Chapter 2

COMMAND AND CONTROL

2.1 The Rhodesian Security Force's approach to Command and Control

At the start of insurgency activities immediately after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, the British South Africa Police quite correctly insisted that the Army was in support of the Police and not vice versa. The type of operation conducted during this period tended, however, to emphasise military rather than police actions. Since incursions were conducted in large groups across relatively uninhabited areas, counter-insurgency operations required tracking and pursuit operations that seemed to fall more within the military domain than within that of the Police. The attitude, particularly amongst middle and lower ranking Rhodesian Army officers, as well as that of the Department of Internal Affairs (now Home Affairs), was not conducive to an effective, total counter-insurgency effort.

Within the Army more than fifty percent of small-unit training was devoted to counter-insurgency tactics such as patrolling, ambushes, cordon and search and pursuit (follow-up) operations. All of these represent an adaptation of conventional military doctrine to meet the threat of armed insurgency. While the above tactics constitute a vital element of counter-insurgency operations, both in eliminating insurgent forces and in dominating an area, the emphasis of Army operations have to change. Since the majority of military forces become involved in operations amongst the inhabitants of various regions, and probably in population control measures, they represent a further extension of administration, thus assuming a partly policing rather than a strictly military role. Obedience to both the spirit and

the letter of the law is essential for the execution of this role within a balanced counter-insurgency campaign. Training and the total approach to counter-insurgency should be supportive rather than punative. From their experience of the war up to 1972 white Rhodesians believed that the insurgency problem was primarily a military threat. This perception remained a hallmark of the Rhodesian approach to counter-insurgency. Coupled with a sincere belief that the unsophisticated black African was incapable of choosing between alternative political systems, Rhodesian Security Forces and in particular officials from the Department of Internal Affairs continued a paternalistic tradition irksome to an increasing section of the black population.

The whole Rhodesian concept of counter-insurgency warfare suffered greatly as a result of the pre-1972 phase of isolated terrorism and banditry. This image was perpetuated in the command and control structures and mechanisms that were developed to counter the insurgent threat of post 1972. They were largely unsuited to meet the serious threat.

2.2 JOC's, JPS and Operation Hurricane

Before 1972 the Army had divided Rhodesia into three temporary brigade areas. These corresponded with Matabeleland, Mashonaland and Manicaland/Victoria/Harare Police Provinces respectively. The school of Infantry at Gweru was responsible for the initial planning and co-ordinating of operations in Midlands Province. Were an insurgent threat to develop in any of these areas, Joint Operations Centres were formed at the appropriate level to counter the threat. This could either be at company, battalion or even brigade level of command. It consisted of the senior Army British South Africa Police, Special Branch and Air Force officers, and the appropriate Commissioner of the Department of Internal Affairs.

According to the official Rhodesian Army definition, a Joint Operational Centre is:

> A joint agency set up by the Security Forces on the authority of Government for the conduct of operations when no single service is solely responsible.(1)

Since the Army representative was normally the highest ranking officer, he assumed chairmanship of the Joint Operational Centre at the start of operations.

Discussions of counter-insurgency measures and planning of action were essentially done on a committee basis. Execution remained strictly departmental. Split decisions, or those possibly in conflict with existing policy, were referred to higher authority for decision. Lower Joint Operational Centres reported to one of the Provincial Joint Operation Centres (PROVOPS), namely SALOPS (for Salisbury Operations), MASHOPS (for Mashonaland), MANOPS (for Manicaland), MIDOPS (for Midlands), MATOPS (for Matabeleland) or VICOPS (for Victoria). PROVOPS roughly corresponded to Army Brigade levels of command but were effectively controlled by the Police. When operations were not being conducted in the specific province, they were usually dormant.

Within the Security Forces, co-ordination was effected via Joint Planning Staffs (JPS) which consisted of a small secretariat and the Operations Co-ordination Committee (OCC). The latter was the senior security planning council immediately below political level. Its members included commanders of the Army and Air Force, the Commissioner of Police and the Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). (2) The secretariat to the Operation Co-ordination Committee was supplied by the Joint Planning Staffs and members usually met in person, which lent it considerable weight. As a joint decision-making body, however, the Operation Co-ordination Committee had little authority. An impasse could only be resolved at a higher (political) level.

