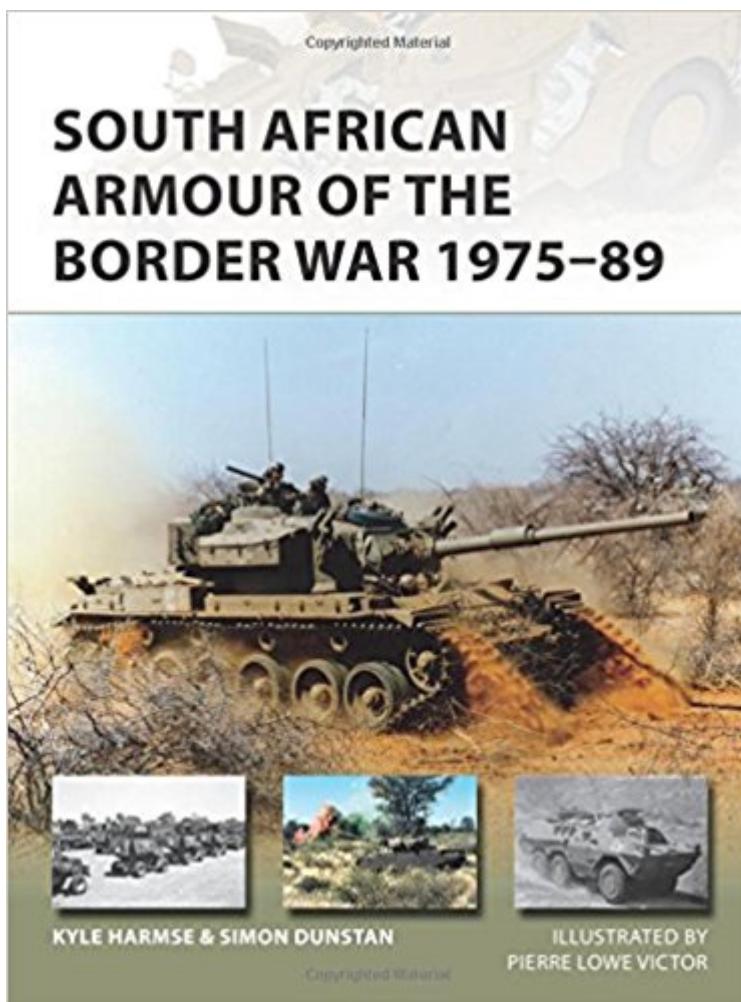


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# South African Armour Of The Border War 1975–89 (New Vanguard)



## **Synopsis**

The Border War saw the biggest armored battles in Africa since World War II. Starting as a counterinsurgency operation by the South African Defence Force (SADF) against the South West Africa People's Organization, South Africa became embroiled in the complex Angolan Civil War, where they came up against enemies well supplied with equipment and armored vehicles from the Soviet Union. With the aid of stunning illustrations and photographs, this study details the characteristics, capabilities, and performance of the wide variety of armored vehicles deployed by the SADF, from the Eland armored car to the Ratel infantry fighting vehicle and the Olifant tank. Designed for the unique conditions of the region, South Africa's armor was distinctive and innovative, and has influenced the design of counterinsurgency armored vehicles around the world. Much demanded by Osprey readers, and written by two renowned experts on armored vehicles, this will appeal to all those interested in modern armor and the Cold War proxy wars.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Based in Johannesburg, Kyle Harmse has long been interested in armored vehicle design and the proxy wars of the Cold War. Simon Dunstan is an author, film-maker and photographer in the field of military history. He specializes in armored warfare, and has written on this subject for two decades. Simon lives and works in London.

