



Member Profile: Take a short journey in the life of – Jacobus (Koos) F de Wet.

- Born and grew up on a farm in South Africa
- Was very interested in all matters to do with flying from a very young age and did all the model aircraft things boys do and continued this hobby through all my life with a number of radio controlled aircraft now gathering dust in my shed due to lack of time to fly.
- After school went on to university to study engineering (combination of aeronautical and mechanical engineering subjects)
- Developed a passion for designing and building armoured military vehicles in the early 1970's when employed by Mercedes Benz and then decided to specialize in the design and development of blast and ballistically protected vehicles in 1973.
- Over the next 20 years designed and built many of South Africa's best known landmine and ballistically protected vehicles such as the Buffel and Casspir.
- Was brought to Australia on contract in late 1996 by ADI to evaluate the protection levels of the Bushmaster vehicle as part of a project they had acquired from Perry Engineering in Adelaide as a competitor in Project Bushranger after the ADF had expressed serious reservations that it did not have the claimed levels of blast protection.
- I quickly discovered that the Bushmaster **had no blast protection at all** and I was then contracted by ADI Ltd to re-design the Bushmaster at short notice to incorporate the necessary blast and protection levels.
- ADI Ltd had no mine and ballistically protected vehicle experience at the time and I then:
 - Put together and trained the team to design and rapidly prototype the totally re-designed vehicle under my design leadership and direction– not a single drawing was carried over from the original prototype designed by Perry Engineering! Not one!
 - Directed, led the design and did the blast certification of the re-designed Bushmaster blast protected hull that is still used today with some modifications.
 - Produced all the test and sign off procedures used for blast and ballistic testing.
 - Managed all the blast and ballistic tests and sign offs. (Even dug the holes in and placed the landmines to do the blast testing!)
 - Between October 1997 and February 23, 1998 led, directed and managed the building of the 3 evaluation vehicles supplied to the ADF which then beat the opposition vehicles in trials to secure the Bushmaster contract for ADI Ltd in March 1999.
 - Also came up with the following future Bushmaster derivative concepts whilst redesigning the Bushmaster vehicle:

- Fireking fire vehicle
- Bushmaster Platform cargo (now called Copperhead by Thales) and being offered to the UK MoD
- 6-wheel drive Bushmaster
- A highly protected reconnaissance vehicle for the special forces which I called Stalker
- Was appointed the first General Manager of ADI Ltd's Military and Specialist Vehicles Department in April 1998. I basically created this business unit from scratch and appointed most of its personnel, many of whom are still there today.
- After ADI's privatization in 1999 I was retrenched by their new management and then went on to privately design a new range of landmine and ballistically protected cabs for the ADF's Unimog and Mack vehicles which I produced through a private company I had formed with a business partner.
- All the protected Mack and Unimog trucks operated in Iraq and Afghanistan by the ADF use this cab and not a single life has been lost in any of them!
- I continue to do military vehicle design consultancy work both locally and overseas and am currently involved with protected vehicle projects in two overseas countries.
- My wife and I are now Australian citizens and I bought a home in Junortoun in 2000 where we have now settled and where we both really enjoy the rural life with all the birds and small animals.
- When my eldest son takes up residence in Australia in March next year we will have our whole family together here which we are looking forward to no end.
- On the business front I have decided to start taking things a bit slower from now on which has at long last allowed me the opportunity to do what I have been dreaming of doing for so many years – to get my flying licence!!
- I joined the Bendigo Flying Club & RAA flying School recently and with first class tuition, guidance and direction from Colin Douglas CFI, and Colin Hokin Senior Instructor. I am starting to get the hang of things and now look forward to getting that pilots licence that has eluded me for so many years.
- I look forward to enjoying my time as a member of the Bendigo Flying Club and hope to make a positive contribution.

Koos de Wet
November 1, 2008