The chairman of the Joint Planning Staffs was also the secretary of the Operation Co-ordination Committee. This appointment alternated between the Army and Air Force. Initially the post carried the rank of colonel, but was later upgraded to that of brigadier.

At the political level the Deputy Minister in the Department of the Prime Minister was responsible for co-ordinating the civil side of the war and for liaising with the military (i.e. Joint Planning Staffs) on matters of mutual concern. This post was initially held by Wickus de Kock, but on appointment as Minister of Information in 1974, he was succeeded by Ted Sutton-Pryce. The Deputy Minister was chairman of an increasing number of committees, the most important of which were the following: Civil Executive to the Security Council (CESC); Roads; Airfields; Anti-Mine Measures; Psychological Warfare; Protective Forces and Cordon Sanitaire. The Civil Executive to the Security Council was the most important of these, dealing with all matters relating

to the protection of the civilian population in general, but particularly with white farmers within operational areas. It included responsibility for civil/military co-ordination of Protected Villages. (See Chapter 3)

The Prime Minister headed the Security Council at cabinet level. Members included the Ministers of Finance, Internal Affairs, Law and Order, Defence, Information, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Commanders of Army and Air Force, Commissioner of Police and Director of the Central Intelligence Organisation. Upon the formation of the Guard Force its commander became a member of both the Security Council and Operation Co-ordination Committee. In 1977 Combined Operations Headquarters (COMOPS) replaced the Joint Planning Staffs and the name of the Security Council was changed to that of War Council. The newly appointed Commander COMOPS also gained representation on the War Council.

The fact that senior officials were able to sit on the Security Council, enjoying equal status with their political superiors gave these officials direct access to the Prime Minister. This allowed Ian Smith to exert direct control over the war but weakened the Operations Co-ordination Committee. This lack of real authority rather than a controversial call-up system led to the resignation of Minister of Defence Reginal Cowper in 1977.

As long as the Army commander was sufficiently capable the Joint Operations Centre system at brigade level (PROVOPS) worked effectively, but at lower levels some friction developed. This was mainly due to Police resentment of the senior role of Army officers. Initially, Joint Operation Centres at the lowest level included the local Army company commander, an Air Force pilot or flight commander and the local Police station commander. Normally rank would determine that the Army representative assumed chairmanship.

British South Africa Police and Army approaches to the problem of insurgency, as well as law and order in general, differed. As a result the Police attempted to match the rank of the senior Army officer present to avoid Army domination. Thus district policemen came to represent Police at these Joint Operation Centres. It was soon found, however, that this 'over and above' task was too time consuming. British South Africa Police officers, whose sole task was Joint Operation Centre liaison, were then provided. The Police eventually fielded assistant commissioners equavalent to the Army rank of

colonel, but did not succeed in obtaining general Joint Operation Centre control before 1977 when Army chairmanship was formalised. To protect their own interests, and in reaction to what was seen to be Army domination of a Police problem (at least initially), the British South Africa Police representatives at some Joint Operation Centres insisted on referring decisions taken by the Joint Operation Centres to Police headquarters for ratification.

Permanent Air Force representation at the various levels of the Joint Operation Centres also replaced initial ad hoc representation by pilots. Thus, by the time the Army took over the dominant role in Operation Hurricane in 1973, the concept of joint planning and co-ordinated execution had already been established, if somewhat tentatively.

With the launching of Operation Hurricane in 1973, it became necessary to establish a permanent Joint Operation Centre at brigade level. Two Brigade Headquarters had shifted from Harare, first to Centenary and then to Bindura. The Joint Operation Centre (JOC) at brigade headquarters became JOC Hurricane while the brigade commander retained the nominal function of MASHOPS chairman in Harare. As the operational areas were established, PROVOPS was superseded by brigade Joint Operation Centres and fell into disuse by the end of the war.

By 1979 Zimbabwe-Rhodesia was divided into four major operational areas, namely Hurricane, Thrasher, Repulse, Tangent and Grapple (see Figure 1.3, Chapter 1). For a number of years the insurgent threat was confined to Operation Hurricane (Two Brigade) area, making it the most well known sector.

