

SECURITY FORCE AUXILIARIES (SFA)

An Abridged History

The deployment of Security Force Auxiliary detachments started in the second quarter of 1978 and coincided with the formation of the Government of National Unity following the Agreement of 3 March.

The objective was to bring on side guerrillas who were prepared to throw in their lot with the internal nationalist leaders, and was tied in with a new amnesty campaign. Initially recruiting was slow and confined in the main to ZANU (Sithole). A fair proportion of these were externally trained, mainly in Uganda.

Initially Special Branch, assisted by the newly formed Headquarters Special Forces, were responsible for their control and administration. Funds were provided through the Prime Minister's Office, and SFA were armed with an assortment of captured communist weapons. Their dress was similar to the guerrillas themselves being in the main blue denim or other civilian clothing. It was only towards the end of 1978 that the forerunners to the brown uniforms started to appear.

As 1978 drew to a close their usefulness was becoming apparent and they were beginning to have a marked effect on the guerrillas themselves. By the beginning of 1979 the date for the election had been set for April and large numbers of additional SFA were recruited for operations in areas generally supporting the UANC as it was apparent that the latter had the most support amongst the internal parties.

At this time, and on the recommendation of the Army Psychological Operations Unit, the SFA were given the name 'Pfumo re Vanhu' or 'Spear of the People'. This name had no party political connotation although opponents of the UANC were quick to allege that it had an UANC flavour.

During the run in up to the election the strength of the SFA grew from some three thousand to more than ten thousand men. The vast majority of these were ordinary tribesmen although there were a number of guerrillas who had thrown in their lot with either Bishop Muzorewa or the Rev. Sithole and a number of press ganged ZANLA mujibas.

Because of the urgent necessity to deploy the SFA into the Tribal Trust Lands to ensure a good vote at the April Election, few of them received more than four weeks basic training whilst their leadership was selected more by trial and error than experience. There was, on an average, one European liaison Officer, normally a junior NCO, to every one hundred and fifty SFA.

The SFA achieved the aim of obtaining a good vote in the TTL's into which they had been deployed but the result of the election brought about different reactions from the main parties involved.

a. The SFA orientated towards the UANC who numbered about 6,000 were delighted with the results, but there were immediate demands to stand down as they were now the "Winners". When they realised that this was not to be, as the war was continuing, there was a marked drop in morale in some areas and a number of desertions.

b. When the election results were announced there were slightly under 2,000 SFA orientated towards ZANU (Sithole) in the field. The allegations of gross irregularities in the election made by Sithole and others of his party had a marked effect on the ZANU detachments who were convinced they had been cheated. A mistake in the addition of the votes cast in the Gokwe district, which reversed a narrow

ZANU majority into a loss of almost a thousand turned what was a model detachment at Nembudzia into virtual enemies of the Government.

Although the Rev. Sithole gave out that the ZANU SFA were to continue to support the Government of National Unity there was an undercurrent of plotting and machinations going on behind the scenes. Junior party men were in constant contact with detachments and were inciting them continually to disobey the Security Forces. Following the general election a major re-training and re-orientation programme was instituted. This started in May 1979 with a senior staff orientation course with about 84 students supplied equally from the UANC and ZANU. A new rank structure was introduced and those who did well on the orientation course were slotted into senior positions.

At this time it was also resolved that the funding of the SFA would be switched from the PM's Department to the Ministry of Defence and that the force would therefore come under the Army from 1 July 1979. Special Branch would be relieved of their part in the administration as this was detrimental to their correct role in the intelligence field. HQ Special Forces with its very small staff then became almost entirely responsible for the day to day administration of the SFA.

Following the completion of the senior orientation course in June the re-organisation of the detachments began. Members who were dissatisfied were discharged and the conversion of all those armed with communist weapons to G3 rifles was begun. The establishment was cut from 10,500 to 7,818 and a period of consolidation took place. More emphasis was placed on leadership and motivation.

