

# WAR SINCE 1945 SEMINAR AND SYMPOSIUM

## CHAPTER 3

### THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES

Prior to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953, the British South Africa Police (BSAP) had been responsible for Rhodesia's defence. The BSAP had formed the nucleus of Rhodesia's military contribution to the British Empire during the Boer War and World War I. Its officers and non-commissioned officers led the Rhodesian African Rifles against the Japanese in World War II. When the army (Security Force) was established in 1953, it was viewed with a benevolent tolerance by the BSAP. This attitude continued through 1963 when the Federation ended. At that time, the commissioner of the British South Africa Police recommended to the newly-formed government of Southern Rhodesia that the army be dissolved, and the BSAP enlarge its Police Support Unit as a means of "ensuring the national defence." This recommendation was rejected, but a concept known as the State of Emergency Procedure was developed. In theory, the BSAP and the army held co-equal status within the government, with each element assigned separate missions. In reality the army was reduced to a secondary status. The BSAP held the right to call upon the army for assistance, or simply "hand over" a particular problem to the security force. The police controlled the power of initiative and decision. This status quo prevailed until 1966.

The institution of a Rhodesian Security Force began to develop in earnest after the Sinoia Battle of 28 April 1966. This incident was commemorated as "Chimurenga Day" by the guerrillas, and marked the official beginning of the Rhodesian War. During this action, the BSAP, with the assistance of local police reservists and air force helicopters, deployed against a force of ZANLA insurgents. The event resulted in the deaths of 7 guerrillas with no BSAP casualties. As a result of the inept handling of the situation by the BSAP, the government became convinced that the BSAP were policemen and not soldiers.<sup>1</sup> A shift of emphasis resulted in 1966, and the Rhodesian Security Force became the government's primary instrument for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations.

The Sinoia incident also marked the official introduction of dedicated insurgent forces into Rhodesia. These insurgents were organised into small groups of 8-15 men operating from bases in Zambia. Throughout this early phase, the insurgents had two modest objectives - attack European-owned farms and attempt to destroy the oil and powerline link between Rhodesia and the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. These initial attempts were unsuccessful.

In 1967, small groups of insurgents continued to enter the country from Zambia with similar goals. They remained unsuccessful, but an additional element was added to the formula. A number of captured guerrillas were identified as members of military components of the South African "African National Council." This led to the introduction of South African Police and prison guard detachments into Rhodesia to assist in the "counter-terrorist" effort. This allied force effectively sealed the border with Zambia, and guaranteed peace through 1969.

The result of this diminished activity had a long-term negative effect on the Salisbury government. In 1969 the Security Forces felt they had absolutely defeated the guerrilla threat and, as a result, they were reluctant to accept the evidence of increased and more sophisticated insurgent activity. In addition, the guerrilla forces spent the year under the guidance of their Soviet, Chinese and Cuban advisors. They entered 1970 better trained and organized. There were two major incidents during the year: a partially successful attack on a police garrison in Chisuma, and an unsuccessful attempt to cut the railway line running from the northern frontier to Salisbury.

From 1971-1973 the complexion of the war began to change. The insurgent activity developed to a point

that demanded the total commitment of the Security Forces. Initially, the army was able to isolate the war to the northern border region with Zambia. As the Portuguese failures in Mozambique became more apparent, the basis for support and operations for the Rhodesian Black nationalists began to expand into Mozambique. This extension, when linked to a larger and more well-trained insurgent element, resulted in several guerrilla military successes throughout 1973. The insurgents began to effectively utilise landmines, small rocket launchers, grenades and automatic weapons, including light machine guns. Their tactics became more sophisticated, but remained essentially "hit and run." They would select an isolated farm and mine the access roads prior to initiating an assault. Once the attack began, it would be broken off very quickly. Local elements of the Security Forces would rush to the scene along the access road and detonate the mine.

These tactics resulted in very few White casualties. The primary victims were the local Blacks who supported the European-owned farms. There is little evidence that the majority of the Rhodesian black population supported the nationalist cause, but it was also not an enthusiastic supporter of the white minority government. Throughout this stage of escalation, the brutalization of the black tribesmen by the insurgents may have increased their sympathies for the minority government, but it also undermined their confidence in that government's ability to protect them.

