

61 Gemeganiseerde Infanteriebataljongoep

61 Gemeganiseerde Infanteriebataljongoep het slegs 27 jaar lank bestaan, maar in daardie kort leeftyd het hy aan nie minder nie as 37 grootskaalse optredes en operasies deelgeneem, en in die proses 'n welverdiende reputasie verwerf as een van die beste gevegseenhede in Suid-Afrika se militêre annale.

Hy het begin as 'n saamgestelde eenheid genoem Veggroep Juliet, bestaande uit pantserkarre en die kraaknuwe Ratel infanteriegevegsvoertuie, wat gevorm is vir 'n aanval vanuit Suidwes-Afrika/Namibië. (nou Namibië) op 'n basis in Angola met die naam Chetequera.

Die aanval het geslaag, en in Januarie 1979 het Juliet – nou tot "61 Gemeganiseerde Infanteriebataljongoep" herdoop - sy plek in die gereelde slagorde ingeneem as die SAW se heel eerste permanent saamgestelde multi-korps gevegseenheid. In die daaropvolgende 11 jaar het "61 Meg" sulke veelsydigheid getoon dat hy die Leër se snelreaksie-eenheid geword het.

In daardie tyd het 61 Meg se samestelling en taktiek heelwat verander soos sy swaarverdiende ervaring en kennis van moderne bosoorlogvoering opgehoop het. Uiteindelik het hy 'n battery van die befaamde G5 kanonhouwers bygekry om sy drie infanteriekompanie, pantserkareskadron en ondersteuningskompanie by te staan. Gevolglik kon hy onmiddellik vir feitlik enige taak ontplooi word.

61 Meg het in die nuwe era bly dien, totdat hy in 18 November 2005 die geskiedenisboeke – dog nie die vergetelheid nie – ingemarsjeer het toe hy ontbind is. Maar die nagedagtenis van die manne in die kamoeifleerbarette leef nog steeds voort.

61 Mechanised Infantry Battalion Group

61 Mechanised Infantry Battalion Group existed for just 27 years, but in that short lifetime it participated in no less than 37 large-scale actions and operations, earning a well-deserved name as one of the finest fighting units in South Africa's military annals.

It started as a composite unit called Battle Group Juliet, composed of Eland armoured cars and the new Ratel infantry fighting vehicles, which was assembled for an attack out of South West Africa/Namibia (now Namibia) on a base in Angola called Chetequera.

The attack was successful, and in January 1979 Juliet -now renamed "61 Mechanised Infantry Battalion Group" - took its place in the regular order of battle as the SADF's first-ever permanently constituted multi-arm fighting unit. In the next 11 years "61 Mech" proved to be so versatile that it became the Army's rapid-response unit.

During that time 61 Mech's composition and tactics changed considerably as its hard-won experience and knowledge of modern bush warfare accumulated. Eventually it acquired a battery of the famed G5 gun-howitzers to bolster its three infantry companies, armoured-car squadron and support company. As a result it could be instantly deployed for almost any task.

61 Mech served on in the new era till 18 November 2005, Then it marched into the history-books – although not into oblivion - when it was disbanded. But the memory of the men in their distinctive camouflage berets lives on.