During 1972 the only Joint Operation Centre existed within Two Brigade at Centenary (Rhodesian Light Infantry). As a result the first birgade-level Joint Operation Centre was also stationed there with two sub-centres at Mount Darwin (Rhodesian Light Infantry) and Guruve, formerly Sipolilo (Rhodesian African Rifles). At the end of 1973 the Rhodesia African Rifles took over the sub-centre at Centenary, the Rhodesia Light Infantry stayed at Mount Darwin and the main Joint Operation Centre moved to Bindura. Sub-Joint Operation Centres were also later formed at Mutoko, Chinhoyi (formerly Sinoia), Bindura, Karoi, Guruve, Lomangundi and Marondera (formerly Marandellas). The headquarters of Two Brigade later shifted to Harare. The battalion responsible had its main headquarters within the sub-centre while the rear battalion headquarters remained at the units training base.

Operation Thrasher (Three Brigade) was proclaimed in February 1976 with headquarters at Mutare (formerly Umtali) and sub-centres at various stages at Rusape, Nyanga (formerly Inyanga) and Chipinge. Operation Repulse (Four Brigade), was launched during May, initially as 'One Brigade Tactical Headquarters, Operation Repulse' with headquarters at Masvingo (Fort Victoria). It was officially designated as Four Brigade at the end of 1977. Repulse sub-centres were at Masvingo, Chiredzi and briefly at Rutenga and Beit Bridge. Their main responsibility was to combat the threat in the South-east. Operation Tangent (One Brigade) was formed in August 1977. Brigade headquarters was at Bulawayo and sub-centres were at Hurange (Wankie), Bulawayo, Gwanda and Gweru (Gwelo). Operation Grapple was constituted concurrently with Tangent and covered the Midlands area. Sub-Joint Operation Centre Gweru was subsequently transferred to Grapple. Midlands was initially commanded by an Army colonel and when the latter was transferred, by the officer commanding, School of Infantry, Gweru.

The two final operational areas, SALOPS (for Salisbury Operations) and Splinter differed from those mentioned above: SALOPS was controlled by the Police and formed mainly for logistical and administrative reasons. Operation Splinter was a maritime command to counter ZPRA infiltration across Lake Kariba.

By 1978, however, ZANLA and ZPRA incursions across the length and breadth of Rhodesia were threatening to destroy the system of Joint Operation Centres. In a secret document entitled 'Hurricane Strategy' prepared in June of that year, the following recommendations were made inter alia:

> With the spread of operations and the decreased force levels the sub JOC system no longer works efficiently. Commanders are not able effectively to influence operations in their extended areas. The local control of operations in certain areas is now a fact and has become the responsibility of the OIC (Officer in Command) and DC (District Commissioner) in that particular area ... JOC members are unanimous in recommending that Hurricane aim at a District JOC system for future command and control. Districts should operate directly to Hurricane.

Above all, the preceding also bears silent witness to the lack of central direction in the war.

While the system of joint Planning Staffs had worked well during more stable conditions, the intensifying war demanded a more authoritarian command structure with powers over all civilian agencies involved in activities related to security.

2.3 War Council, COMOPS and NATJOC

When the extent of insurgent penetration in the North-east had become clear, Army Commanders realised the need for a Director of Operations. Veterans of the Rhodesian forces who had fought in Malaya were familiar with the idea. Lacking an overall strategy to combat the threat at national level Security Forces badly needed somebody in a post powerful and influential enough to direct their efforts. This need was nowhere deemed more important than in the lack of enforceable co-operation between different government departments.

During the comparative peace of the sixties the leisurely pace of co-ordination and discussion at various ministerial levels aimed at achieving a uniform approach to counter-insurgency had led to a history of wavering and indecisive action. Thus each ministry took a different view both of the threat itself and any countermeasures to be taken. A system of unempowered committees had therefore led to slow and apathetic attitudes to a problem in need of urgent and speedy decisions and execution.

Since the Department of Internal Affairs had resisted attempts in 1972 by the Army to step up its force levels along the Rhodesian border of the Tete province in Mozambique, much blame for the situation that had developed was placed on Internal Affairs.(3) Army commanders and Special Branch officers felt vindicated only months later when Operation Hurricane was launched. At a fairly early stage the need was thus recognised for a strong, central executive with power to enforce compliance from all services related to security. To the Army this became further apparent in their efforts to obtain sufficient numbers of territorial soldiers on call-up.