From 1973-1975 both sides of this conflict began to learn the lessons of unconventional warfare. The guerrillas received a higher degree of training, and demonstrated the discipline required to wage an effective campaign. The Rhodesian Security Forces developed the counterinsurgency tactics which would bring it so much positive recognition in the following years.

The withdrawal of the Portuguese from Mozambique in 1975 allowed the "Frontline" nations to form a loose confederation in order to direct their support and some limited resources to the overthrow of the white minority government in Salisbury. Rhodesia's position worsened when South Africa bowed to President Carter's pressure; Pretoria withdrew its auxiliary forces from combat and eventually from Rhodesia. As a result of greater Chinese and Soviet support, the numbers of insurgents began to increase, and units in excess of 100 men moved through the northern and eastern border regions. By 1976, the pressure on the Rhodesian military began to intensify. Insurgent attacks were initiated from Botswana. The addition of Botswana a guerrilla sanctuary had a noticeable impact on white Rhodesia. The main railway from Rhodesia to South Africa passed through this country. Salisbury could no longer depend upon a secure line of communications with its only ally. This resulted in the construction of the Beit Bridge-Rutenga railway line. Throughout the war, this route served as Rhodesia's only direct link with the international community.

In order to counter the escalation of insurgent movement into the country from virtually all points of the compass, the Security Forces separated the country into five military districts. The northern district was identified as HURRICANE; THRASHER covered the Eastern Highlands; REPULSE included Fort Victoria and the majority of the BEIT BRIDGE-RUTENGA railway; TANGENT was established in the area adjacent to Botswana, and GRAPPLE occupied the centre of the country.

The immediate result of this intensification of guerrilla effort was that the Rhodesian Armed Forces lost control of the African Trust Lands in the northeast, and most of the rural areas of the country. As in the United States' experience in the Republic of Vietnam, the Security Forces controlled the rural areas by day, and the guerrillas held the territory at night. This increase in strength and capabilities of the nationalist movement resulted in an increased measure of popular support from the indigenous black population (the tribesmen). This began to ensure the insurgent of a local source of food and shelter, but, of more import - indigenous recruits.<sup>2</sup>

In the face of these realities, and provided with only a relatively small force and equipment, sometimes both obsolete and elderly, General Walls, first as Army Commander, and then as Commander Combined Operations, waged a campaign of extreme professional competence that will deserve a place in the world's military Staff Colleges for many years to come.<sup>3</sup> Under Walls, the Rhodesian forces

accepted their inability to control the terrain, and directed their operational planning toward limiting and reducing the growth of the insurgent forces within Rhodesia.

The tactics developed to accomplish this mission were based upon an accurate evaluation and the dissemination of intelligence, ambushes, ground and aerial reconnaissance, the rapid deployment of forces in order to gain and maintain contact with confirmed enemy movement, and the development and use of a unique military organization known as a "PSEUDO-GANG" to disrupt enemy forces in a particular area.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the Rhodesians tended to disregard the international boundaries of the five black nations that had proclaimed themselves as "Front-Line" states: Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Angola. The insurgents countered these incursions by the skilful use of the media. The publicised violation of these borders greatly tempered the military benefits the Rhodesians derived from such operations. The international reaction was intensified by the number of non-hostile Blacks who were killed and wounded during these raids. The guerrilla base camp served as the living compound for its soldiers. Inevitably, a large number of women and children became casualties of a Rhodesian attack.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the United States' involvement in the Republic of Vietnam, Americans tend to equate their experiences and perceptions to other conflicts involving an insurgent movement. At the height of the Vietnam War, Washington had over 500,000 troops in the Republic of Vietnam. In contrast, the Rhodesian Security Forces in 1978-1979 consisted of 10,800 regulars, 15,000 territorials (reserves), plus 8,000 regular BSAP, with a police reserve of approximately 19,000 strong. This force was patterned after the British model, with a separation of the Army into branches or "arms." The Air Force was a separate service, but closely linked to the ground element by its primary role: close air support and helicopter operations.<sup>6</sup>

The command and control of all combat operations was centred in the Combined Operations Headquarters in Salisbury under the direction of General Peter Walls. The five military districts in Rhodesia were controlled by Joint Operations Centres (JOCs) which were linked directly to Salisbury. The individual JOC was a combined operations centre with representatives from the Army, Air Force, Police, Central Intelligence Organization, and Internal Affairs. The Army commander was eventually designated the senior service representative. The operational units assigned to a military district were task organized in accordance to specific mission and terrain, and remained under the tactical control of the JOC commander of that district.<sup>7</sup> Although the combat elements in each Joint Operations Area were task organized, the Air Force remained the most structured of all components of the Rhodesian Security Forces.

