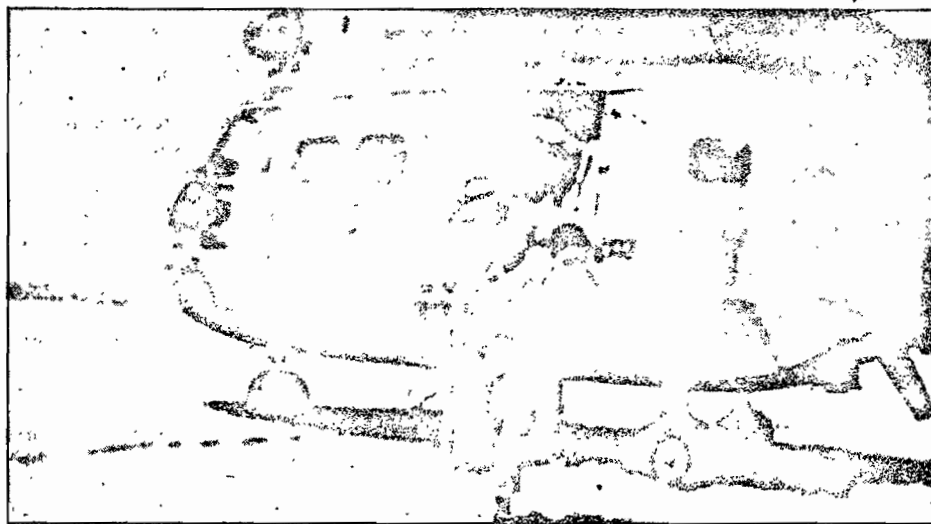


# Pretoria's dirty tricks army

South Africa has reconstituted its military machine so that it can not only fight conventional war, but can take on bandit-style operations in the frontline states. Destabilisation of its neighbours is a major foreign policy element.



Destabilisation in practice: South African helicopter troops in action

South Africa's rulers, increasingly influenced by the military, believe that threats to their power from SWAPO in Namibia and the increasingly effective African National Congress are very serious. They state that they face a "total onslaught" masterminded from Moscow.

Using the experience of the counter-insurgency strategy of the White regime of Rhodesia — not to mention thousands of its soldiers — the latest techniques from its close ally Israel, and the expertise of veterans of the world's counter-guerrilla wars, South Africa is implementing what its chief military officer Lt. Gen. Constand Viljoen calls "offensive defence." This new word for aggression entails the Matola massacre in Mozambique last year, the incursions into Angola and the creation of a *cordon sanitaire* around the Namibian border with Angola, raids into Zimbabwe and the sponsoring of "bandits" in Zambia.

The goals are to preoccupy the frontline states of the area with defence and internal security and hinder economic development that might in time result in quarantining South Africa through trade sanctions. The goal is also to discourage and impede front-line state support for the ANC and SWAPO. Such strategy relies heavily on unconventional forces, the main elements of which we outline here.

## Special forces

South Africa has the best trained and equipped army in sub-Saharan Africa. But though it is to fight a conventional war, the emphasis over the past decade has shifted decisively towards fighting wars against guerrillas. Conscription has recently been extended as have periods for reserve service. Progressively, from involvement in Civil Defence right through to the part-time Commandos, virtually the entire White population is now being involved in some sort of military planning.

South Africa's serious development of counter-insurgency strategy only started with the demise of Portugal as a colonial power together with the intensification of the Patriotic Front's offensive against Ian Smith's government in 1974. Taking the Rhodesian and the British Special Air Service (SAS) as its example the South African Defence Force (SADF) created the Reconnaissance Commando in the summer of 1975. The former Inspector-General of the SADF, General Frederick Loots, was asked to head the unit by the then head of the SADF — now Minister of Defence — Magnus Malan.

This unit is recruited from volunteers to the SADF, conscripts with at least a year's service, former members of the Rhodesian army, and veterans of the counter-insurgency wars of Britain the US, Belgium,

France, Portugal and others. The rapid expansion of the SADF recently has meant serious shortages of officers and NCOs, a gap which mercenary recruitment from these quarters is meant to fill.

The British SAS has been the model for all counter-insurgency forces, although its own role is substantially different nowadays. But the British army's definition of its capabilities serves well to describe the potential of the Reconnaissance Commando:

"SAS squadrons are particularly suited, trained and equipped for counter-revolutionary operations. Small parties may be infiltrated or dropped by parachute, including free-fall, to avoid a long approach through enemy dominated areas, in order to carry out any of the following tasks:

- a) the collection of information on the location and movement of insurgent forces
- b) the ambush and harassment of insurgents.
- c) the infiltration of sabotage, assassination and demolition parties into insurgent-held areas
- d) border surveillance
- e) limited community relations
- f) liaison with and organisation, training and control of friendly guerrilla forces operating against the common enemy."

The similarities of the Recce units (as they are popularly known in South Africa) to other SAS look-alikes extends to the gruelling training involved. It consists of extensive survival training in the bush, diving, parachuting, familiarity with a myriad of weapons, unarmed combat, mountaineering, and endurance tests designed more to evaluate individual determination than the physical fitness which is a *sine qua non* for any applicant. The psychological testing is meant to ensure reliability and willingness to carry out any task.

These Citizen Force recruits will serve three years in the SADF rather than the normal two, and will have an obsession with military life. They are also vetted from the security standpoint. A further similarity to the original SAS is its training for operating in five- to six-man units for maximum mobility and concealment in hostile areas.