The calls for a 'supremo' became loud enough to force Lieutenant-General Peter Walls, then Army Commander, to draft a signal to all units towards the end of 1973 forbidding the use of the word.(4) Yet as the war intensified, these calls were repeated from both inside the military as well as from

prominent Rhodesian Front politicians. The idea was also mooted in a number of Joint Planning Staff papers. When put forward to Prime Minister Ian Smith it was rejected on the grounds that he, as the Prime Minister, was the 'supremo' who would make policy decisions and enforce compliance. The Operations Co-ordination Committee could thus refer controversial decisions to him if necessary.

This response was given at an early stage when the need for a supreme commander was not as obvious as it was to become at a later stage. Yet Smith failed to appreciate the complexities of this type of command. It was impossible to refer a large number of decisions to him in addition to his exacting task as head of government. On the other hand, the Rhodesian Prime Minister was reluctant to delegate the running of the war to someone else who could possibly become a challenge to his own authority. This had apparently already started to happen with the appointment of P.K. van der Byl as Minister of Defence during August 1974. He was subsequently relieved of his defence portfolio in September 1976 after the execution of the Nyadzonia raid into Mozambique. This operation had caused both Prime Minister Smith and Prime Minister Vorster from South Africa some acute embarrassment at the height of the Kissinger initiative. To a number of politicians and senior government officials there seemed a lack of suitable candidates for such an appointment, while the Prime Minister was wary of the political ambitions of the most likely candidate, Lieutenant-General Walls.

Eventually bowing to both military and Rhodesian Front pressure, Smith took a first step towards better co-ordination of the Rhodesian war effort. Having relieved Van der Byl of the Defence portfolio, he approved Reginal Cowper as the new incumbent, while also announcing the formation of a War Council in charge of defence matters on 9 September 1976. As discussed, this was largely limited to the renaming of the existing Security Council.

The next step was taken some months later on 3 March 1977, when Roger Hawkins was appointed to the newly created post of Minister of Combined Operations.

On 23 March 1977, Smith announced that, in accordance with the recommendation of his security chiefs, a unified command was to be formed to streamline the control of Security Forces in the field.

> Accordingly it has now been decided to appoint a Commander, Combined Operations, who will be

> responsible to the Minister of Combined Operations and will have the authority to exercise command over all elements of the security forces, as well as civil agencies directly involved in the prosecution of operations against terrorists. This will be implemented with minimal disruption of the command functions of individual service headquarters. He will have the assistance of a Deputy Commander, who will be the executive officer responsible for the control of a small Combined Operations Headquarters staff, all of whom will be drawn from existing organisations. In order to complete the chain of command under this system the senior army officer at each joint operations centre will assume command of counter-insurgency operations in his designated military area.(5)

The authority, functions and intentions underlying the formation of COMOPS are best illustrated by the following quotations from an extensive article that appeared in the Rhodesia Herald on 8 May 1977.

> This means that again all problems affecting the sub-JOC's and JOC's will flow to a single source and not, as previously from the representatives of the various components of the JOC such as Army and Air Force, Police, Intelligence and Internal Affairs having first to be fed into their separate Ministerial channels .. Included in the General's authority will be all such matters as the allocation of force levels to main JOC's and considerations of the changes in force levels coming from them. Also, he will have the direction and co-ordination of Special Force Operations such as the Selous Scouts, Grey's Scouts and PATU.(6)

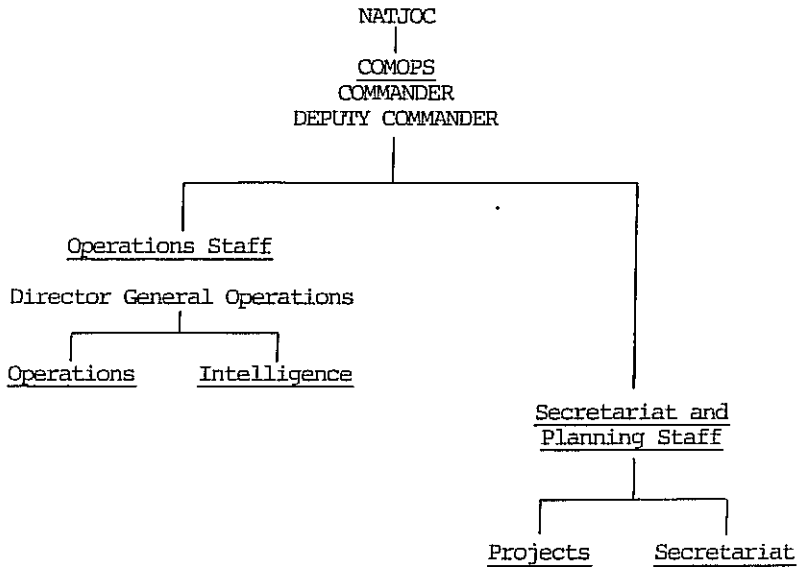
The most important of these, central authority, was never vested in COMOPS.

