



## Iron Fist From The Sea: South Africa's Seaborne Raiders 1978-1988

*Douw Steyn , Arnè Söderlund*

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## **Iron Fist From The Sea: South Africa's Seaborne Raiders 1978-1988** Douw Steyn , Arnè Söderlund

This seminal work documents the clandestine sea borne operations undertaken by South Africa's 4 Reconnaissance Commando Regiment. It breathtakingly reveals the versatility and effectiveness of this elite unit which worked with a range of other South African and Rhodesian forces, including the Rhodesian SAS, to engage in a range of raiding and war fighting activities. These operations saw the clandestine reconnaissance of harbors, the sinking of enemy shipping and the destruction of shore installations in Angola and Mozambique. Just some of the tasks undertaken by this extraordinary maritime capability which totaled no more than 45 operators, both black and white! With unparalleled access to previously secret material, the authors, both of whom worked to develop 4 Recce's operating capabilities, trace the origins of the Regiment back to the 1970s when the South Africans determined the need for a maritime force projection capability. They relate how maritime doctrine was developed within South Africa's wider Special Forces capability and how joint operational approaches were configured with the South African Navy. This saw the development of a range of swimmer, reconnaissance, diving and boat operator training courses, along with the design of specialist raiding craft and amphibious assault platforms, which were originated to operate from the Navy's existing shipping and submarines. All of which demonstrated the immense potential of this newly emergent force and the resourcefulness of its individual operators. Required to successfully complete a grueling selection process, the operators of 4 Recce were relentlessly tested to prove their physical and mental mettle, not to mention their leadership skills and initiative. Steyn and Soderlund's chronological analysis of the operations undertaken by 4 Recce and the South African Navy is stunning to behold. They impartially detail the secret and specialized actions which saw both success and failure. From Cabinda on the West Coast to Tanzania on the East, 4 Recce, and whose existence and capability was largely kept secret even within the South African Defence Force, conducted numerous clandestine raids. They attacked shipping and strategic targets such as oil facilities, transport infrastructure and even ANC offices. And sometimes the raids did go wrong, spectacularly so in one instance when two operators were killed and Captain Wynand Du Toit was captured. He was later paraded in front of the world's media, much to the embarrassment of the South African government. This is a fascinating work and one that will enthrall anyone with an interest in Special Forces operations. Profusely illustrated with many previously unpublished photographs, it stands as a testament to the author's endeavors as, respectively, the former Operations Commander of 4 Recce and the former Commander Task Group of the SA Navy - as well as the incredible operators of 4 Recce. Explosive and compulsive, Iron Fist from the Sea takes you right to the raging surf; to the adrenaline and fear that is sea borne raiding...REVIEWS a truly fascinating piece of work I was really impressed by the quality of this volume Miniature Wargames"

## **Iron Fist From The Sea: South Africa's Seaborne Raiders 1978-1988 Details**

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## **From Reader Review Iron Fist From The Sea: South Africa's Seaborne Raiders 1978-1988 for online ebook**

### **Eddie Booyjens says**

#### **Superb**

To the point and factual. Exactly what I expected and loved the details.

Suggest that this book and the other on the subject , Recce by Koos Stadler, are read shortly after each other as both books contents paint a complete picture of the land and sea capabilities of the unit.

Highly recommended book which debunks all fallacies about Recce's, killing the stereotype once and for all!

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### **Barry Sierer says**

Steyn and Soderlund have put together a fascinating account of the operations of the SADF's 4th Reconnaissance Regiment, better known as "4RR". This book is written differently than other comparable books on Special Forces units. Whereas similar books on the US Navy SEALs or the British SAS often focus on the mission, in terms the unit's time in contested territory (with some background information at the beginning), "Iron Fist from the Sea" documents each mission from the initial planning phase, to the operator's return to their home base. This gives the reader the feeling that they are going through an encyclopedia.

The drawback of this style is that the writing is dry, overly detailed (in some ways), and lacking in excitement. On the plus side, many details of mission planning are explained and the writing still preserves the tension of 4RR infiltrations and extractions, as well as the complications that ensue.

Firefights are a rare occurrence. 4RR's exploits tend to focus on the various tricks of Seaborne infiltration, sabotage, and reconnaissance missions. These accounts not only involve the operators themselves, but naval strike craft and submarines.

Despite its "dry" style, the book is a catalog of seaborne SADF missions in the 1980's and worth the time for those interested in South African military history and the nuances of infiltration by sea.

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### **Ryan K. says**

Man, I wanted to love this book, I really did.

It is not often you can find a lot of information on South African special forces and their missions. The Recce's being at the top of the food chain for their SOF elements, this had promise I had hoped.

Well, hope is not a strategy.

If you are looking for first hand accounts of operations with a lot of excitement and balls out Michael Bay levels of action and explosions, save your money. This will definitely not be your jam. If you want a painfully well documented, exceedingly thorough account of ship staffing, departure times, routes, equipment, training, and very difficult operations pulled off without a hitch , you are in luck!

This book is honestly very well written and accurate for what it is - I see it more as a historical archive and documentation than anything. To that degree of accuracy and detail, you would be hard pressed to find better. It's just not... exciting for the most part. With the exception of one or two operations, there isn't a ton of 'action' as you would probably want. That is a testament unto itself of the amazing skill and expertise of the Recces and supporting naval assets themselves.

For what the book does and how it is written - awesome job. If you want tale after tale of combat and neck stabbing, face shooting, grenading every room CQB slaughter, carry on.

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## **David padgett says**

### **Good read**

Excellent book but it reads more like a series of AARs than what I expected. I thought it would include more on the training and selection and be a little more focused on the individual operators; nonetheless an excellent treatise...

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