One of the most significant boosts to the Reconnaissance Commando was the arrival of between 200 and 250 members of the Rhodesian SAS squadron, which had formed ties with the British SAS and had participated in some of its Malayan and Middle Eastern operations in the 1950s and 60s. The SADF also benefited from the flight of thousands of members of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Selous Scouts, and militarily-trained members of Bishop Muzorewa's militia.

Although the SADF denies it strongly, the Rhodesian SAS squadron is thought to have been incorporated as a distinct unit within the Reconnaissance Commando. Although the commander of the SAS-related Selous

Scouts, Colonel Ron Reid-Daly, is now the head of the Transkei armed forces, he and his men are close to the SADF high command.

Not surprisingly, the SADF withholds all details about the Reconnaissance Commando except information designed to encourage awe of its capabilities. Bits and pieces can, however, be put together to give the following pictures of its five units.

**No. 1 RC:** Commanded by a former military intelligence officer, Colonel Olckers, it is the oldest unit of the five and was responsible for the Matola massacre of January 1981, when 12 ANC members were murdered in an ambush. A British mercenary member of the unit was killed in the attack.

**No. 2 RC:** The existence of this unit only became clear following its prominent association with the attempted coup in the Seychelles. At the trial of the mercenaries in South Africa it was revealed by the commanding officer, Commandant Danie van der Spuy, that 11 of them were members of the No. 2 RC unit, but he denied any official involvement in the coup attempt. Based in Durban like No. 1 it consists of reservists — similar perhaps to Britain's part-time SAS unit, the Territorial SAS.

**No. 3 RC:** Little is known of this unit, if it exists at all.

**No. 4 RC:** This appears to be the South African equivalent of the Special Boat Squadron, the marine equivalent of the British SAS. It has been in existence for four years and specialises in underwater techniques and reconnaissance missions involving boats. It is likely that this unit carried out November 1981's attack on the Angolan oil refinery near Luanda. The attackers had been landed from a submarine. It is based at Donkergat near Cape Town.

**No. 5 RC:** This unit consists mainly of Black non-South African soldiers; since various sources have said that Angolan, Zambian and Mozambican renegades were trained there. Trainees from the camp in Dukunduku, in Natal, have allegedly gone on to form units of soldiers posing as SWAPO members and committing atrocities to discredit the nationalists (this was a favoured tactic of the Selous Scouts). Jose Belmundo, the defector from the 32 Battalion (see below) said that these units carried out pre-attack reconnaissance missions in Angola too.

These special troops give the SADF greater flexibility than it had before. They are versatile and suited for a multiplicity of tasks the SADF may find it difficult, for various reasons, to get conventional soldiers to perform. It may involve murder, infiltration, wearing no uniform or the uniform of the opposition forces — indeed, any task which the commanders deem fit. With the added expertise of the international mercenaries, these forces are the cutting edge of South Africa's destabilisa-

tion strategy in conjunction with other irregular forces.

The disadvantage to the troops and one of the main reasons for the special selections procedure is that, when captured, they can be expected to be disowned by their employers and executed as spies. Several reports suggested there was widespread anger in the Reconnaissance Commando at the disavowal of the South African Government's involvement in the Seychelles coup after many of the members of the RC unit involved received jail terms.

Although the government did say that the three White soldiers killed while on a raid to Zimbabwe in August this year were with their armed forces, they insisted that the raid was unauthorised. The three sergeants later turned out to have been former members of the Rhodesian army, two from the Rhodesian Light Infantry and one from the Rhodesian SAS.

### Irregular forces

A vital adjunct to the SADF is its sponsor-

## Assassination as an extension of politics

The letter bomb which killed writer and academic Ruth First in her office at Maputo's Eduardo Mondlane University deprived the South African liberation movement of one of its finest intellectuals. That was, presumably, one of the motives for the killings. As far as the South African secret services are concerned, pens are as lethal as guns and those who wield either effectively in opposition to the regime are targets to be eliminated.

Of course, the South African Government has issued one of its routine denials, but no-one seriously doubts that the murder was planned in Pretoria. It falls into a pattern of assassinations, or attempted assassinations, of prominent African National Congress members and supporters living in exile (as well as of known ANC supporters inside the country).

The most recent victims prior to Ruth First were Joe Gqabi, ANC representative in Zimbabwe, gunned down outside his Harare home on July 31 1981, and ANC Deputy Representative in Swaziland, Petrus Nzima and his wife Jabu, killed when explosives wired to their car's ignition system blew up on June 4 this year.

Fortunately two other attacks this year — against an ANC exile's home in Maseru and against the ANC offices in London — killed nobody, although they were clearly intended to be lethal.

ship of military units at one remove from the SADF proper and, in several cases, believed to be controlled by the SADF's Department of Military Intelligence. The main element of destabilisation strategy in the front-line states relies on these so-called liberation armies. Manned by renegades of various descriptions these troops try to subsist in the state's bush areas, attacking the infrastructure: trains, trucks, schools and villages.

In Mozambique, the Mozambique National Resistance, set up by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation in 1976, is perhaps South Africa's showcase of a successful pseudo-guerrilla movement. Its penetration has been so deep and the disruption so intensive, that earlier this year President Machel resolved to send FRELIMO commanders back into the bush to wage war the way they had done it against the Portuguese. Already the Mozambique Government is claiming successes from this tactic. But South Africa has escalated its response and the scale of the conflict is increasing.

Another movement the South Africans regard as successful has been UNITA, under Jonas Savimbi. Once an exhausted, defeated force, its revival has been stage-managed by regular South African forces operating against the MPLA with UNITA later claiming the actions for itself. UNITA's usefulness to the SADF lies mainly against SWAPO forces, since Namibia and Angola are the areas in which most SADF activity goes on.