In terms of rank, Lieutenant-General Walls held no superiority over his counterparts in the Army, Air Force, Police and the Central Intelligence Organisation. He had not been promoted to full general and the post that he held amounted to little more than chairmanship of the National Joint Operations Centre (NATJOC). The composition of NATJOC was similar to that of the now defunct Operations Co-ordination Committee with no real authority conferred on the Commander COMOPS to enforce compliance from his

NATJOC members. All COMOPS directives had to be issued in the name of NATJOC and not COMOPS (i.e. endorsed by the relevant head of the department) to ensure compliance. In the case of the Departments of Internal Affairs and Law and Order, COMOPS made no provision for either control or inclusion of their planning staffs. Each continued to plan and execute within traditional departmental constraints.

By way of comparison, NATJOC became a looser organisation than the Operations Co-ordination Committee had been. Commissioner of Police Peter Allum did not attend in person (as had been the case with the Operations Co-ordination Committee) but sent one of his two deputy commissioners. The Director General of the Central Intelligence Organisation sent his Director External Affairs, a retired Commissioner. Although those seconded were given wide discretion and delegated much power, this tended to weaken COMOPS in comparison with the Operations Co-ordination Committee, rather than strengthen the central co-ordination. Lieutenant-General Walls approached the Prime Minister on repeated occasions to obtain clarification on his own authority but never met with any success.

In very broad terms COMOPS was organised as follows:



Initially the services of Air Marshal M.H. McLaren were retained as Deputy Commander COMOPS after his retirement from the Rhodesian Air Force. Lieutenant-General John Hickman succeeded Lieutenant-General Peter Walls as Commander of the Army, while Major-General A.L.C. Maclean became Army Chief of Staff Operations. Brigadier Herbert Barnard became COMOPS Director General Operations. Air Commodore John Rodgers was appointed Director Operations. The British South Africa Police was represented by Senior Assistant Commissioner Gardner while the Central Intelligence Organisation and Special Branch were both represented by Assistant Commissioner Edden. Internal Affairs was represented by Provincial Commissioner J. H. Tapsen.

The task of the operations staff was to prepare operation orders for operations that fell under COMOPS authority, i.e. involving the use of so-called Special Forces (Special Air Service troops, Selous Scouts, etc.). The intelligence section existed only to gather all relevant intelligence and information from members of the intelligence community, but initially had no evaluative or other intelligence function. As from 1979 the Army Chief of Staff also fulfilled the functions of the Director General Operations at COMOPS, and thus had a dual role. The secretariat was mainly concerned with providing secretarial services and with representing COMOPS in other government departments. While the planning staff was earmarked for long term military strategic planning, this remained a paper function.

Organisationally COMOPS did not meet the demands of the war. Although Comops and Army headquarters were two separate entities, Army headquarters was almost solely involved with the administration and logistics of COMOPS' decisions. While this was an unavoidable side-effect of the co-ordinating machine decided upon, it was exacerbated by personal animosity between Lieutenant-General Walls and Army Commander-Lieutenant General Hickman. The latter had lost many of his command functions, but retained his staff.

COMOPS thus obtained control over the operational planning functions of the various services (Army, Air Force and to a lesser extent Police and Internal Affairs) without incorporating their various planning staffs. For example, in the case of the Army and Air Force, the G (operations) staffs were not incorporated. Planning was thus done without the necessary supportive staff work. By excluding these various staffs, COMOPS should have limited

itself to the determination of broad planning guidelines. The resulting problems were especially notable as regards logistics, intelligence and most important, broad strategic planning.

