NE and dug in. "At that stage I was feeling bloody frustrated," Van Staden admitted. "Finally I said the hell with it, left one platoon there and returned to our last position. The BRDMs were gone, but we could still see the log vehicles on the far side of the chana. I knew there was still the first group of vehicles and troops - the one with the Land Rovers - stopped between the two roads behind us, but decided to first attack the one we could see."

Under covering mortar fire they attacked across the chana. A BM-21 MBRL started to burn, sending its load of 122mm rockets streaking wildly across the sky. A flight of Alouette III gunships which had responded to Van Staden's call for air support arrived but were ordered out of the area by the young CO until the rockets had finished cooking off.

We found over two dozen children hiding under the trees

"At about 1600 hours we moved forward again and found over two dozen children hiding under the trees. There was nothing we could do at the moment, so I left them there and we began checking the vehicles, all of which were full of ammo. Then I received a call from one of the Alouette pilots to tell me they'd spotted what appeared to be tank tracks."

Fully aware of the destruction heavy armour could inflict on thinly-skinned mechanized infantry vehicles, Van Staden took one platoon, found the tread marks and began following them at a run in the fading light. When they came across a new Soviet-made jeep, he assumed it belonged to the FAPLA commander. He left one section to guard it and carried on with two sections. More and more abandoned vehicles were discovered, and Van Staden continued dropping off men to guard them. He was down to one section when automatic weapons fire exploded from their right. Van Staden and his men attacked immediately, killing three of the ambushers. Of the four seen to break and run, three were chased down and killed.

Van Staden quickly turned his attention to the bodies, noting that the second one was wearing new FAPLA fatigues. "When I turned him over I was stunned to see he was white. I can't tell you why, but I knew instinctively that he was Russian." He was right: the Buffalo soldiers had just killed a Soviet lieutenant colonel. Night had fallen and Van Staden ordered six troops to guard the body. With Lt Naude, one of his platoon leaders, and his last two troops, he continued following the tracks. Within minutes the four men stumbled across two PT-76s. Van Staden climbed silently onto one with a grenade, listening for any sound from the crew. When he found both abandoned, he radi-oed back for one of the

(Continued on page 7)
Uittreksel uit “Ag man dit ‘WAS’ lekker in die Army” - van Danie Matthee

In die Army het ek aan die weermag se marathon club aangesluit net om so nou en dan ‘n bietjie uit die kamp te kom al beteken dit om ‘n mara-thon of twee te hardloop. Ek het sommer met die gewone ou Army tekkies gehard-loop wat nie regtig geskik was vir langafstande nie. Met een van die marathonne waraan ons deel geneem het dek ons Army ouens, met ons weermag atletiek klere,
die agterhoede van die honderde mense wat die marathon hard-loop. By een van die waterpunte staan daar ‘n Hoërskool laaitjie ons en aanmoedig. Toe hy sien ek is van die Army skree hy vir my: “Mooi so oom, oom is amper klaar” Ek sien toe hierdie ou is seker net so 2 jaar jonger as ek en sê vir hom dat ek nie sy ver-domde oom is nie. Hy skree toe terug vir my: “Sorry tjomma, Julle lyk nog goed tjomma en hou net aan julie is amper klaar tjomma!”

"WE'VE GOT A RUSSIAN!" Part 2

(Continued from page 6)
two remaining platoons to move up and guard them.

Exhausted, the four soldiers headed back to rendezvous with the platoon and lead it to the PT-76s. On the way, they passed a kraal and detoured slightly away from it. Van Staden was leading, followed by Lt Naude and the two troops, when an AK-47 opened up on them from a thicket alongside the kraal fence. They immediately returned fire and advanced to find two bodies, one of them white. It was the second Soviet lieutenant colonel to die that day, and, as Van Staden would later learn, the commanding officer of the Ongiva logistics base.

"I was examining the body when Lt Naude suddenly shouted at someone not to move. On the other side of the kraal fence were three whites in FAPLA uniforms, one trying to crawl away. I jumped over the fence and took the weapon away from him, then saw that the other two were women, both dead. Although we didn't know it at the time, one had been the wife of the lieutenant colonel we'd just killed, and the other the wife of the Russian sergeant major we'd just captured. The prisoner was uninjured, and as we were tying his hands he began speaking in Portuguese, desperate to know about his eleven-year-old son, who had been with them just before the shooting began.

Continued next week, in Part 3…

The second attack on Tumpo Part 3

(Continued from page 5)
was silenced by a single G-5.