The first part of anti-SWAPO strategy lies in attempting to interdict its supply lines from Zambia and Angola. Secondly, direct attacks on SWAPO's hosts are meant to discourage that support. Thirdly, the SADF attempts to maintain an unpopulated strip both sides of the Namibian frontier.

The main element in this war, apart from UNITA, the Reconnaissance Commando and the regular forces, is the 32 Battalion which was brought to prominence by the testimony of two defectors from it, Jose Belmundo, a former FNL fighter, and Trevor Edwards, a British mercenary.

32 Battalion is thought to consist of about 1,200 troops brought to South Africa at the end of the Angolan civil war by a US mercenary with long African experience, Colonel Carpenter. In January 1976 the Battalion was formed with White officers, and NCOs as a unit of the SADF. Operating out of Rundu in northern Namibia, it is the main body taxed with the creation of the depopulated zone near the frontier.

If necessary, as testified by Trevor Edwards in January 1981, this involves murdering any civilians in the area. It has performed operations later claimed by UNITA and is used in large-scale military ventures involving artillery and air support. As well as engaging civilians, it carries out attacks on the Angolan armed forces.

The ex-FNL men are not, like UNITA, advertised by the South Africans, as

Angolans anxious for change and SADF propaganda says they all wish to live in South Africa even if the government in Luanda were to change. Trevor Edwards spoke of frequent occasions on which 32 was called on to rescue UNITA from difficult confrontations with Angolan armed forces.

Other Black-manned battalions were formed by the SADF in an attempt to create a "South West Africa National Army" — seven of them in all. It is thought only the battalion with Bushmen (San people) as its main constituent has been committed to military operations.

Other units active in Namibia are worthy of mention. One is the South West African Specialist Unit composed of White soldiers designated for "cleaning up" operations in Namibia itself. They have horsemen, dogs for tracking, patrol and mine-detection duties, as well as scrambler motorcycles. The soldiers, SADF propaganda states, are urban Whites who have their own powerful motorcycles. Formed in 1977 this unit would appear to be used mainly in a policing role. The SWA Police force itself is more akin to a military unit and it is trained more for conventional military operations than normally understood police duties.

The marines of the South African Navy are another force recently deployed in Namibia. In December 1980 SADF headquarters said that they were being sent to Namibia to gain counter-insurgency experience. They are currently guarding the port of Walvis Bay against sabotage, a task they perform at strategic ports in South Africa. This is another highly-trained unit, with experience in all the manifestations of land-sea operations.

South African military tactics in Namibia are the model for their military activities against the other front line states, such as Zambia, Botswana and Lesotho — but most sinister of all is the allegation that the 2,600 auxiliaries of Bishop Muzorewa, formed when he was in government in Zimbabwe before independence, are being trained to be the MNR or UNITA of Zimbabwe.

Counter-insurgency warfare against South Africa's neighbours has developed the regime's philosophy of its own defence. The "area defence" concept, now being promulgated in South Africa by the military, relies on part-time soldiers with intimate knowledge of the area they live in. They are trained in counter-insurgency techniques and made familiar with likely ANC tactics.

There is also a contingency plan to create a six-mile depopulated zone on South Africa's borders, with Namibia as an example, to help the detection of infiltrating guerrillas. The government is desperately trying to encourage settlers to move into these border areas, from which something like half the White farmers have fled ●

Jonathan Bloch, Andrew Weir

## Angola: one year of occupation

**South Africa is in permanent occupation of a large portion of southern Angola. That country's fate has now been tightly linked to the decolonisation of Namibia.**



**Attacking the enemy stronghold**

South Africa's most ostentatious use of force to undermine its neighbours has been in Angola. Since independence there has been no let-up in the onslaught, but since August 23 last year South Africa has been in permanent occupation of a large part of Kunene province.

At the OAU meeting in Tripoli, Angola's President Jose Eduardo dos Santos revealed that two brigades of the South African regular army totalling 5,500 men were permanently stationed on his country's territory. About 500 people, soldiers and civilians, have been killed since the August invasion last year.

The South African Defence Force, for home consumption, continues to assert that its purpose is to cut off SWAPO lines; its contacts are, however, almost solely with the Angolan forces, FAPLA. As for the Cubans, of whom there are between 17,000 and 20,000 *co-operantes* and troops in the country, there was one recorded contact in December last year in the area between Mujombe and Uia; one Cuban soldier was killed, three FAPLA soldiers slightly wounded and one Cuban captured by the South Africans. Privately senior US aides admit that most fighting is between the SADF and FAPLA.

The South African forces in Namibia comprise many groups in addition to White South Africans. There are mercenaries from Europe and the US, remnants of the FNLA, Black South Africans drawn from the Bantustans (used only in Namibia), the so-called Bushmen (the San people) from Namibia itself (used mainly in Zambia) — these are all in addition to the UNITA forces.

The intention in the southern provinces of Angola is to prevent any normal life or economic activity: all traffic on the roads is strafed; bridges are bombed; towns, municipalities and communes have been reduced to rubble.

The area has particular potential for cattle rearing as well as for minerals exploitation. In May this year the iron mine at Kassinga, which the Angolan government has attempted to restart through the Ferrangol state company, was attacked: the target was the power plant.