The conversion of the ZANU detachments to G3 rifles was scheduled to start in early July but this was immediately met with opposition from most quarters and a refusal to obey orders and go for re-training. As a result Security Forces had to be used to ensure that ZANU SFA complied with orders given to them. This resulted in two major incidents on 20 July when fighting broke out between Security Forces and ZANU at Nembudzia (Gokwe) and Nyamaropa. These incidents resulted in the death of about 190 SFA and one soldier. A number of other soldiers and SFA were wounded. All the dissident SFA were detained whilst the remainder were retrained and redeployed. On redeployment they were integrated with their UANC counterparts and SFA of all factions and tribal groupings were warned that further participation in party politics would no longer be tolerated.

The future emphasis of the SFA was to be directed towards national politics and nation building. Whilst supporting the Government of the day, the emphasis was to be placed on freedom to vote for and support any party of a persons choice without fear of intimidation. This was a high ideal, and, as can be seen throughout Africa, it is not easy to implement.

Following the take over of all administrative and logistical responsibilities from Special Branch it became immediately obvious that the three married quarters in KG VI Barracks were totally inadequate. As a result investigations were undertaken to find an alternative site. By August a suitable location had been found at the Imperial Tobacco Company at Msasa for a Rear Headquarters. During that month all the AQ staff, MT and the ordnance depot moved to the new site leaving only the command, operational and liaison staffs at KG VI Barracks.

As the SFA worked closely with Home Affairs an investigation to examine whether the force could be handed over to that Ministry took place. It became immediately apparent that Home Affairs did not have the administrative capability to take over, and so the Army continued with some assistance from personnel of other ministries.

On Sunday 2 September the raising of the new National Flag took place at Rufaro Stadium in Salisbury and at numerous other centres throughout the country. Wherever there were SFA detachments in close proximity they took part. In Salisbury there was a squad of 30 on parade and a further 100 lined the parade ground. They received tumultuous applause from a crowd estimated at 30,000.

In September Com Ops decided that the SFA should take over the responsibilities for 74 PV's from the

Guard Force so that the latter could be deployed on the lines of rail and in a mobile role in the European farming areas. As a result the SFA establishment was again raised to approximately 10,000.

The PV's in the Beit Bridge, Chiredzi, Chipinga, Mutasa and Darwin areas were taken over by the beginning of October, and once initial teething troubles were overcome the scheme worked well.

In October 1979 the PM in London at the Lancaster House talks, instructed that the SFA were immediately to be increased to 26,000. It soon became apparent that the administration could not handle this number and the ceiling was set by the National JOC at 16,000 which is the highest figure it had ever reached.

During the period 1 July to 31 December the Central Training School at Domboshawa and the next door farm, Elphida, were working at full capacity. Thirty five courses were conducted by the staff and 4,365 students and recruits passed through the school. Seventeen different types of courses were run. These were Senior Staff Orientation, Liaison Officers, Detachment and Unit Leaders, Junior Leaders, Area Administrators, Trackers, Basic Recruits, Re-Training of detachments, Envoys, Advanced Envoys, Drill and Weapons Instructors, Radio Operators, Basic Administration, Q Accounting, Troop Medical Orderly, Drivers and Intelligence.

Up until the end of 1979 instructors were loaned to the SFA from the Army, BSA Police/ Guard Force, Air Force and Home Affairs. An eight week drill and weapons instructors course attended by 102 SFA students was held over the period October to December at Guinea Fowl and of those attending 56 passed at an Army standard. All attached instructors were therefore released back to their own Services early in January.

Recruit courses and retraining also took place at various Brigade and JOC Battle Camps during 1979. These were staffed by a variety of instructors from JOC resources. Standards were not always uniform and the long term plan was for all training except refresher to take place at Elphida.

The large increase in recruiting over the last quarter of 1979 put a greater strain on the administrative and logistical systems. Treasury funded the money and orders for uniforms, kit, equipment, radios, vehicles and support weapons were placed in November. For almost two months, however, the majority of the SFA were clad in little more than Tee shirts, shorts and boots. Other Government Departments were mobilised to assist, and uniforms together with the bulk of equipment became the responsibility of Government Central Stores. This eased the burden on the overworked logistics staff at Headquarters Special Forces. By the beginning of 1980 sufficient of most items had been received and stocks were arriving on an almost daily basis.

During the second half of 1979 considerable success were achieved on operations. During this period 66 guerrillas were killed and another 93 captured. SFA losses during the same period were 98 killed in action or vehicle accidents, a further 100 were wounded or injured.