A signals intercept at 14h30 indicated that Fapla had suffered quite heavy casualties in this brief engagement.

At 14h35 a reconnaiss-
sance team reported that the Fapla tanks at New Samaria had started up and were preparing to move. Colonel McLoughlin ordered 32 Battalion to draw back and the rest of the force to wait. Muller was meanwhile having mechanical prob-
lems with some of his vehicles and was also still taking 23 mm fire. He decided to pull back still farther to regroup in a safer area. At 14h50 a 23 mm round hit one of the Ratels, but caused no casualties or serious damage.

(Continued on page 8)
The second attack on Tumpo Part 3

(Continued from page 7)

At 15h22 Muller requested permission to pull back to where his reserve was, in order to carry out a quick re-appreciation. By 15h30 he was down to only five serviceable tanks and could no longer operate an effective armoured force. Colonel McLoughlin discussed the situation with Generals Liebenberg and Meyer, and then gave his permission.

Muller meanwhile went on pulling farther and farther back in an effort to get out of range of the 23 mm guns, which were still giving trouble. Try as they might, the forward observers seemed unable to locate the 23 mm positions to silence them with fire from the G-5s. At 16h20 a Ratel moving just off the 'rollered' trail detonated a mine. It suffered only slight damage, however, and was able to continue with the force.

Muller at last got out of range of the 23 mm guns. Although his force was still being engaged by M-46s and 120 mm mortars, they did not present a serious threat at that time.

At 15h50 Colonel McLoughlin and Muller discussed the possibility of a night attack together with 32 Battalion, but Muller felt that it would not be feasible given the small number of serviceable tanks. Some of his Ratels were now also beginning to give trouble, and he was also drawing increasingly heavy artillery fire.

At 17h00 McLoughlin decided to call off the attack and gave permission for Muller to withdraw to the forward assembly area. A covering force was to be deployed in the former 59 Brigade positions as before, to prevent any interference from Tumpo or any attempt to reoccupy these positions. This task fell to 4 SAI and a Unita battalion. 4 SAI deployed its armoured car squadron, a mechanised infantry company, an assault pioneer section and four anti-tank missile teams. Both 61 Mech and the main body of 4 SAI then moved back to their assembly areas.

Mike Muller summed up the outcome tersely: "The enemy is strong and clever." While Fapla did not have a strong force in the bridgehead, they did have very strong artillery elements that did most of the fighting, and they - or, rather, General Cintra Frias - certainly planned and executed their defence very cleverly indeed. It is an open question whether they would have been able to deal with a night attack as effectively. Their artillery, which relied on observers to some extent, would have been less effective. Their air force would have been out of the picture altogether.

One outstanding characteristic of the Fapla defence was their use of an anti-tank reserve, which could move quickly to deploy in support of that part of their positions threatened by imminent attack. The use of mines to 'announce' the attacking force before it could see the positions and to slow it down long enough to allow the mobile anti-tank reserve to deploy, worked as planned. The next stage would probably have been to bring up the tanks - although they were down to five mobile ones, the rest being dug in - either to beef up the defence, or to destroy the weakened attacking force. That did not happen, was due to the superior fighting ability of the South Africans, who managed to subdue the Fapla elements in contact, and then to extricate themselves and Unita before the tanks could come up. The Fapla reaction to the main attack was also delayed by the confusion caused by Les Rudman and his deception team. For some time the Fapla commander thought that their sound-effects might be the actual attack, and he did not react to the warning by his outpost of the South African approach from the north.

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In January 1961, the low cotton prices of 1960-61 caused social unrest in Angola.

During January 1968, the MPLA started military activities in Zone D under Daniel Chipenda, which included most of the Cuando-Cubango district.

By January 1975 UNITA was definitely the strongest force in southern Angola.

The Alvor Agreement between the FNLA, MPLA, UNITA and the Portuguese government was signed on 15 January 1975.

During the election of the Ovambo Board from 13 to 17 January 1975, the voting percentage was 55%, despite a SWAPO boycott.

On 14 January 1976, the South African Cabinet decided that the South African Defence Force must withdraw from Angola with the exception of the Ruacana-Calueque area.

Maj.-Gen. Viljoen issued withdrawal orders to all units in Angola on 15 January 1976. The Withdrawal was not to start before 17 January and had to be completed by 25 January.

On 17 January 1976, Task Force Zulu was informed that they would be relieved by Civilian Force units between 21 and 26 January, except for the gunners of 14 Field, who would only be relieved in February.

