

## 44 ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT



(Source: The SA Gunner)

44 Anti-Aircraft Regiment was appointed and designated as a unit of the Citizen Force wef January 1985 with the headquarters at Murrayhill (Hammanskraal).

The unit struggled to obtain any National Service intake as Gunners posted to the Parachute Brigade were being passed to the battalions and were not being released for the AA unit.

When the first exercise was held, only 18 parachute trained gunners were available. They were dropped over the exercise area from C130s by what the commanding officer at the time, Maj “Paddy” Case, referred to as “the nerve wracking tailgating method”.

Their armament and equipment, dropped before them, consisted of SAM 7 missiles and Russian 14.5mm AA guns and they also had .50 Brownings mounted on Jakkals airborne “mini-jeeps”. The men felt they were the finest AA Gunners in the world. In 1988 a huge airborne operation was planned. The Gunners were to be dropped with the pathfinders on Mocamedes. They were to receive and undergo training from Unita on Stinger missiles before the main force dropped. The operation never took place.

It was not until *Exercise Vlakwater* in September 1989 that a full troop with two gun sections of 14.5mm AA guns and one Jakkals vehicle with a Mamba double barrellled 12.7mm AA gun, was deployed in an air drop. On 14 July 1992 at approximately 23h30 during *Exercise Pegasus* at the then Army Battle School parachute-qualified air defence Gunners were dropped over the General De Wet Training Area. Two 24ft pallets were dropped from a C-130 transport aircraft. At 07h00 on 16 July the ground forces were attacked by air (in the form of Skylift radio-controlled aircraft) which were repelled by eight 14.5mm double-barrellled AA guns and two shoulder-launched missiles. The regiment, a Reserve unit of 44 Parachute Brigade, has taken part in brigade “water jumps” over the Roodepoort Dam each year since 1990. A unit flag was approved by Chief of the then SADF on 15 July 1986.