In the continuous attacks and now the occupation, the SADF has not attempted to extend its depth of incursion, to take major inland towns, as it did in the invasion of 1975-76 — though it makes regular reconnaissance flights over the three southern provinces of Huila, Kuwene and Mocamedes (Namibe). It has thus not come up against major Cuban units placed as a line of defence some hundreds of kilometres inland. Neither the Cubans nor the Angolans have sought military contact of this nature as it would rapidly lead to an internationalisation of the conflict and could set at nought the negotiation between Angola and SWAPO and the Western Contact Group and South Africa.

A major arm of South Africa's destabilisation strategy is UNITA, the organisation which during the 1975-6 war fought with the South Africans and the Zaire-based FNLA against the MPLA. It had at that time undoubted allegiance from the Ovimbundu-speaking people of the central highlands and its capital was Huambo.

In August, files shown to journalists in

AL J. VENTER/GAMMA

Lisbon proved that from at least 1972 UNITA was working in collaboration with the Portuguese secret police in attacking the MPLA.

In the south of the country UNITA operates in unison with the regular South African forces and is trained and supplied by them. UNITA members are placed in position as local leaders in occupied areas of the South. In July, UNITA was able to hold a 1,500-strong congress in the town of Mavinga in Cuando Cubango provinces, in the very sparsely populated south-east of the country.

Last month UNITA, according to government reports, massacred 150 people and wounded 100 in the village of Bunjei, 110km south of Huambo.

In other parts of the country (largely the central highlands and the coast) UNITA is engaged in sabotage with direct logistic support from the South Africans. Their supplies of explosives and equipment are dropped by helicopter or light plane.

Their main success has been in continuing to mine the Benguela rail line which links the coast with Shaba, the copper province of Zaire, and which could play a notable part in the development of the Angolan economy if it were able to run untroubled.

It is within this context of unrelieved military aggression that the South Africans, with the informal backing of the US, are demanding the withdrawal of the Cuban forces from Angola. The issue of the linkage of the decolonisation of Namibia with the withdrawal of the Cubans was most recently rejected at a meeting of the frontline states at the beginning of September.

One way out of the impasse concerning the Cubans could be the use (as rumoured in Lisbon) of Portuguese or French troops to replace them and to guarantee the security of the Angolan state against the South Africans.

Portugal has recently been taking a much more active role in relation to its former colonies in Africa and has signed co-operation agreements with Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau, as well as a military agreement with Mozambique.

However, in a speech last month, President Dos Santos gave no indication such a solution to the Cuban issue was on the cards: "Only the true independence of Namibia, achieved through the political, military and diplomatic struggle led by SWAPO, will give us the guarantee of greater stability on our southern border and permit us to carry out, with the government of

Cuba, a programme for the gradual withdrawal of Cuban internationalists from Angola."

The US State Department, on the other hand, announced early this month that agreement had been reached with Angola on a framework for withdrawal of Cuban troops.

The Americans are applying pressure on the frontline states to bring Angola to heel: President Reagan in a private communication sent to frontline chairman Julius Nyerere of Tanzania stressed that while he was not placing Angola on the formal Namibia negotiations agenda, he still wanted "a credible Angolan comment to a parallel framework of Cuban withdrawal."

This was needed before the Security Council could agree to set its resolution 435 — the implementation of which is the basis of the Namibia talks — in motion. "We cannot and will not put aside the Cuban issue," he wrote.

Meanwhile Angola has announced that it now fears attacks coming not only from the south but also from the north. This statement apparently ties in with press reports in August that the South Africans have been organising an army of mercenaries in Zaire to reopen that front.

## Mozambique: intensified war through the MNR

**Pretoria is intervening directly or using its puppet organisation, the Mozambique National Resistance, to harry the Mozambique Government and to obstruct the development of the SADCC**

In Mozambique the South African strategy has been demonstrated both through the direct use of its own military personnel and through its sponsored organisation, the Mozambique National Resistance, MNR.

The most notorious direct use of South African military units was in the attack on the African National Congress house at Matola, just outside Maputo, in January last year. In this, as in the assassination in August of Ruth First in Maputo, their principal target has been the ANC.

But the main weapon for South African destabilisation of Mozambique itself has been the MNR. It was first set up by the Ian Smith regime in Zimbabwe and was used largely as a means to collect intelligence concerning ZANLA guerrilla camps in eastern Mozambique. With the advent of independence in Zimbabwe the sponsorship of the organisation was taken over by the South Africans and its role was altered to that of a private army in support of

Pretoria's foreign policy.

In a raid on an MNR camp in December last year, FRELIMO said it found Afrikaans writing stencilled on the side of unused crates of ammunition. They also said they found, and later made public, documents detailing a meeting between South African military intelligence and MNR officials.

In the last year, massive South African logistical support has enabled the MNR to return to areas from which it had been expelled towards the end of the Zimbabwean war and to start operations in places hitherto untroubled.

A year ago MNR activity was confined to well south of the Beira-Machipanda railway. But now that line has come under attack several times and the area of MNR operations has been extended to the northern parts of Manica and Sofala provinces, up to the River Zambezi.

This year the government claims to have killed nearly 800 MNR "bandits." However,

MNR attacks have continued unabated. A mixed passenger and goods train travelling from Sena to Beira was bazookaed on August 10, and the passenger carriages were then raked with machine-gun fire. Fourteen people died.

The Mozambican Government refers contemptuously to the MNR as "armed bandits." Indeed, the MNR has never been able to develop a mass social base. In this respect it is quite different from, for example, UNITA in Angola, which at one stage commanded the loyalties of most of the Ovimbundu-speaking peasants of the central highlands.