The initial COMOPS organisation made no provision for a logistic staff component to be incorporated into the planning process. Each service in question was relied upon to do its own logistical planning. With the shortage of personnel and material, it invariably led to serious problems and to a less than optimum use of available resources. In a few select cases external operations had to be cancelled owing to the logistical problems encountered in the execution of COMOPS planning. But as the war progressed, both COMOPS and the logistical staff at Army Headquarters became more adept at meeting each others' needs.

The lack of a central body for co-ordinating intelligence at COMOPS also had a decidedly negative effect on the total intelligence effort. Initially the section consisted of a single member, providing further evidence regarding the perpetuation of general military neglect of intelligence inherited from the Joint Planning Staffs (see Chapter 9). This neglect had also led to an almost total lack of military intelligence officers capable of control and co-ordination of intelligence at top level and to the neglect of military intelligence as a serious challenge at lower levels.

Largely as a result of the lack of a Special Forces Headquarters on the one hand, and the removal of the Rhodesian Special Force units from Army control on the other, COMOPS involved itself both in the detailed planning and in the execution of external operations. It became practice towards the conclusion of the war for Lieutenant-General Walls to command external operations from his distinctive command Dakota, instead of leaving it to the field or sub-ordinate formation or unit commanders. The tradition started during the first raid on Chimoio. It almost led to disaster during the attack on Freedom Camp at Westlands Farm in Zambia during October 1978, when enemy aircraft were scrambled and in a position to attack the command Dakota. Such practices led to repeated complaints by the various Joint Operation Centres that while COMOPS involved itself to a great extent with the everyday conduct of the war, no formal war strategy ever saw the light.

After much prompting, COMOPS eventually formulated a national strategy in the period prior to the

3 March Agreement. For security reasons it was never put before the whole national executive, but approved by Ian Smith, Bishop Abel Muzorewa and the white Co-minister for Defence, Hilary Squires. The Reverend Sithole and James Chikerema only received the national objective and were not given the guidelines for execution. After his triumphant election, Prime Minister Muzorewa ratified this strategy. Internally, it revolved around the Security Force Auxiliaries and an offer of amnesty to any insurgents prepared to lay down arms now that a black majority government had been achieved. Externally it held the economies of the insurgent host countries hostage as a means of ending the war.

The final step in an attempt to co-ordinate the Rhodesian war effort was the combination of the Defence and Combined Operations portfolios under Minister of Combined Operations Roger Hawkins on 18 September 1977. Henceforth the portfolios most involved in the war were Defence and Combined Operations, Justice, Law and Order, and Internal Affairs.

Throughout the period 1972 to 1980, neither the Operations Co-ordination Committee nor COMOPS gained a free hand in the running of the war. At all stages Prime Minister Ian Smith kept a tight rein especially on external operations: this led to considerable friction between the Prime Minister and Lieutenant-General Walls and was seemingly perpetuated after Bishop Muzorewa's election to power. In his cabinet announcement of 30 May 1979, he reserved the portfolios of Combined Operations and Defence for himself. In practice, however, he had little real authority over the Armed Forces for all senior appointments were still held by whites who owed allegiance to the Rhodesian Front party rather than to a black government.

Under the Transitional Government effective control of the military was retained in white lands. On the same day that Bishop Muzorewa, the Reverend Sithole and Senator Chirau were sworn into government, Smith quietly created his own unofficial War Council. It had six permanent members, namely Walls, Chiefs of the Army and Air Force, the Commissioner of Police, the Director-General of the Central Intelligence Organisation and co-opted ministers as the need arose. After Bishop Muzerewa became Prime Minister COMOPS increasingly ran the war with decreasing reference to the politicians.

In the final months of the war and in the bitter post-Mugabe election period, many military commanders pointed to the undue limitations on external

raids into neighbouring insurgent host countries that emanated from the War Council, and, to a lesser extent, NATJOC. In both cases criticism was often directed at the influence of the Director General of the Central Intelligence Organisation, Ken Flower. As member of both bodies he played a major role in decisions and would point to the political problems involved in external operations. Yet in many cases the veto for external operations was as a result of pressure from South Africa, especially as regards Gaza, the southern province of Mozambique. Inside Rhodesia there were very few political constraints.(7)

Although this element of national strategy was very important, it tended to overshadow the more mundane and less dramatic task of consolidating internal security. Apparently the initial intelligence failures (detailed in Chapter 9) of the 1972 to 1976 period were major factors in limiting external operations and attacks on insurgent base camps.

