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The Editor, *Scientia Militaria*, Faculty of Military Science (SA Military Academy),
Stellenbosch University, Private Bag X2, Saldanha 7395, South Africa

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Editorial

From a defence and security point of view, the first half of 2023 continued to be overshadowed by the ongoing Russo–Ukrainian War, which has now moved into its second year. In essence, the war in Ukraine began in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine and supported separatist rebels in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. The conflict escalated into a full-scale war, with both sides engaging in military action and suffering significant casualties. However, in February 2022, there was a significant escalation of the conflict when Russia launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, which was met with fierce resistance from the Ukrainian military. The fighting caused widespread destruction and displacement, with many civilians fleeing their homes and even the country. Throughout the following months, the conflict continued to intensify, with both sides suffering heavy losses, specifically during the major fighting around Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Mariupol and most recently Bakhmut. The Ukrainian military continues to receive significant support from Western countries, including military equipment and training, which helps to boost their capabilities, performance and resolve on the battlefield. International condemnation of Russian actions remains widespread, specifically from Western countries, with several countries enforcing sanctions on Russia. The conflict also continues to have vast geopolitical implications, with tensions continuing to rise between Russia and the West. As of May 2023, the situation in the region remains volatile, with no clear resolution in sight.

The ongoing Russo–Ukrainian War has caught the attention of military practitioners and scholars worldwide, as it offers valuable insights into the evolving nature of modern warfare and international relations. The war has also shed light on enduring superpower competition, hybrid or conventional warfare, force structure and deployment, defence policy, military alliances, doctrine, intelligence, and coalition operations. These issues remain pertinent, and will continue to generate academic interest regardless of the duration and outcome of the war.

Whilst the international geopolitical attention remains fixed on the events in Eastern Europe, the armed conflict that erupted in Sudan in April 2023 between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAA) of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has partly shifted the focus to Africa. The conflict started with a series of attacks by the RSF on key government infrastructure and buildings, followed by airstrikes, as well as artillery and gunfire reported across large parts of Sudan, including the capital city Khartoum. By the end of April, both Dagalo’s RSF and Fattah al-Burhan’s SAA claimed control over several critical government sites in Khartoum.

The escalating conflict between the RSF and the SAA has pushed Sudan towards a renewed civil war, particularly with several peace efforts failing after repeated violations of agreed-upon ceasefires between the opposing groups. Nationally, the sprawling conflict in Sudan has intensified the fragility of the state, leading to waves of displacement, deprivation, large-scale human suffering, and loss of life. However, regionally, the conflict has far-reaching consequences, including increased geopolitical instability in the already unstable Horn of Africa, compounded by a growing number of refugees seeking safety across the region. Currently, the situation in the area remains volatile, with no clear resolution in sight, and the stark possibility of a full-scale civil war that may erupt.

In Southern Africa, the focus is currently centred on the continuous operational deployment of Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Rwandan troops to the uncontrolled area of Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique. Their aim is to combat the insurgents linked to Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama (al-Shabaab). Despite the earlier successes of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) between October 2021 and January 2022, it appears that, during the latter half of 2022, the operational initiative has once again shifted in favour of the insurgents, leading to the extension of the SADC mission. Previously, the reduction in insurgent attacks allowed SAMIM to shift its focus from being a purely interventionist group to being a more complex and multidimensional peacekeeping force. This change in mandate necessitated reinforcement of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) contingent deployed to Mozambique as part of the regional task force, which previously consisted primarily of special forces. As a result, from May 2022 onward, elements of Combat Team Alpha were dispatched to the Mihluri Base in Macomia in northern Mozambique to assist in countering the Islamic insurgency.

However, despite these advancements, critical issues – such as post-conflict reconstruction and development, the restoration and maintenance of law and order, the provision of essential services, and addressing the root causes of the insurgency – have not received sufficient attention in public and academic discussions. Additionally, despite an increase in the number of forces in the SAMIM mission, the security situation in Cabo Delgado does not appear to have stabilised in the first half of 2023, with periodic insurgent attacks and outbreaks of violence. In fact, the larger issues of peacebuilding and stabilisation remain wanting. The SAMIM forces too appear to be underfunded and lacking the necessary aerial assets and military equipment to conduct fire-force and hot-pursuit missions as and when required. Moreover, the military operating environment in northern Mozambique proves extremely challenging to conduct counterinsurgency operations and, in fact, allows Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama fighters to exploit the harsh climate and terrain in their conduct of the insurgency successfully. The deployment of South African troops as part of the SAMIM mission also continues to stimulate debate in academic and military circles and provides a valuable perspective to explore topics such as doctrine, force structure and design, military operations, defence policy, and alliances.

In this issue of *Scientia Militaria*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 2023, the articles consider both historic and contemporary issues associated with war and conflict, as well as defence and security-related matters. As always, it is trusted that these articles will provide key insights and act as a source of influence for individuals involved in the broader ambit of military planning, operations, management, and higher education.



The article by Theo Neethling, from the University of the Free State, reports on the role of the infamous Wagner Group as a foreign policy instrument of the Russian government on the African continent. The article specifically presents an analysis of the activities of the Wagner Group in four African countries, namely Libya, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali. Neethling argues that the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, has become a significant tool in the Kremlin's foreign policy arsenal. In fact, he states that it can be seen as a quasi-state actor and a proxy institution for the Russian government. With a global presence, the operations of the Wagner Group are the subject of controversy, especially on the African continent. Russian interest in Africa is primarily to expand its geopolitical influence and counter Western powers. Of note is that operations by the Wagner Group are carried out in fragile African states with abundant resources, often in the midst of conflict or insecurity.

