

44 PARACHUTE ENGINEER REGIMENT



(Source: Wikipedia)

44 Para Engr Regt is the successor to components 44 Parachute Brigade, established as an integrated fulltime/reserve formation on 20 April 1978.

At its peak, the brigade included 1, 2 and 3 Para Bns, 18 Light Regiment (120mm mortars), 44 Parachute Anti-Aircraft Regiment, 44 Parachute Engineer Regiment, 37 Field Workshop, 44 Maintenance Unit, 44 Signals Unit and 44 Anti-Tank Company. Elements from all three parachute infantry battalions made an operational jump at Cassinga, Angola, during Operation Reindeer (1978). The 1st para-sappers that ever took part in a SADF airborne assault operation were two Officers (both Lt's) during Operation Reindeer on 4 May 1978.

Since its establishment until 1982, the Unit only operated on Squadron minus level. From 1983 the Unit effectively functioned as a well-established Squadron, with Capt. Gerhard Pretorius in command.

44 Para Engr Regt received its official status as a Regiment on 12 January 1990.

The restructuring of the Army in 2000 saw the establishment of Corps-specific type formations. A necessary consequence was the scaling down of the brigade to a multi-battalion regiment. The regiment is also responsible for acquiring, maintaining and storing all SANDF parachutes – hence a Parachute Packing Wing, and parachute training, done at the regiment's Parachute Training Wing.

According to the wikipedia, "the Brigade was scaled down slightly" following the end of the Border War in 1989, and began preparing for a new role, that of conducting operations internally in South Africa in order to quell increasing levels of political violence. In January 1991 the Brigade conducted its first operational jump in an urban counterinsurgency role when 2 Parachute Battalion deployed to the then-Natal province as part of Operation Eardrum.

The Brigade's first operational deployment in the post-1994 period was Operation Boleas in September 1998. It deployed two parachute companies and the Pathfinder Platoon to

Lesotho to prevent a coup d'état.

During 1998, the decision was taken to redesignate the unit as a multi-battalion regiment, but it was only during the year 2000 that this change became official. As of 2004, according to the wikipedia, the Regiment had under arms:

44 Parachute Regiment Headquarters and Regimental Staff

1 Parachute Battalion (Regular Force)

3 Parachute Battalion (Reserve Force)

44 Pathfinder Platoon

13 Signal Squadron

44 Medical Task Group

Parachute Training Wing

Parachute Packing Wing

101 Air Supply Unit

Current role: Parachute infantry

Current base: Tempe, Bloemfontein