In the final instance the smooth functioning of NATJOC was also hindered by personality clashes between the Commissioner of Police, Commander COMOPS and Secretary for Internal Affairs. This provided further evidence of the lack of forced co-operation and compliance that was a hallmark of Rhodesian counter-insurgency efforts.

2.4 Special Forces

Within the Rhodesian context, Special Forces constituted what was initially known as the offensive component or cutting edge of Army troops. These units included Special Air Service, Selous Scouts, Rhodesian Light Infantry and in some cases even the Grey Scouts (a mounted unit). Initially, they owed allegiance only to the Commander of the Army. When Lieutenant-General Walls was appointed as Commander COMOPS, he retained this relation. The newly appointed Army Commander, Lieutenant-General Hickman, only retained command of black regular units such as the Rhodesia African Rifles and units of the Territorial Army.

Largely as a result of the need for absolute security in the planning and execution of Special Forces operations, planning must be centralised at the highest level, with strict limitation on the distribution of information. In the case of Rhodesia the operations section at COMOPS, and the battalion headquarters of Special Force units involved, jointly planned external and other Special Force operations.

As the war progressed, COMOPS became ever increasingly involved in the detailed planning of an increasing number of operations, particularly external operations.

Owing to the limited staff available within the operations section, the detailed planning of external operations precluded any other activity, such as the formulation of a coherent military strategy for the country as a whole. This was to become possibly the major criticism that the four brigade commanders levelled at COMOPS; the lack of overall strategy guidelines to combat the worsening internal security situation on a country-wide basis. Lieutenant-Colonel Reid-Daly would subsequently state

> It was indefensibly ridiculous for General Walls or his Staff to concern themselves with which village in the bush, a three-man stick from the Special Air Service, or the Selous Scouts should be deployed, and who should release the helicopters to support them. This was, and should have stayed the sole responsibility of the Army and Air Force Commanders and their Staffs, whose plans would have been the logical follow-on from the strategical guide lines put out by COMOPS. The immediate result of COMOPS taking overall physical, as well as the detailed day to day control of the Army's running of the war, was that the Army Commander, General Hickman, lost his rightful operational command. ... The only command left to him was purely an administrative one. ... His staff at Army Headquarters, particularly the G-Staff, were allowed nothing further to do with his planning of the war and were only able to concern themselves with new organisations, amendments to staff tables and training matters.(8)

A second, and almost equally important problem regarding Special Force operations was the lack of a section that could gather and process all the relevant intelligence and information that had a bearing on external operations. This problem had been evident for a number of years as a result of the lack of intelligence fed back to brigade Joint Operation Centres prior to and after Special Force operations within a Joint Operation Centre area. In the case of the Selous Scouts this was especially significant. The latter were arguably the major source of operational intelligence inside Rhodesia, yet the flow of intelligence from the Selous Scouts to local Army

commanders was very limited. At this stage (prior to 1978) development of military intelligence as embodied by the Directorate of Military Intelligence was still in its infancy.

At various stages the establishment of a Special Forces headquarters had been proposed to NATJOC and COMOPS. It was eventually approved by the issue of Formation Order No 4: Headquarters Special Forces, which read:

> AIM
> 1. The aim of this order is to lay down the formation and roles of Headquarters Special Forces.
> TITLE
> 2. This headquarters is to be known as Headquarters Special Forces. Its abbreviated title is HQ Spec Forces.
> FORMATION
> 3. HQ Spec Forces was formed on 1 July 1978.
> ROLES
> 4. The roles of HQ Spec Forces are as follows:
> a. To formulate Special Forces strategy
> b. The planning, execution and co-ordination of Special Forces operations
> c. The operational command and control of Special Forces
> d. Co-ordination of Special Forces training.
> ESTABLISHMENT
> 5. The establishment for HQ Spec Forces has been issued under Establishment Table No 20/4.

As will be noted, no mention was made of intelligence co-ordination, although a Special Forces Intelligence Centre, (SFIC), started at Inkomo Barracks, had lasted a total of 4-6 months before being closed down.

