



# THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGION

## NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT ELIZABETH BRANCH

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#### Welcome to 2022

This year has really started to rush along, we are into the 3<sup>rd</sup> month already. It is hoped that with the relaxation of many of the Covid “Rules” we will start to see a return to some of the things that are special and sacred to the Legion returning.

#### Branch news

It was with sadness that we learnt of the Passing to Higher Service of Lgr Johnny Jarman recently, he was a great supporter of the Legion Ideals. The Branch extends it condolences to his family.

The EXCO have started their monthly meetings at the Maritime Club and are looking forward to the better year than 2021.

The POPPY Collection last year has finally been put to bed and it realised a net R21 727. Bearing in mind the Covid situation in November and the state of the economy, that was a pretty good figure. This year’s POPPY collection is aimed at Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

The Annual Three Ships service was programmed for the 20<sup>th</sup> February, however the EXCO decided that the Covid restrictions still prevented the Branch holding this service this year.

#### General Meeting - 27<sup>th</sup> February 2022

The General Meeting was held in our new home, the Maritime Club. Some 16 members attended – now that the Covid restrictions have been further adjusted, it is hoped that we will see more members at the AGM on Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> May. An interesting talk was given by Lgr Alan Shaw.



After the closure a finger lunch was enjoyed by all.

#### Maritime Club

Port Elizabeth Branch has formalized its use of the Maritime Club for our meetings and social functions. All members of the SA Legion are now accepted as Associate Members of the Maritime Club and have full use of its amenities, which include 2 bars, a large snooker Salon (3 tables), and Conference facilities. Visiting members from out of town are automatically included as members. We will be mounting our plaque by the entrance shortly.

#### Annual Subscription

The Annual Subs are now due so please ensure you are paid up so you can vote at the AGM in May.



#### Spitfire Restoration Hangar.

The dedicated and voluntary efforts going into restoration of the SA Air Force (SAAF) Museum’s crashed Spitfire reached a significant milestone when work started on a purpose-built workshop and restoration hangar at Air Force Base (AFB) Swartkop.

It’s now eight years since the Spitfire Restoration Project (SRP) was registered as a non-profit and public benefit organisation. Its sole aim is to bring back to display status Spitfire S/N5518 after the World War II single-engined fighter crashed during an air show in 2000.



In 2018 the SRP reported its “most pressing need” was a new restoration hangar and workshop. At the same time those involved said the planning phase was complete adding restoration could start once the hangar/workshop facility was complete and sufficient donor funding available.

Making the essential hangar/workshop reality is a step closer with erection work under way as of late February.

*“This will remain a memorable day in the restoration of the SAAF Museum’s Spitfire 5518. The structure is being erected in phases, as funding becomes available. This first phase includes erection of a steel structure and a significant part of the roof covering and will be completed by end March,” according to an SRP communique.*

The SRP steering committee acknowledged the tireless effort, work, dedication and commitment of retired colonel Tony and Shirlee Smit in overseeing the project.

“Smit was the second Officer Commanding of the SAAF Museum and responsible for returning a large number of museum aircraft to flying status. He and his wife were leaders in initiating the Spitfire project. The entire aviation community is grateful and indebted to them both, for their commitment to preserving our aviation heritage,” the committee said.

Spitfire 5518 arrived in South Africa in 1947 and served in the Cape and at Air Force Base (AFB) Waterkloof before decommissioned. The iconic fighter then served as a gate guard at Waterkloof before the SAAF Museum motivated its restoration to flying condition to serve as the star attraction at SAAF air shows to promote the air force and aviation among youth. 5518 took to the skies in 1994 as 5553 “The Spirit of Reutech”. (Defence web)



**Gunners stop illegal immigrants; confiscate a boat, brandy and cigarettes**

An attempt by Zimbabwean cigarette smugglers to beat South Africa’s eyes and ears on the country’s

borders by using a covered eight ton truck to hide the illegal tobacco product was not enough to distract 4 Artillery Regiment gunners currently deployed on the Limpopo/Zimbabwe border.

Gunners on duty at the Grobler’s Bridge port of entry stopped the Hino truck and found close to R2 million worth of illicit cigarettes in the covered load bay. The driver was handed to police. The truck is valued at R380 000, according to Captain Moses Semono.

In another 4 Artillery Regiment area of operations on the same borderline, soldiers working with Mapungubwe National Park rangers confiscated R265 000 worth of illegal cigarettes. Not far from the park at Dongola Kop, soldiers struck again, taking R140 000 plus worth of illegal cigarettes from smugglers.

A fourth cigarette bust by the Potchefstroom-based unit saw a boat, used to move illegal goods across the Limpopo River, confiscated along with cigarettes valued at R420 000.

Gunners from the same regiment posted at the Beitbridge port of entry apprehended 177 illegal immigrants who were handed to police and Department of Home Affairs officials. A further addition to the Beitbridge scorecard was finding and confiscating 73 small bottles of King Stallion branded brandy, conservatively worth R1 800.

4 Artillery Officer Commanding, Lieutenant Colonel H Abrahams, brought congratulations for work well done to his soldiers from Colonel Samuel Mabotja, OC Joint Tactical Headquarters, Limpopo. (Defence Web)

Well done the Gunners!



Regards, the Editor

