



# **FIRST IN, LAST OUT: The South African Artillery in Action: 1975-1988**

*Clive Wilsworth*

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## **FIRST IN, LAST OUT: The South African Artillery in Action: 1975-1988** Clive Wilsworth

From the 25 pounder to the devastating G5 and G6 guns-to the Valkirie 127mm multiple-rocket launcher and M5 mortar. This work covers all operations of the Border War in which the South African gunners took part, starting in early 1975 when a young second lieutenant was seconded to train UNITA troops in Angola on US 4.2-inch mortars-through Operation Savannah, the first operation, to the last rounds that were fired in June 1988 against the Cuban 80th Division in southern Angola. During this period, the artillery grew from an under-strength troop of 17 men and two medium guns to an artillery brigade supporting a mechanized division. It is a story of heroism, of fear, of well-planned, successful operations and of losses to own forces by ill-timed and inaccurate fire. It tells the story of the 8,500 South African gunners who took part in operations during that time. Personal accounts are merged with historical fact organized in chronological order, highlighting the shortage of modern equipment and the efforts to combat a well-equipped, numerically superior enemy through innovation, application of the principles of war and sheer pluckiness. Clive Wilsworth was called up for national service in 1969 to the School of Artillery, Potchefstroom, and then posted to 4th Field Regiment as an assistant OP officer. After a six-year stint with the Natal Field Artillery and as a territorial captain with the Regiment Port Natal, he signed on as a regular with 14th Field Regiment, South African Artillery. From 1978 to 1988, as a battery commander and Intelligence Staff Officer, he saw action in several major operations during the Border War. He was involved in the development of new weapon systems, leading the first 127mm multiple-rocket launcher and G6 courses. His last posting was to Army HQ, Pretoria as Project Officer for the development of the Artillery Target Engagement System-the digitization of the artillery. He retired in 1994 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Clive is now a business consultant living in Johannesburg.

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