## THE RHODESIAN AIR FORCE

The Air Force consisted of eight operational squadrons. These included one light bomber squadron, one fighter-attack squadron (Hunters), one fighter-attack squadron (Vampires), one reconnaissance squadron, one counter-insurgency squadron, one transport squadron, and two helicopter squadrons. The major aircraft types available to the Air Force included:

### AIRCRAFT: Rhodesian Air Force<sup>8</sup>

- **25 Fighter Ground Attack**
- 9 "Hunter" FGA9
- 12 "Vampire"
- 4 OV-10 "Bronco"
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- **19 Trainer-Reconnaissance**
- 8 BAC "Provost" T-52
- 11 T-55

- **30 Counterinsurgency-Reconnaissance**
- 12 AL-60
- 18 Ce-337
- **17 Transports**
- 1 Be-55 "Baron"
- 6 BN-2 "Islanders"
- 10 C-47
- **77 Helicopters**
- 66 SA-316/-318
- 11 Bell 205

The air service unit was composed of approximately 1300 personnel. Pilot training was unique by American standards, but it followed British traditions. The pilots and crew members were trained to become individually proficient in the maintenance of particular parts of the aircraft. If the aircraft experienced a malfunction, the entire crew was able to perform fairly sophisticated levels of maintenance. This system included the incorporation of maintenance technicians as members of helicopter and transport carrier crews.

In 1978 the serviceability of the Rhodesian Air Force was 85%. This is exceptional when 60% is considered as "good" throughout the western world. This is a greater accomplishment considering the international sanctions levelled against Rhodesia in 1965 and 1970. The majority of its military resupply was built upon a system of improvisation and invention.<sup>9</sup>

### **THE RHODESIAN ARMY (C.1979)**

The Rhodesian Army consisted of one Armoured Car Regiment, six Infantry Battalions, four Special Air Service Squadrons, one Artillery Regiment, six Engineer Squadrons, and two Special Scout Groups.<sup>10</sup>

The history of the Rhodesian Army included participation in World War I, World War II, and the Counterinsurgency Operations in Malaya. A former Commander in Chief of NATO, General Sir Walter Walker, described the Rhodesian soldiers as "the toughest counterinsurgency force in the world." In a letter to the London Times newspaper he stated, "the Rhodesian Army will never be defeated in the field by terrorists or even a much more sophisticated enemy."<sup>11</sup>

The Army's lack of sophisticated weaponry and equipment was an important element in its success. It was a force which dealt with the terrorist on his own level. The Security Forces lacked extensive lines of logistic support, yet they were adept at small scale operations throughout a broken and ragged countryside. In order to compensate for their small numbers, the government forces had to rely upon the basic ingredients of victory - professionalism and an intimate knowledge of the terrain. The combat forces operated in small units, and depended upon mobility, surprise, flexibility and tactical dispersion for success. The army tended to meet the guerrilla on his own ground in a man-to-man fashion of combat. The Armed Forces reflected the spirit of the Rhodesian culture. It was a highly efficient organization. The tight bonds within the Rhodesian society reduced the elements of traditional friction between soldiers, civil servants and politicians. The combat and police forces were not plagued by a sense of social isolation. The majority of the white population was willing to endure the necessary taxation and the required conscription of its children in order to ensure the Prime Minister Ian Smith's final objective, which was a gradual and moderate transition of political power to the black majority. The Rhodesian armed forces were the instrument of these policies.<sup>12</sup>

In order to appreciate the effectiveness of this counterinsurgency force an understanding of the structure and mission of its principal components is necessary. Each of the elements of this force had a distinct

mission, and a unique character.