In fact, no movement in Mozambique is likely to get very far if it starts from an ethnic base, since the country is highly fragmented. The MNR did try to win support in Manica province on linguistic lines, but with only limited success. Once it moved out of Shona-speaking areas, this approach proved a problem.

An early source of recruits was the pool of former agents of the colonial regime — informers for the Portuguese secret police, the PIDE, members of elite units in the colonial army, and so on. As time went on, this pool of malcontents slowly increased: many *regulos* (chiefs who were normally imposed by the Portuguese), dislodged from their positions by FRELIMO, were quite prepared to work with the MNR. So were a good number of careerists who had failed in their bid to get elected to the people's assemblies or whose application for



FRELIMO membership had been rejected.

There were 35 recorded violations of Mozambican airspace by South African planes in the first seven months of 1982 — an increase of about 25% on last year — all recorded along Mozambique's borders with South Africa and Swaziland and are probably only the tip of the iceberg. Planes that enter the country after first violating Zimbabwean airspace, or fly in over the ocean, or at night, would usually avoid surveillance.

Direct intrusions by South African ground forces into Mozambique also seem to be on the increase with several incidents in July and August.

On July 22, a small group of soldiers, wearing South African uniforms, were discovered some five kilometres inside Mozambique, just south of the border town of Ressano Garcia.

Altogether more serious was an attack against the town of Namaacha, nestling on the Mozambique/Swaziland frontier, but only 10km or so from the South African border. A unit consisting largely of Black soldiers, but, according to eye-witnesses, commanded by four English-speaking White men, attacked three adjoining houses on the night of August 21. Two of the houses were ransacked and three Mozambicans found there were kidnapped. In the third house, Antonio de Figueiredo, a Portuguese technician working on a co-operative project for the Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture, was shot dead.

Of all the groups of foreigners working in Mozambique, the Portuguese have been singled out for attack by the South Africans and their MNR surrogates, perhaps because they form the largest expatriate community and perhaps because the South Africans feel betrayed by a former ally. The improved relations between Portugal and Mozambique have infuriated Pretoria which, despite all the rhetoric about the "communist menace," feels much more threatened when a NATO power strengthens its ties with Mozambique, than when a Warsaw Pact country does the same.

The possibility of some limited Portuguese military co-operation with Mozambique has particularly incensed the South Africans.

A further indication of direct South African military involvement inside Mozambique came on August 18, when Zimbabwean troops shot and killed three White soldiers in the Sengwe communal land area of south-eastern Zimbabwe. According to the Zimbabweans, the intruders had entered Zimbabwe from Mozambique and the survivors fled back into Mozambique.

The dead soldiers wore an odd assortment of uniforms, all camouflage outfits, but from three different forces — one was a Rhodesian uniform from the Smith period, one was Angolan, and the third Ethiopian.

Fairly obviously, the three had been

members of one of the specialised units created to do the South African army's dirtiest work — they were perhaps serving in one of the Reconnaissance Commandos. Their most likely motive for being in Mozambique was logistical and training support for the MNR bands operating in Gaza province.

South Africa seems to have two main strategic objectives in this war. The first is simply to spread chaos through as much of Mozambique as possible, giving the impression that the country is unstable,

scaring away foreign aid and foreign workers, and accentuating Mozambique's economic crisis (through MNR disruption of agriculture and destruction of sawmills, for instance).

Secondly, South Africa aims to hit at Mozambique's rail links, and the Beira-Umtali pipeline.

Full-scale South African invasion of Mozambique was openly threatened by Defence Minister Magnus Malan, speaking at the ruling National Party's Natal provincial congress in August.

## Merger in the MNR

For the first time the MNR has published the names of its leadership. A list of the members of its "executive council" appeared in the right-wing Portuguese weekly *Tempo* in early September.

Previously the MNR kept this information secret, allegedly for security reasons, but in fact because the leadership scarcely existed — for the first four or five years of the MNR's existence, the leadership was no more than two or three former Portuguese secret police agents, plus a couple of people cashiered from the Mozambican army, such as "Commander-in-Chief" Alfonso Dlakama.

Now South Africa is trying to project the MNR as a viable national movement, largely so that it will be taken more seriously in Europe. Efforts are being made to improve its credentials by collecting all exiled right-wing Mozambicans under its banner.

Although some of the Lisbon-based exiles have rejected such blandishments, the MNR seems to have successfully negotiated a merger with the autonomous armed group, "Africa Livre," operating out of Malawi.

These are the lineal descendants of an early splinter from FRELIMO called COREMO (Mozambique Revolutionary Committee).

The most interesting name in the new list is that of Faniel Guidion Mahluza, head of the MNR's external relations department. He was founder member of UDENAMO, one of the three movements that came together to form FRELIMO in 1962. But he left FRELIMO in the very first split in the organisation in 1963 and became a founding member of COREMO in 1965. It seems clear that Mahluza has been involved in the Malawi-based attacks and his elevation to the MNR executive is one of the results of the formation of a unified command.

Dlakama is listed as President and Commander-in-Chief. Following him comes the former PIDE agent, Orlando Cristina, as general-secretary. Cristina was the link man, first with the Rhodesians and now with the South Africans and organised much of the original recruitment for the MNR. Dlakama's position is likely to be purely titular: Cristina is the effective leader of the MNR.

## Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland: trapped in Pretoria's net

The BLS countries are less able than any of the other frontline states to confront Pretoria's demands for total compliance. Independence is punished.

In each of the three BLS countries, all tied into the economy of South Africa through a myriad of migrant labour, commercial and investment links formalised in the Customs Union agreement of 1969, a different level of destabilising activity is evident.

