



**the sandf**

Department:  
Defence  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## RESERVE ACHIEVEMENTS - MILITARY SKILLS COMPETITION

### SPAIN 2016

#### Background

The annual international military skills competition was held in Spain over the period 30 July 2016 to 7 August 2016.

The competition is a method of measuring the capability and ability of different nations soldiers with regard to their competencies in basic military skills. All of these basic skills, combined with the normal SANDF combat ready requirements, enable a soldier to be declared combat ready. These skills include land and water obstacle crossings, shooting with a pistol and a rifle at different targets (one target simulating marksman skills and another simulating three different enemy positions forcing the shooter to shift his/her aiming point), hand grenade throwing, map reading skills, range estimations and a military speed march including orienteering, whilst carrying two weapons, by means of military maps and aerial photos without any electronic aids such as GPS etcetera.

The competition is a three man team event executed over several days and which includes a three day training period in order to prepare and familiarize the competitors with the terrain, the obstacles and the different weapons of the host country.



Heckler & Koch G36

The SANDF was once again fortunate to send two teams to this competition due to a combined effort between the Defence Reserve Division, the Reserve Force Council and the South African Army.

These soldiers attended several training camps in order to prepare themselves for this grueling competition.

The team consisted of Maj Labuschagne (3 Para Bn), Sgt Daniels (SAIR), Cpl Hlope (UMR), Cpl Tshikare (2 Sig Reg), Tpr Neethling (RMR), Rfn Mdlalose (3 Para Bn) and Rfn Smit (3 Para Bn). Capt Ditshego (SAAF) was the team manager and Capt Le Roux (3 Para Bn) was the instructor. Lt Col Van der Westhuijzen was the OIC as well as a technical jury member for the competition. Indeed a formidable team.

The team departed on 27 July 2016 and arrived on the afternoon of 28 July in a very hot (40°) and humid Madrid. Quite a shocking experience. Traveling from a cool 16° in South Africa.

#### Competition



The first event was the shooting competition. Both teams did well with the rifle and Cpl Hlope almost achieved a full score: 174/180.

The next event was the land and water obstacles. Both our teams did extremely well and came respectively 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. The first time ever that



both our teams ended in the top two positions together. The swimming event also went very well and many complimentary remarks by different competitors were made about the major improvement in our soldiers' basic military skills.

Due to these two events, ZAF1 came 1<sup>st</sup> and ZAF2 came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the combined obstacles event. Unfortunately medals and trophies are only issued to the team that achieved the 1<sup>st</sup> position otherwise we would have had two teams on the podium.



Many teams were disqualified during the military march, but both SANDF teams were able to finish extremely well in this event. Again the best ever for South Africa.



### Extraordinary Achievements



Our soldiers are definitely making their mark in this prestigious international competition. We have received numerous compliments and many nations congratulated us on a job well done.

This was clearly demonstrated during the awards ceremony. ZAF1 was called forward and the whole congress stood up, clapped their hands, whistled and cheered our team whilst they were receiving their trophies. Again a first for South Africa.

Another major compliment was given to the team during the gala dinner. South Africa was the only nation that was thanked by name for their professional military conduct and participation in this competition.

The technical jury member from South Africa was called forward and received a plaque for his contribution and military ethos during the execution of his duties.



South Africa was also given the opportunity to hand over the first trophies of the competition during the awards ceremony.

These four incidents clearly indicate the caliber of our soldiers in a competitive international environment and emphasize the importance of interacting with different nations in order to measure our basic military skills capability to that of the international military community. The branding of our military culture in such an environment must never be underestimated.

South Africa and more specifically the SANDF, can truly say we were weighed and not found wanting.