### **THE RHODESIAN LIGHT INFANTRY (RLI)**

The RLI remained one of two "all white" units in the armed forces until the very end of the war in 1979-1980. It was established in 1961 as a conventional infantry battalion. In 1964 it was assigned the mission of a commando unit, and based its reorganization upon a British pattern. The regiment was organized into five sub-units: three combat commandos, a support commando and a base group. Each commando consisted of approximately 100-150 men. The support commando was similar to the Marine Corps' Weapons Company, and the base group consisted of those elements found in our Headquarters and Service Company. The regiment contained approximately 1,000 men.<sup>13</sup>

The mission of the unit became purely counterinsurgency. The emphasis of organizational training was centred upon search and destroy operations. In addition, the Rhodesians spent a great deal of time developing their non-commissioned officer corps. As a result, their operational commitments were at the "stick", or squad, level.

The RLI was also unique because of the large number of foreign nationals who served in its ranks. It has been estimated that this participation went as high as 30%. They were primarily British, South African and American. The majority of these men acquitted themselves well. The tendency was for the foreigners to approach Rhodesia with mercenary mentality, but this was a misperception. All foreigners enlisting in the Rhodesian Armed Forces received some degree of basic training, with an emphasis on discipline. The Rhodesian Security Forces had a higher standard of military discipline than most western armies, and Americans were generally surprised by the intensity and severity of this system.<sup>14</sup>

The basic training for RLI volunteers was provided within the regiment. This consisted of 16 weeks of recruit training. The instruction consisted of basic military skills: drill, weapons, leadership, small unit tactics, and an emphasis on focussing these skills toward the destruction of the insurgents. Upon assignment to a commando, the soldier could expect to spend 4-6 weeks in the bush, and 10 days to 3 weeks in the RLI Base Camp at Llewellyn Barracks, near Bulawayo. These periods were dedicated to retraining and refitting the commando prior to another assignment.<sup>15</sup>

### **RHODESIAN AFRICAN RIFLES (RAR)**

The RAR was an elite organization and enjoyed the distinction of having more black volunteers for billets than were available. There were two reasons for this interest. The RAR was an hereditary organization. The sons of RAR soldiers were anxious to follow in their fathers' footsteps. Of equal import, membership in the regiment would guarantee a higher standard of living, and more prestige to the young black than he would have been able to achieve in most civilian pursuits.<sup>16</sup>

The RAR was originally established during World War I, and designated the Rhodesian Native Regiment (RNR). The RAR was disbanded at the end of World War I, but with the outbreak of World War II, the RAR was reformed and renamed. The regiment saw service as a member of the East African Brigade in Burma, and won praise for their actions against the Japanese during the Battle of Tankwe Chung on April 26, 1945.<sup>17</sup>

By 1977, the RAR was organized into four battalions. Each battalion consisted of approximately 700 men. The Regiment was fully integrated with both black and white officers. The internal structure of each battalion consisted of three rifle companies. When a unit was assigned a combat mission, its base unit for deployment was a company, but in the field it rapidly broke into 5-7 man squads. The emphasis was on small unit tactics, ambushes and tracking. Squads may have operated for as long as a week as an independent element.<sup>18</sup> Because of the natural bush abilities of the black soldiers, the RAR enjoyed a solid reputation, and performed very well.

## THE RHODESIAN ARTILLERY REGIMENT

The Artillery Regiment was designated the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment. This unit reveals a disparity between the American concept of an artillery regiment and the reality of its Rhodesian counterpart. The 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment consisted of two batteries, one active and one reserve. The reserve battery was dependent upon British 25 pounders for support. The active battery consisted of six M101 105mm Howitzers; it also had an additional responsibility for approximately 10 ZPU-4/20mm anti-aircraft guns which were posted throughout Rhodesia at strategic points. The AA guns had been captured from elements of the Patriotic Front during raids into Zambia and Mozambique.<sup>19</sup>

## THE RHODESIAN ARMoured CAR REGIMENT (RAC)

The RAC was established in 1972 to fulfil an armoured cavalry mission. Its primary duties involved reconnaissance, patrolling, escort duty, crowd control, and road blocks.<sup>20</sup>