On 19 January 1976 the South African withdrawal out of Angola is once again postponed, this time to 21 January.

First elements of Combat Groups Orange and Boxer starts the withdrawal from Calucinga via Andulo and Vouga to Silva Porto on 20 January 1976.

On 18 January 1977 a 32 Bn platoon encountered 12 SWAPO at a waterhole about 3.3km north of the border.

A platoon of 32 Bn and 3 platoons of 1 Parachute Bn, supported, by 4 gunships, attacked a FAPLA base north of Cuamato on 15 January 1981.

On the same day, Lieut. Arthur Walker earned the Honoris Crux Gold for his dedication and exceptional courage under fire while supporting ground forces with his Alouette gunship, exposing it to heavy and continuous AAA fire to protect six Puma helicopters dropping assault troops.

On 17 January 1981, as 2 companies of 32 Bn and a company of 201 Bn got ready to attack a FAPLA base 9km south of Cuamato, all attacks against FAPLA were halted and all troops ordered south of the cutline.

On 15 January 1988, the SAAF carried out an air strike on the SWAPO Western Regional Headquarters.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE SADF AND SWATF!

Write the names of the units represented by the flashes below each one.

Find the answers in next week’s issue!
Schedule of Events

- 23-25 January 2012 — 6th Counter IED Summit
- 23-25 January 2012 — 2nd Annual Military Logistics and RESET
- 23-25 January 2012 — Tactical Data Links
- 23-25 January 2012 — 9th Annual Tactical Power Sources Summit
- 24-26 January 2012 — International Military Helicopter
- 24-27 January 2012 — Cyber Defence & Network Security

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With over 6,400 UNIQUE visitors to War In Angola, viewing in excess of 167,000 pages per month, the time has come to allow a select few to rise above the rest.

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The War In Angola website (www.warinangola.com) is dedicated to recreating and re-fighting the battles between the adversaries of the Angolan War (or Border War as it is also known), that is, the SADF and UNITA on the one side and the Soviet-supplied FAPLA, Cuba, and SWAPO on the other side. In order to recreate the battles as accurate as possible, a lot of research is required about the equipment, organisation, quality, uniforms, command, support and logistical structures behind the different forces.

There are two sides to the website: the gaming and recreation of the miniature battles; and the historical facts and research of the forces behind the battles.

The dividing line between the two sides is deliberately blurred in order to expose both sides to all the users, thereby promoting and exposing the wargaming and modeling hobby to the historically inclined and vice-versa.

Johan Schoeman

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Last week’s latest topics on the Forums

**RE: Engineers in Oshakati by Chris (Broer) (guest)**
Hier is ek weer vir hulp Is daar medaals gegee indien jy langer as 6 of 9 maande op die grens was behalwe die diens medal en propatria

**RE: Engineers in Oshakati by Broer (guest)**
Onthou asb die datum 03-06-2012 dit is die dag van die muur van hermering by die monument WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

**RE: 2 Special Service Battalion by Need2Know (guest)**
Thank you for the link Johan, Appreciate it! So this was a armour regiment. How easy was it in the 1980's to transfer between regiments? Lets say from this armour regiment to other regiments? ...

**RE: Engineers in Oshakati by ammazulu (guest)**
Happy 2012

**RE: 14 Light Artillery Regiment by Tjoops**
PLEASE PLEASE forgive me, again the age played it's mistakes on me! It is NOT 14 Light Regiment (Which was in fact an "berede" horseback regiment according to Wikipedia! I was in fact in 18 Li...

**RE: 2 Special Service Battalion by johansamin**
I also don't have much on 2 SSB, other than what is here: http://www.warinangola.com/Default.aspx?tabid=1239&Parameter=65 I do have a bit more on 1 SSB, which is here: http://www.warinangola....

**RE: 14 Light Artillery Regiment by johansamin**
RE: 14 Light Artillery Regiment by Tjoops
Hi, Deon... Great to hear from you! I was aware of a 120mm Battery deployed between me and Cuito during Packer but had NO IDEA who they were... even though as OPO I even had the opportunity...

**14 Light Artillery Regiment by Tjoops**
Hi, I was in 44 Parachute Brigade and was in 14 Light Artillery Regiment. We were rather VERY active outside Cuito, laying no more than 1500m from the town, doing daily bombing of the town with ou...

**2 Special Service Battalion by Need2Know (guest)**
Where can i find more info on "2 Special Service Battalion, which was based in the town of Zeerust" Anyhelp would be appreciated.