There can be no shadow of doubt that the SFA had proved that they were an essential back-up to the Security Forces and provided a link between the Government and the people in many of the areas in which the SFA were deployed. The situation would have been far worse in the country without them and they proved to be a thorn in the side of the Guerrillas.

As in any semi-trained and inexperienced force motivation is a key factor in keeping the boat on an even keel. In the case of the SFA this received high priority and a large number of envoys were trained by 1 Psychological Operations Unit. These envoys were trained to motivate both their own men and the tribesmen to follow the course of democracy. Over the period December 1979 to February 1980 approximately 300 additional envoys were trained. On the orders of Commander Combined Operations these envoys were used to explain the difference between marxism and true democracy to the people.

On several occasions HQ Special Forces had recommended to both Com Ops and Army HQ that the

SFA should be made a properly constituted force, but this was always resisted mainly due to the number of other forces already in being, and because of their previous political taint. However a full establishment and rank structure were introduced and SFA funds were used to purchase a Computer for the Army. The personal details of every member of the SFA was actually recorded by this computer.

During the months from November 1 1979 to March 1 1980 the MT Branch carried out driving courses at HQ SFA (Rear), Msasa. During this period 195 learner drivers passed their tests. Almost half of these had never driven before whilst the remainder either had a civilian licence or some experience. In addition 172 drivers successfully completed conversion courses onto other types of vehicles.

After the introduction of the so-called Cease Fire and the move of guerrillas into assembly points, the SFA were able to concentrate more fully on re-construction and re-building. A competition between detachments was introduced. This was called operation "Ruoko re Vanhu" of which a literal translation is "a helping hand to the people". Over the period 1 January to 24 February this operation resulted in the opening of over 90 schools, 27 clinics, 9 business centres, 71 stores, 71 dips, 4 beerhalls, 16 grinding mills and two missions. Several of the clinics were staffed by SFA medical assistants.

Reconstruction had been undertaken on a national basis. District and Provincial teams were formed to do the planning under the direction of Home Affairs. The SFA worked very closely with these teams and also with the tribespeople themselves to assess their needs. Much of the pick and shovel work was done by them and there were instances when detachments actually clubbed together to buy materials for certain projects.

The purchase of Elphida Farm was finally resolved in January 1980 and the contractors John Sisk and Son (Pvt) Ltd were tasked with building an Headquarters, Camp Hospital, QM Stores and instructors quarters for the Central Training School.

On 11 February the first passing out parade to be held at Elphida took place. A large number of guests and three overseas TV teams were invited, and the parade was reviewed by Brigadier Campling the day before he was promoted to Major General. Everyone was impressed by the standard and bearing of all SFA at CTS.

In line with the rest of the Civil Service and Security Forces the SFA received a pay rise with effect from 1 February 1980. For the majority of the SFA this was about 15 percent although for the top five grades it was approximately 100 percent, as these ranks had not received the previous rise in August.

Although there was meant to be a cease fire in operation from early January, this was far from the case. Several thousand ZANLA guerrillas remained in the TTL's to intimidate the local tribesmen and their place in the Assembly Points was taken by untrained mujibas to make up numbers and dupe overseas observers. During the first two months of 1980, operations continued almost unabated and the SFA achieved considerable success. During this period they killed 23 guerrillas and 7 mujibas, captured 86 guerrillas and 26 mujibas and lost fifteen of their own men killed in action.

With the lifting of sanctions against this country, the Imperial Tobacco Company decided to sell their factory at Msasa. As a result it became necessary to move all the administrative staff back to KG VI Barracks in March although Q, Ordnance and MT were given an extension of lease until 31 May 1980 at an increased monthly rental.

The ZANU (PF) landslide victory at the polls meant there was no possibility of the continuance of the SFA as a force. They had been too successful against the guerrillas and their early political background mitigated against them. In spite of severe provocation by ZANU (PF), their conduct after the election was generally exemplary and they proved that they were still a disciplined force who had the interest of the people at heart.

The keenness, willingness to learn, esprit de corps and dedication to the cause of the SFA were

exceptional. Many members of the Security Forces at middle and lower levels who were detailed to serve with them came reluctantly. It took only a short time for them to appreciate the worth of the SFA and become amongst their most ardent supporters. Great is the pity that the SFA have not been able to realise their full potential for the future of Zimbabwe.

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