The RAC had a basic table of equipment of 60 Eland, 54 S/90 Scout Cars, approximately 50 UR-416 armoured personnel carriers, and 20 Ferret armoured cars. The latter were four-wheel drive vehicles mounted with either a 50 calibre machine gun, twin Brownings or a 20mm aircraft gun. The Rhodesians manufactured two additional combat vehicles. The *Bullet* was a wheeled infantry fighting vehicle. It carried a 10 man crew. The vehicle commander was also the squad leader. The second was the *Vaporizer*. It was a scout/reconnaissance vehicle, built upon a light chassis with a fiberglass body. It was manufactured for less than \$1500, and mounted with a 30 or 50 calibre machine gun.<sup>21</sup>

The organization of the regiment was similar to its NATO counterparts. There were four armoured squadrons; each squadron had four troops. Three of the squadrons were commanded by a cadre of regular officers and NCO's, and manned by reservists who were activated for incremental periods. The fourth squadron was a regular establishment.

The tactics initially used by the RAC reflect its British heritage, and the United Kingdom's association with NATO. However, as the war progressed, the RAC began to incorporate Israeli mechanized doctrine. Although Israel fought her major armoured campaigns on a scale which paralleled World War II desert operations, it developed many innovative and small scale armoured cavalry movements for use in the "occupied territories". The Rhodesians studied these tactics, and modified them to the terrain and character of an African insurgency.

The armour column always moved with the supported mechanized infantry, with one of the elements of combined arms in support. Air support was used only when absolutely essential. In order to compensate for the lack of an "aerial umbrella", the armoured car units developed a tactical doctrine which emphasized movement, speed, and offensive action.

The RAC was reported to have achieved contact with insurgent forces in excess of 90% of their operations. This was impressive, but should be tempered with the knowledge that a squadron was never committed until military intelligence had established a large concentration of guerrilla forces.

Although the Rhodesian Armoured Car Regiment was small and virtually self-reliant, it was a potent force which included an anti-armour capability. The Rhodesians never possessed tanks, but they had modified a number of their vehicles to carry anti-armour weapons. Throughout 1978-1979 they became justifiably concerned over the introduction of approximately 200 T-34, T-54 and T-62 Soviet tanks into Zambia accompanied by Cuban military advisors.<sup>22</sup> With the introduction of this force into one of the *Frontline Nations*, Rhodesia received considerable assistance in upgrading its anti-armour capability from South Africa and possibly Israel. It has been impossible to define the exact nature of its anti-armour capacity, but both *Jane's* and *World Armies* speculate upon the existence of a credible deterrent.

## THE GREY'S SCOUTS

The Grey's were one of the most unique military organizations of the latter 20<sup>th</sup> Century. They were a horse mounted infantry unit of approximately battalion size which specialized in tracking, reconnaissance and pursuit. Because of the terrain characteristics of Rhodesia, there were very few places within the country that were not accessible to horse mounted infantry. The unit was operationally deployed as a squadron. This was roughly equivalent to a Marine Rifle Company with approximately 160 men. The squadron consisted of three troops; each troop had four 8-man sections. The Grey's consisted of three *saber* or combat squadrons and a support squadron which contained a combined 60mm and 81mm mortar section, a reconnaissance troop, and a tracking troop which was assisted by specially trained dogs.

The published advantages of the Grey's Scouts were primarily its rapidity of movement and shock effect. A mounted 8-man section could cover a frontage of approximately 550 metres.<sup>23</sup> Although the unit was widely known because of its unique fashion of movement, it was not a particularly effective combat vehicle. The horse provided the rider with height and visibility, but it also exposed him to enemy small arms fire. Although the Grey's suffered very few casualties throughout the war, it is possible that this was due more to the poor marksmanship of the insurgent than the effectiveness of the unit. The horse was certainly much more quiet than an armoured car, but it was also much more vulnerable to enemy destruction.<sup>24</sup>

## THE SELOUS SCOUTS

Every war produces its élite unit, and the Rhodesian War was no exception. The professional reputation of the Rhodesian Security Force was justified, but the skills of the Selous Scouts have become legendary. The founder and commander of the Scouts was a Rhodesian born officer, Lt.Col. Ronald Reid-Daly. He entered the Rhodesian Army in 1951 and served with the Rhodesian Squadron of the British Special Air Services (SAS) in operations against insurgents in Malaya in 1951. Rising to the rank of Sergeant Major in the Rhodesian Light Infantry, he was later commissioned and achieved the rank of Captain. He retired from the Army in 1973. In late 1973 he was persuaded to return to active duty in order to form the Selous Scouts.<sup>25</sup>