This is an excellent Osprey title on South African armored vehicles during what they called the

"Border War". Authors Kyle Harmse and Simon Dunstan have given the reader an excellent account of armored vehicles employed by South Africa and how they evolved during wartime. The long border war involving Namibia and Angola lasted from 1975-1989 and propelled armored development and construction of some unique vehicles. This is a good example of a country, by necessity, designing and developing its own military weapon systems to fit its own environment and needs. The SADF (South African Defense Force) began with French Panhard armored cars which the SADF upgraded to weapons capability for but then had to rely on indigenous weapons design as an international embargo cut off outside sources. The bush war and cross-border insurgency into Namibia meant a lot of mines were used to kill police and civilians. The SADF responded with the Casspir and the Buffel - early mine-resistant vehicles which were very effective in their role. The SADF moved on to the Ratel, a wheeled infantry fighting vehicle that was among the first such vehicles and certainly predates the Bradley in US service. The SADF vehicles are 6x6 wheeled vehicles and their designs were mostly wheeled ones because of cost, ease of maintenance and repair and strategic mobility. Although the SADF did use tracked tanks, the Centurion-based "Oliphant", their vehicles were mostly wheeled with versions as infantry fighting vehicles, tank killers and self-propelled artillery. This is an excellent primer (it's a typical 48-page Osprey weapons title) on South African armored vehicles and independent weapons design. Very interesting and a worthwhile read! Five stars!

I found this book to be disappointing. The South African Army of this era and the Border Wars are interesting and important subjects which have received little attention by mainstream publishers outside of South Africa, with post-Cold War coverage of the topics largely being limited to somewhat dubious works issued by obscure firms. While this book has been published by a mainstream British publisher, it unfortunately falls squarely into the literature on this topic. It is written from the South African perspective only, and repeats the usual tropes: the Border War is described as being a defensive conflict for South Africa (the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that it was actually part of an aggressive strategy to destabilise the country's neighbours), the narrative is focused on South African victories, and some of the more morally indefensible elements of the South African security forces such as the Koevoet teams (which were also condemned by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) are singled out for praise. Leaving aside issues with balance, the book does provide some useful information. While coverage of the design of the main AFVs is somewhat brief (especially in comparison to what's common in books of this series), the summaries are clear and interesting. The book's many artworks and photographs were also well selected and

executed. Overall, this would have been a much more useful work if it had focused on the South African AFVs rather than the campaigns they were involved in. For instance, it would have been interesting to have included much more detailed material on the development of AFVs such as the Ratel IFV and the features of their variants. The views of South Africa's opponents on the effectiveness of these AFVs would have also added a useful dimension to the book. Given the issues with the book's bias and the lack of focus on its purported topic, I can't recommend it.

The long border war between South Africa and its insurgent-dominated, communist-supported neighbors is mostly forgotten today. The initial clashes between South African Defense Forces and their South West Africa People's Organization opponents gradually escalated in the terms of their violence and in the sophistication of the equipment involved. South Africa's agile and lethal light wheeled forces soon found themselves facing increasing modern tanks, artillery, and mines, as both sides adapted to a tough Angolan battlefield. "South African Armour of the Border War 1975-89" is an Osprey New Vanguard Series book by Kyle Harmse and Simon Dunstan, with illustrations by Pierre Lowe Victor. It sketches the story of the conflict but the focus is on South African armor forces and how they adapted to an increasing dangerous battlefield. By the end, South African forces were fielding their own main battle tanks and long range artillery to counter Soviet-supplied, Cuban-manned systems. It's an interesting story, backed by lots of period photographs and modern illustrations and diagrams. Oddly, there are no maps. Well recommended to students of armor warfare for its coverage of a forgotten conflict and a time of intense innovation under fire.

I learned a great deal by reading about how the South Africans adapted their doctrine and tactics based upon terrain and how the enemy operated. Their integration of vehicles, trackers and helicopters to intercept guerrillas in the bush is worth the price of the book. Very well written and informative. They also successfully fought conventional Cuban forces equipped with Soviet armor. Our armed forces can learn a lot by studying these operations.

Text, descriptions, and artwork plates are all fine. -2 stars because the photos are all so small that no detail can be discerned. The B&W's are OK, but most color shots are super small. I may be spoiled by the Panzerwrecks and old Squadron series, I realize. I expected more along the lines of Dunstan's "Vietnam Tracks" or the Tanks Illustrated features.

..in a rarely known thema , South Africas war with the Communists , SWAPO , Cuban troops and

the Material it used in this epic fight ! Good !!!!

thank you

Very well written and informative good to have information on South Africa

Would like to have more series on infantry and Air Force Also Navy 1960 -1990.

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