When nominations were made for headquarters Special Forces posts, there were immediate difficulties. Competition and mutual dislike between the commanding officers of the Selous Scouts and the Special Air Service represented the first problems. The latter refused to shift his battalion headquarters to Inkomo Barracks where the Selous Scouts were stationed. A further problem was the appointment of a Commander, Special Forces, who proved unacceptable to both the Selous Scouts and the Special Air Service. Finally, the concept did not have the support of the Commander, COMOPS, who would consequently have lost his direct control over these forces.

Special Forces Intelligence Centre, the brainchild of the Commander of the Selous Scouts, also flounde-red. The Director General of the Central Intelli-gence Organisation was thus threatened with the eventual loss of the Scouts, who were one of his prime sources of operational intelligence. In the second place, the Special Forces Intelligence Centre would have been in direct competition to the fledge-ling Directorate of Military Intelligence which had a lack of suitable personnel. It was only after the collapse of the Centre and the transfer of its officers to Military Intelligence that the latter developed into an intelligence section of real value. (Also see Chapter 9)

After only seven weeks in total, headquar-ters Special Forces became the headquar-ters of the Security Force Auxiliaries. No satisfac-tory solution was found for the planning and co-operation of Special Force operations, nor for long term strategic planning.

2.5 Conclusion

A number of officers who attained key positions within the Rhodesian Security Forces had served in Malaya during the Emergency. When insurgency reared its head in Rhodesia after UDI, the isolated terrorism experienced prior to 1975 did not seem to constitute a comparable revolutionary threat. In the years to follow the Malaya clique belatedly realized that the threat was essentially the same.

But lower ranking men in the field and those not experienced in the subtelties of a coherent counter-insurgency campaign, did not come to this realization at all. History and combat experience in a different continent hardly seemed applicable to Black Africa. The majority of whites refused to believe that 'their' black populace was capable of a general nationalism and political awareness. A communication gap developed between high com-mand in Harare, and men in the field. Equally important was the fact that experience before 1972 led to an over emphasis of the role of the military. This became ingrained in the thinking of Security Force members and influenced their politi-cal superiors who were dependant on the former's advice for policy decisions regarding the conduct of the war.

The foregoing approach to a problem that is essentially not military, but rather socio-economic and political, had a decisive influence on the Rho-desian military strategy. Some of these effects have been dealt with, but the major one is the lack of a coherent total national strategy. Without a viable political objective and at least rudimentary policy guidelines a vast number of counter-insurgency mea-sures become difficult to execute coherently. Two specific examples discussed at length are psycholo-gical operations (Chapter 6) and the recruitment and training of an own politically orientated local militia for defence purposes (Chapter 8).

Possibly the major shortcoming within the Rho-desian structure of command was the lack of firm, decisive command at the highest level. This was not limited to the military, but also included the Police and Department of Internal Affairs. The lack of a unified high level command that could enforce compliance over the total range of counter-insurgency activities was a severe limitation indeed. The Rho-desian Front politicians who took the decisions regarding the employment of existing resources can hardly be blamed for this deficiency. Yet the rather informal approach adopted to the war was merely a product of the preceding years. From the start of incursions in the sixties, no formalised co-ordina-ting machine was established. Local commanders and officials were left to 'sort out' co-ordination between themselves on an informal basis, which often led to inter-service clashes and personal animosity. In effect, the Joint Operations Centre system as employed relied heavily on the personal rapport that was established between its members, and it is to Rhodesia's credit that there was close co-ordination and support in the majority of areas.

NOTES

1. Rhodesian Army, Military Support to the Civil Power (MCP), (restricted, as amended, dated 1 May 1976), p. xvi.
2. Later to become the Director General of the Central Intelligence Organisation.
3. Special Branch had reported a build up of FRELIMO and ZANLA insurgents in the area.
4. See, for example, the report on the Commit-tee of Supply debate in the revenue vote for defence Rhodesia Herald (25 Aug. 1976) and the editorial comment of the same newspaper dated the 26 Aug. 1976.

5. Africa Research Bulletin (1-31 Mar. 1977), p. 4372.

6. Rhodesia Herald (18 May 1977).

7. With little exception, senior and middle ranking military officers remain convinced that a serious security leak existed at COMOPS, and, most possibly, within NATJOC itself.

8. P. Stiff and R. Reid-Daly, Selous Scouts: Top Secret War (Galago, Alberton, 1982), pp. 272-273.