The unit remained on active duty until Robert Mugabe was elected Prime Minister in 1980. One of his first acts was to order the immediate disbanding of the Scouts; Mugabe also threatened to bring its members to trial as war criminals. During the transition period under British protection, most of the unit's members left Zimbabwe. In 1981 *Newsweek* magazine reported that the Republic of South Africa incorporated the majority of the unit as a combat element into its Self Defence Force. Its former commanding officer is currently serving as a Major General in charge of the Defence Force of the Transkei, an independent black state within the border of the Republic of South Africa.

Prime Minister Mugabe's reaction to the Selous Scouts is of interest. Upon assuming office he made a concerted effort to ensure the dignity and structure of the minority European community. This was particularly evident in the Army. Mugabe realised that his link to a peaceful future for Zimbabwe lay in its armed forces. He was very cautious in handling this delicate issue, but with the single exception of the Selous Scouts.

The basis for the new government's mistrust of the unit was founded upon the efficiency of the organization. During the war the Scouts were credited with the deaths of 68% of the insurgents killed within the borders of Rhodesia.<sup>26</sup>

The purpose of the unit was the clandestine elimination of the Nationalists without regard to international borders. The foundation of the unit's effectiveness was its members' ability to live off the land, combined with the tracking skills of the individual soldier. All members were volunteers and

combat veterans. They were initiated into the Scouts via a very severe indoctrination programme which eliminated approximately 85% of the respondents. The training course was six weeks in length and incorporated an excess of physical and psychological stress. The unit was entirely integrated and all soldiers had to pass the same course of instruction in order to win access to the unit. The final test included a 90 mile forced march with a 70 pound pack. This may not seem excessive to American Marines, but the hike was divided into four "courses". At the completion of each course, the volunteer was given a difficult combat task to accomplish prior to continuing onto the next phase.

The emphasis throughout the entire training cycle was the development of "Bush and Tracking" techniques. The Scout had to become absolutely self-reliant. The unit incorporated the same tactics that the British had initiated in Malaya and Kenya. It was defined as a *Pseudo-Gang* concept. A team of 4-7 men was deployed into an operational area. All other friendly forces in that region were withdrawn. The team was dressed in insurgent uniforms, carried communist weapons, and gave the appearance of being a guerrilla force. The key was that they were better trained and more disciplined than the nationalists. Once they ascertained the presence of an insurgent force, they began to stalk them. They were proficient at remaining undetected throughout this phase. This gave them the advantage of initiating contact with the insurgents at their discretion.<sup>27</sup> The Selous Scouts achieved remarkable results by carrying the war directly to the guerrillas. Their success carries the key to an effective counterinsurgency campaign. They were simply much better at guerrilla warfare than their opponents.<sup>28</sup>

### **SPECIAL AIR SERVICE (SAS)**

The Rhodesian SAS was modelled directly after its British counterpart. Its mission was the most diverse of any branch of the Rhodesian Security Forces. Its primary task consisted of reconnaissance. The training for the SAS involved static line and free fall parachuting, light and heavy weapons training, demolitions, tracking, scuba, and in indigenous languages. A fully trained member of the SAS would require over three years of instruction.<sup>29</sup>

The SAS remained an entirely European unit throughout the course of the war. From 1975-1977 the unit was utilised in accordance with doctrine. As the war intensified, its role became more clandestine. It mounted a number of pinpoint strikes at insurgent headquarters in Zambia and Mozambique, and conducted numerous combat patrols along the border with these two nations. The unit never consisted of more than several hundred men. It was a very professional and effective force, but limited because of its size.<sup>30</sup>

### **THE BRITISH SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE (BSAP)**

The BSAP was a supporting force with military training. This unit was neither British nor South African. The name originated during England's colonial era in southern Africa and was retained by the Rhodesian government upon its declaration of independence. The unit consisted of four elements. The regular police force could be equated to our state police in a mobilized status. It was augmented by a specialised regular force known as the Police Support Unit or *Blackboots*; and two reserve or volunteer elements: the Special Reserve and the Police Anti-Terrorist Units.