The country at the moment most

devastated is Lesotho, where the Lesotho Liberation Army of Ntsu Mokhele has made itself available to the South Africans. Once again Pretoria has utilised the splits in the social and political fabric of its neighbours to insert its own will.

Through the LLA a number of key figures

in Lesotho have been assassinated this year: the most crucial figure to be taken out was Koenyama Chakela, who in the view of internal observers had a chance of knitting together the various warring political groups in Lesotho. But the immediate purpose of the South African strategy has been to attack ANC refugees and to isolate ANC sympathisers within the establishment: Lesotho is a major haven for ANC refugees and is regarded by Pretoria as a conduit for guerrillas.

South Africa's security police chief has said that intercepting LLA men occupies a lower priority than intercepting ANC members.

Pretoria and the LAA have switched from confrontation with the Lesotho paramilitary force and from attacking government institutions to selective assassinations. This changed strategy, according to local observers, has struck a popular chord with the rank and file in the opposition Basotho Congress Party.

The ANC is not particularly well liked by BCP followers, it has been accused by Ntsu Mokhele, the commander-in-chief of the LLA, of collaborating with the ruling Basotho National Party and of training the Lesotho paramilitary force. Thus the consistent attacks on the ANC have met with approval from Mokhele supporters — and even from some of the militant students at the university, which has become a stronghold of Mokhele's BCP.

The assassinations have also been very selective. The targets have often been key BNP figures, especially those readily identifiable with the banditry and thuggery of the 1970 and 1974 periods. Chakela was an exception. He was seen as a dangerous element in Pretoria's long-term strategy of destabilisation. At the time of his assassination he was on the verge of undermining Mokhele's political support inside the country and has also emerged as the most serious threat to both the BCP and BNP.

Despite the fact that the LLA claimed responsibility for his death there is still controversy over who was finally responsible.

Chief Leabua Jonathan has now moved still closer to the frontline states and has tied his fate with theirs. Meanwhile the right wing of his party is growing increasingly wary of his radical anti-apartheid rhetoric. A number of times he has been labelled a communist by this right wing, which in turn has led some local observers to conclude that a coup from the right is now a real possibility in Lesotho.

### Swaziland

In Swaziland, too, the South Africans are using a combination of direct military attacks and involvement in the internal politics of the statelet. Swaziland occupies the most strategically crucial position of any of the SLS countries: it borders Mozambique and is perhaps the main channel for ANC guerrillas to enter and leave the country.

Up to now the Swazi government has played a careful game, but one basically sympathetic to the ANC: the late King Sobhuza was, after all, a long time member of that organisation. This situation now is more liquid, while details of the succession are awaited.

To win over the king Pretoria decided to play on his overriding desire to see united in his kingdom adjoining areas of land he regarded as rightfully Swazi, as well as ensuring access to the sea. This has provoked an outcry within South Africa itself as well as opposition from the ANC.

But, together with diplomacy, South Africa is using bombs: there have been a number of recent assassinations of ANC figures (such as the car bomb killings of the Nzimas this year — see *Africa Now*, August) or kidnappings. It is believed that some of the personnel working for a large sugar estate on the Swazi/Mozambique

border, where there have been a number of recent shooting incidents, are ex-Selous Scouts.

### Botswana

Botswana has, on the surface, been the least affected by recent destabilisation efforts — but that appears to be changing. Last month a bomb destroyed the house of two refugees, reportedly former organisers for SWAPO in Namibia. They were unhurt.

There have been many other incidents: some years ago a refugee student leader was killed by parcel bomb in Botswana and, since then, there have been instances of kidnapping, the most recent earlier this year. Botswana has, particularly since the Soweto rising of 1976, been a refuge for many exiles — and a hunting ground for South African agents.

Earlier this year, in March, a South African helicopter flew over Botswana territory and shot at Botswana Defence Force troops and a game warden's hut.

However, the threat from Pretoria seems to have become much greater following Botswana's recent purchase of Soviet military equipment for its tiny desert force. The BDF is a long-range desert and bush counter-insurgency force with only 3,000 troops to cover Botswana's nearly 600,000 sq. km. The Soviet purchases were of APCs, AK-47 rifles and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles.

In no way could this be seen as matching South Africa's military might, but Pretoria appears to regard any step away from abject pliancy as provocative: Botswana was accused of becoming a Cuba on South Africa's doorstep and Ian Khama, son of the late Sir Seretse, who is second-in-command of the BDF, was accused of being a "firebrand revolutionary."

Regular infringements of the Caprivi Strip/Botswana border are likely to continue and other military and political pressure may be applied.

## Malawi: a schizoid foreign policy

Malawi is both part of the SADCC and South Africa's only friend in the region. Now it seems the MNR is being run by Pretoria from Malawi territory.

Mozambique's war against the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance took a new turn in August, when it suddenly showed up in force for the first time north of the Zambezi.

The incursion mounted by the MNR into Zambezia province may have involved 500 or more men. The MNR spokesman in Lisbon claimed that 800 had "crossed the

Zambezi." Some other reports swelled the figure to 1,500 — but this seems clearly to be a case of multiplication caused by panic.

The single most important fact is about this intrusion in their starting point. Contrary to the assertions of their Lisbon representative, they did not simply cross the Zambezi, moving northwards from their zones of operation in Manica and Sofala

provinces. Instead, it seems almost certain that they came in from Malawi, in a triple-pronged attack — one group going into Morrumbala and two into Milange, one heading for Lugela and the other for the country's main tea-producing area. Certainly in Milange they were using trucks, and clearly they did not ferry those across the Zambezi.