The Special Reserve was charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order within their residential areas. They were an unpaid paramilitary organisation similar to an auxiliary police force found in American communities. It was nicknamed Dad's Army because the average age of volunteers ran between 55-65 years. The unit was integrated, but in a very limited sense. Because their ranks were drawn from residential neighbourhoods, these were always segregated. There was active participation from both the Asian and European communities, but the black community was a non-participant.

As terrorist attacks on the civilian population increased, the paramilitary Anti-Terrorist Units were formed. Their main function was to ensure the security of national key points such as power stations, waterworks, pumping stations and bulk food areas. This was later expanded to include shopping

centres, major sporting events and other public gatherings.<sup>31</sup>

The primary counterinsurgency arm of the BSAP was the Police Support Unit. The unit was originally formed as an Askari Unit whose sole function was ceremonial guard duty. With the advent of civil disturbances and riots in the early 1960's, it was felt that there was a need for a force that could be used to support the police efforts in various districts. This was not intended to be a regular component of the police, but a temporary reserve during periods of unrest.<sup>32</sup>

Each troop consisted of both black and white participants. The black troops served as permanent members of the unit while Europeans were either regular policemen, or servicemen who elected to fulfill their military obligation as a member of this organization. The training was thorough and covered familiarisation with weapons and counterinsurgency tactics. A good deal of the basic recruit training occurred in the field in "Battle Camps". This training included a tough period of physical indoctrination and an emphasis on bush warfare. The emphasis was on aggressive and offensive tactics.

The extensive use of native blacks in this unit had several advantages. These men came from a variety of tribal backgrounds and possessed a keener awareness of unusual behaviour pattern of local villagers than their European counterparts. In addition, they were general excellent natural trackers who were capable of following human trails for long periods. Once their training was completed the men joined a "troop". This unit was comprised of 5-7 men who operated exclusively in a single area.<sup>33</sup>

### **THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS (INTAF)**

Although the IntAf was not considered an element of the Rhodesian Security Forces nor a supporting unit similar to the BSAP, it had a direct impact upon the course of the war.

The mission of the IntAf was the "programming and motivation of the tribal African towards active participation in the development of a new and better way of life which takes into account the socio-political and agro-economic potential of the community as a whole."<sup>34</sup>

The role of the IntAf was frequently misunderstood. They were not organized for participation in combat, but solely as an administrative auxiliary. This was a government agency with a mission to provide advice and the necessary skills to assist tribal farmers to combat disease and increase their agricultural productivity. With the increase of insurgent activity, their mission was expanded to include that of an arbitrator between the tribal blacks and the security forces.

The methods of infiltration and extortion used by the guerrilla forces resulted in making the tribesman the man who was "caught in the middle". On one side the insurgents demanded food, shelter, and money on threat of torture or death. On the other, the security forces prosecuted the tribespeople for providing aid and comfort to the enemy. This resulted in massive numbers of tribal blacks abandoning their homes and flooding the urban centres of Salisbury and Bulawayo.

The requirement to provide more protection for the tribesmen resulted in the establishment of a paramilitary wing of the IntAf in 1977. The formation of this military element, IntAf National Servicemen (IANS), was important primarily because of its mission. As the guerrillas increased their pressure on the minority government, they endeavoured to demonstrate to the non-aligned blacks the inability of the security forces to protect them. This resulted in an increase in the number of vicious and bloody atrocities. It also assisted the nationalists by flooding the capabilities of a strained government with a sizeable refugee problem. By 1979 both Salisbury and Bulawayo had developed serious social and health problems due to the influx of over 500,000 tribespeople attempting to find safety in the large cities.

In order to check the insurgents' use of the indigenous population and counter the refugee flow from the bush to the cities, Rhodesia embarked upon its most controversial policy of the war, the Protected

Village concept. This policy was initiated and administered through the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and monitored/enforced by the IANS.

This idea was not an original strategy of the Rhodesian Government. It evolved as a result of Rhodesia's participation with Commonwealth Forces during the British crisis in Malaya. This concept served as the basis for the British pacification effort. The United States attempted to use a similar strategy in the Republic of Vietnam: the Strategic Hamlet, and the Portuguese had initiated a similar programme during its war with the Frelimo insurgents in Mozambique. With the exception of the British effort, the tactic has been a failure.

The Salisbury government attempted to reinforce British success by incorporating tribal heritage with the village concept. The Tribal Trustlands were divided into existing communities. The denominator consisted of a formula based upon arable land, traditional grazing areas and water supplies. On the strategic ground within this area the government established the village. The intent was to ensure that the tribesmen would be able to continue their normal pattern of existence.

The protected village was to place an additional strain on the guerrillas' supply source. Within the village the store merchant was required to restrict his sales only to registered villagers; and he could also sell only in designated quantities. Every person was checked upon entering or leaving the compound to ensure that excess food and equipment did not leave the village, and that unauthorized weapons were not introduced into the hamlet.

The physical structure consisted of a wall around the entire compound with a fortified "Keep" located at its most strategic point. There was a single entrance which was guarded "around the clock". The area was patrolled throughout the night, and a perimeter sweep was accomplished at dawn, prior to allowing the tribesmen to leave for the day.

In actuality, the protected villages were of limited value, and the government suffered a great deal of international criticism because of this effort. The tribesmen remained unenthusiastic participants. By the time the concept was introduced into an area, they had probably come to some type of arrangement with the local guerrilla cadre. They obviously resented the interruption of their lives and the loss of their individual freedom of movement.

Although the Rhodesian Security Forces and the Salisbury government made a sincere effort to create a bi-racial and professional armed force, they were hampered from the beginning. The intensity of the insurgent pressure and the refusal of any nation other than the Republic of South Africa to recognize their right to existence combined to create an atmosphere of intransigent resignation throughout the entire society. The decision to create an integrated security force with black officers was heralded as proof of Ian Smith's desire to create a co-equal bi-racial society. In actuality, the decision was reached only after the strength of the insurgent forces had increased to a point that the principally European-manned army was in danger of being overrun.

The Salisbury government never retreated from its desire to retain as much European domination of the country as was possible. Throughout the 1960's and early 1970's it refused to consider a negotiated settlement to its political status. The white minority could never have imagined the depth and conviction of the blacks to have "their" nation returned to them. Even when Bishop Muzorewa assumed power in 1979 and the state of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia was formed, the white minority controlled the key element to power – the Security Forces. Any effort to reach a settlement within the government, or a racial compromise within the security forces only surfaced when the story of Rhodesia was in its final chapter. The blacks were aware of the inevitable outcome and were unwilling to accept anything other than "their" own nation – Zimbabwe.

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- [4](#) Keegan, World Armies, pp. 587-593.
- [5](#) Keegan, World Armies, pp. 587-590.
- [6](#) "Rhodesia", Deadline Data on World Affairs, 1 October, 1979, pp. 1-5.
- [7](#) Captain James K. Bruton, Jr., USA, "Counterinsurgency in Rhodesia," The Military Review, Vol. LIX, March 1979, pp. 26-39.
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- [9](#) Captain M.L.M. Blackman, Fighting Forces of Rhodesia, (Salisbury, CentAfrican Publications, 1978), pp. 4-11.
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- [14](#) Bruton, Counterinsurgency, p. 33.
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- [17](#) Keegan, World Armies, p. 589
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- [20](#) Robert K. Brown, "The Black Devils", Soldier of Fortune, January 1979, pp. 38-43
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- [22](#) Moore, Rhodesia, p. 132-136
- [23](#) Daly, Selous, p. 14
- [24](#) Daly, Selous, p. 14
- [25](#) Daly, Selous, p. 14
- [26](#) Moore, Rhodesia, p. 127
- [27](#) Daly, Selous, p. 102
- [28](#) Bruton, Counterinsurgency, p. 33

[29](#) Moore, Rhodesia, pp. 148-151

[30](#) Blackman, Fighting Forces, pp. 19-29

[31](#) Bruton, Counterinsurgency, p. 33

[32](#) Blackman, Fighting Forces, pp. 19-29

[33](#) Blackman, Fighting Forces, p. 45

[34](#) Blackman, Fighting Forces, pp. 49-57

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