While this is the biggest incursion mounted from Malawi, it is by no means the first time that Malawi territory has been used by anti-FRELIMO organisations. There have been sporadic raids across the border pretty well ever since Mozambican independence in 1975: these were the work, not of the MNR, but of a separate group calling itself *Africa Livre* (Free Africa).

When the South Africans took over as the MNR's chief paymaster they found that Orlando Cristina, who had headed *Africa Livre*, had useful connections in Malawi. It is not known when Cristina last visited Malawi, but there is every reason to suppose that at least some of his links of the early 70s are still intact.

The South Africans had no use for extra

dissident movements, and it is no coincidence that shortly after the MNR had been evacuated from Zimbabwe to South Africa (by about October 1980), articles began to appear in right-wing Portuguese papers about "unity talks" between the various anti-FRELIMO groupings.

In Europe the MNR have tried to recruit prominent exiles who might lend the organisation a certain intellectual weight and credibility. But in Africa, the upshot of South African strategy seems to be that the MNR has absorbed the remnants of *Africa Livre* and is now making use of its Malawian connections.

The Malawian armed forces have been strengthened by South Africa — four plane-loads of military equipment, including

armoured cars, were sent to Banda in 1971. But much more serious is the South African penetration of the Malawian state apparatus where, in many respects, they have taken over from the British. The Malawian Special Branch, for instance, is now effectively run from Pretoria. Hastings Banda perhaps now finds himself in the position of a man who has invited a monster into his house only to find that he can no longer control it.

Malawi's schizoid foreign policy implies that there must be serious tensions and conflicts within the Malawian establishment over attitudes towards Mozambique. Such conflict does not surface publicly, but is masked by the autocratic rule of Banda himself. ●

## Zimbabwe: using the internal split

South Africa's strategists hope to take advantage of the turbulent and increasingly complex political conflict in Zimbabwe.



Mugabe: won a credibility coup

On August 18 a unit of the Zimbabwe National Army intercepted a South African raiding party in the Sengwe communal area in the south of the country. Four of the raiders were killed and the rest fled, leaving behind the equipment they could not carry.

Three of the four were later identified. John Wessels and Robert Deech were formerly members of the Rhodesian Light Infantry. David Berry had been with the Rhodesian Special Air Service Regiment. Wessels had been discharged from his regiment in 1979 and later declared a prohibited immigrant (he was born in Malawi) after being convicted for forgery.

It is not clear whether they were engaged in MNR operations or in some attack specifically against a Zimbabwe target. In one sense the difference is academic: Pretoria is intent on destabilising all its neighbours who have not, like Malawi adopted a totally compliant attitude. Many MNR sabotage attacks directly injure the Zimbabwe economy and are equally aimed at Mozambique.

Last year South Africa used its economic might by withdrawing badly needed locomotives from Zimbabwe railways, and announcing an end to the Preferential Trade Agreement between the two countries. However, these have both been restored this year because, according to sources, of US and British pressure.

The use of former Rhodesian soldiers as in the Sengwe incident seems to be common. Some of them told the South African *Sunday Mail* that they were fed up with the Defence Force for dissociating itself when these missions backfire. General Constand Viljoen, the South African Defence Force chief, had said that the Sengwe raid had not been authorised. The men interviewed by the *Sunday Mail* said that the mission had been approved by Pretoria.

The South African military official account added that the "renegade" incursion was intended at freeing a number of political detainees in south eastern Zimbabwe — a mischievous statement, as it would imply connection between dissidents and the South African forces; indeed if true it would not be in Pretoria's interests to reveal it.

The quantity of equipment left behind suggests that they were on a sabotage mission — they were carrying TNT blocks, detonating fuses and mines. Their arms were an apparently casual mixture of NATO and Warsaw Pact equipment. This adds weight to the belief in some official circles in Harare that the attackers infiltrated the country not from South Africa but from Mozambique where they had been working with the MNR.

The Minister of State in charge of security, Emmerson Munangagwa, believes that the MNR constitute the biggest threat to Zimbabwe's security. They constantly attack transport links with the coast and on one occasion blew a hole in the vital Beira-Mutare oil pipeline. The Zimbabwean army is deployed from the north-east right down into Matabeleland South to guard the border against MNR attacks. Although it is officially denied, the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade has also been active against the MNR inside Mozambique — without conspicuous success.

The Sengwe incident and the MNR attacks are the sort of thing which is happening daily. These are some of the most serious examples:

- Late last year the ammunition dump at Nkomo barracks was blown up.
  - On July 24, 13 aircraft — a quarter of the airforce — were blown up at Thornhill base near Gweru.
  - Last year Joe Gqabi, the ANC of South Africa representative, was assassinated in Harare.
  - In June there were attacks on the homes of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and the Minister of Supplies, Enos Nkala.
  - Last December a bomb destroyed the headquarters of the ruling ZANU(PF) party.
  - In the same month Mugabe's brother Albert, head of the trade union federation, was found dead in his swimming pool.
- Some incidents are directly blamed on South Africa; some remain unexplained. Until August this year, little evidence was supplied by the Mugabe government to back up its allegations of the South African connection. Now with the shootout at

Sengwe between Zimbabwe forces and SADF soldiers, Mugabe has won a credibility coup. He can now demand that more serious attention be taken of his long-standing claim that South Africa is training 5,000 former Muzorewa auxiliaries in the northern Transvaal — men which Mozambique says are also assisting the MNR.

The Thornhill attack was the most devastating. It is also politically serious because it throws doubts on the loyalty of Whites still in senior positions within the state apparatus. This puts a great strain on Mugabe's policy of post-war reconciliation. Phosphorous bombs with timers were placed inside engine vents — a sophisticated operation which seems to have needed collaboration from inside the base. The attack came only days after the air force had taken delivery of new Hawk aircraft from Britain. Four of them were destroyed. Three senior officers, including the second and third in the air force hierarchy, are now being held.

If such senior officers are now suspect, who is not? Many Whites in key positions have war records which do not exactly recommend them. The head of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), for instance, is Derrick Robinson who was a senior and trusted officer under the Smith regime. Nor was he someone who was "just obeying orders." He was given delicate political and diplomatic missions; his contacts in the British establishment were particularly good. This strengthens the links between the CIO and British military advisers. Under Robinson the CIO is playing a frontline role in the crackdown on opponents of the government.

Two White members of Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organisation have been

charged under the Official Secrets Act. They were allegedly members of a South African spy ring in Zimbabwe's security apparatus. The person claimed to have recruited them, Geoffrey Burton Brice, who was director of Close Security in the CIO, fled to South Africa in January. Others have also fled, since independence in 1980.

Incidents, like the attacks on Mugabe's and Nkala's houses, are attributed to "dissidents" — often correctly, no doubt. But clear evidence is never readily forthcoming and the picture is complicated further by the fact that "auxiliaries" loyal to Bishop Abel Muzorewa and trained in the Transvaal have been infiltrated back into the country in at least two areas — Gwanda and Buhera.

The general impression, which the government does not seem anxious to dispel, is of a unified onslaught by the government's opponents, be they South Africans, relics of the Smith regime or ZIPRA/ZAPU "dissidents." Avowedly left-wing opponents, who a few months ago were merely "objective" allies of Pretoria, have quickly become paid-up members of the apartheid conspiracy.

Unfortunately, no evidence of collaboration between the ZIPRA/ZAPU left and South Africa has yet been made public.

An alliance with the mainly Ndebele ZIPRAS has been a persistent White fantasy. In February 1981 the South African paper *Die Burger* published an interview with ZIPRA commander "Peter Ndlovu" in which he declared his aim to be an independent Matabeleland republic. There is no such person as Peter Ndlovu in ZIPRA.

Much speculation turns on this idea of Matabele independence. In May four White

Matabeleland separatists were jailed after they had been discovered with weapons. Wally Stuttford, a White Matabeleland MP, has been held incommunicado for months. He is supposed to have plotted with Black "dissidents." There are no Black politicians campaigning for independence for Matabeleland.

But despite the political gulf between them, it is not surprising that South Africa should want to take advantage of the discontent expressed by Mugabe's Black opponents. As one ZAPU official says: "I have absolutely no doubt that approaches have been made to our members. On that the government is right. The question you have to ask is how our members have responded."

At this juncture in South Africa's own politics the P. W. Botha wing is particularly attentive to Washington's views, and Washington has made it plain that it disapproves of attempts to destabilise Mugabe. On the contrary, Mugabe is seen as someone to be ardently wooed. Thinking in high-level US circles tends to the view that actions against Zimbabwe flow from a lack of coherence and possibly rivalry in the South African secret services.

The Zimbabwe Government has been very cautious in allowing an ANC presence in its country, yet, if Mugabe's allegations are correct, Zimbabwe has become a major destabilisation target. One reason some observers maintain is that Zimbabwe, as the strongest state militarily and economically in the Black-ruled sub-continent, offers the region a chance of reducing links with South Africa. Furthermore, if an independent Zimbabwe succeeds in becoming a non-racial state, then it makes nonsense of South Africa's apartheid ideology.

## Zambia: incursions create no-go areas

**Incursions by South African troops and the laying of landmines have prevented normal life in large areas of western Zambia**

During the Zimbabwean war, incursions into Zambia by the Rhodesian Air Force were frequent. Indiscriminate bombings of Zambian villages were prevalent although, officially, the attacks were aimed at Zimbabwean refugee camps. After the war, Zambia has continued to be victimised, by South African forces stationed along the Caprivi Strip in north-eastern Namibia.

The Zambian border towns of Sesheke and Katima-Mulilo are constant targets and landmines continue to be a major hazard. Forces belonging to Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in south eastern Angola have been linked with some of these incursions into Zambian

territory and the plight of an estimated 3,500 Angolan refugees who continue to be stationed at Kaunga Mashi in Zambia has been compounded by the severe drought that has hit large parts of the area.

Government employees fled from the town when it was invaded by South African troops recently. Although the clinic has been repaired, it remains closed because of a lack of drugs and medical assistants. The school has reopened but is in a state of disrepair. The area's inhabitants are threatened with starvation because the landmines are hampering food distribution. Some areas are absolute no-go areas. The

peasant farmers are unable to utilise them, despite the limited acreage of suitable agricultural soil.

At Sesheke, efforts to repair the second pontoon are proving difficult. The original pontoon was seized last year by South African troops.

Adamson Mushala, the former Zambian game warden who has organised a gang and since 1975 waged a terror campaign in parts of north-western Zambia, is reputed to have received South African backing. His gang may have undergone South African military training in Namibia, according to Zambian Government officials.

The 1980 attempt to overthrow President Kaunda's government is also understood to have been substantially financed by South Africa and Pierce Annfield, a Zambian lawyer who has been linked with the coup plot, has never returned to Zambia. He was last heard of in South Africa at the time the plot was discovered.

The entire question of destabilisation is bound to have cropped up during the recent Kaunda-Botha talks.