In his article, Joseph Adebayo, from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, explores the 20-year military involvement of the United States of America in Afghanistan to proffer possible lessons for the involvement of the South African government in countering the current Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama insurgency in Mozambique. In mid-2021, the South African government dispatched troops from the SANDF to the troubled Northern Province of Mozambique as part of a Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional force to counter the insurgent threat in the country. It is noteworthy that this deployment occurred around the same time that the United States completed its withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan after twenty years of military involvement. Afghanistan subsequently descended into chaos, with the Taliban taking over the government, leading to a renewed discussion on the viability of military interventions and so-called "stability operations". Various reasons have been put forward for the perceived failure of America in Afghanistan, including the policymakers' inability to comprehend the role of ethnicity, religion, and tribalism in conflict dynamics. Although the socio-political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural contexts of the SA intervention in Mozambique differ from those of the United States in Afghanistan, Adebayo shows that there are lessons that South Africa could learn to avoid similar pitfalls.

The article by Leon Steyn, from Stellenbosch University, aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the first permanent appointment of women in the South African Navy (SAN) in 1972 and 1973. Steyn argues that the service of women in the SAN can be divided into three distinct periods. The first of these was the service of the so-called Swans with the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War, followed by the service of women in the Navy's Permanent Force with the South African Defence Force (SADF) since 1972, and lastly, after the establishment of the SANDF, their service with the SAN since 1994. While the first and last eras have been well studied, the second has been largely neglected in academic writing. This marked an important milestone in women's service in a permanent capacity, and led to their expanded utilisation in later years. Steyn utilises both archival sources and oral history to offer a balanced view of the experiences, challenges and, particularly, the utilisation of women in the SAN during the early and mid-1970s.



In their article, Magdeline Alcock and Jacqueline Wolvaardt, both from the University of Pretoria, report on the perceived barriers affecting adherence to healthy eating and exercise guidelines among obese active-duty military personnel of the SANDF. They show that, according to the World Health Organization, the accumulation of excessive or disproportionate body fat impairs health, and is defined as overweight and obesity. The South African military community, like the general population, is susceptible to the consequences of overweight and obesity. Alcock and Wolvaardt show that obesity directly influences military recruitment and operational readiness as it affects the physical fitness, overall health, and ability of members to perform their duties optimally. The South African Military Health Services (SAMHS) employs a multidisciplinary approach to treat and prevent obesity and related conditions. The authors show that, identifying perceived barriers to physical activity and healthy eating within the military environment could help to develop effective programmes to address weight management and mitigate the health consequences of obesity.

In his article, Henning van Aswegen, an independent researcher and author, discusses the infamous case of Dieter Felix Gerhardt – the accused and convicted Russian spy. Van Aswegen proposes that Dieter Felix Gerhardt, a naval officer stationed in Simon's Town, South Africa, was a paid agent working for the Russian Military Intelligence Service, *Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije* from within the SADF. However, this assertion could not be accepted as true without scientific investigation and analysis through a case study. The author thus approached the case study on Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr from the perspective of intelligence studies, and intelligence terminology and nomenclature are used throughout to make sense thereof.

In the final article, Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju, from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, analyses corruption as a major threat to Nigeria's internal security. While prior research has explored the various aspects of corruption and its effect on security in Nigeria, Yagboyaju focuses on analysing specific forms of misconduct within the Army and Prison Services – two security agencies under the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior, respectively. Although both agencies fall in the military and paramilitary categories, their roles overlap with other security forces, such as the police. The author employs a combination of secondary data sources for the conceptual and theoretical framework, and primary data from event analysis, particularly from public hearings concerning the chosen security agencies in Nigeria. Using a combination of the structural theory and ecological approach as an analytic frame, he reveals that corruption is widespread in multiple sectors of the internal security architecture of Nigeria.

A selection of book reviews by Johnny O'Neil, Alan Nelson, Marno Swart, Godfrey Ramuhala and Phumza Mboobo concludes this issue of *Scientia Militaria*.

The Editors

Evert Kleynhans  & Anri Delport 

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Russian Para-Military Operations in Africa: The Wagner Group as a De Facto Foreign Policy Instrument

Theo Neethling¹ 

*Department of Political Studies and Governance
University of the Free State*

Abstract

As a Russian private military company, the Wagner Group has become an increasingly significant instrument in the Kremlin's foreign policy toolkit. Wagner can even be described as a quasi-state actor and a proxy institution of the Russian state. It has a footprint across the globe, but its operations have especially been mired in controversy on the African continent. In Africa, Russia has sought to expand its geo-political influence and accordingly challenges Western influence on the continent. What is of particular interest is that Wagner's operations are conducted in resource-rich and fragile African states where insecurity or conflict prevails. In view of the above, the study on which this article reports, examined the Wagner Group as a foreign policy instrument of the Russian government. The discussion commences with a background section on instruments of foreign policy, followed by an overview of Wagner's activities worldwide, and particularly in Africa. Wagner's operations in four African states are specifically analysed, namely Libya, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali.

Keywords: Wagner Group, Russian Foreign Policy, Private Military Company, Mercenaries.

Introduction

In a relatively short time, the Wagner Group has emerged and established itself as arguably the Russian Federation's (hereafter Russia) most (in)famous private military company (PMC). Wagner is well known in the international community for providing security to pro-Russian role players in several conflict zones across the globe. For some time, the Russian government officially denied that Wagner exists but, in fact, its close ties with the Kremlin as well as the military and intelligence services of Russia have been an open secret. As a PMC – or mercenary enterprise – Wagner offers security services to customers in areas of conflict and insecurity.²

According to Gagaridis,³ the Wagner Group is actually a conglomerate of firms with security-focused entities, but also entities involved in mining and energy ventures. It controls individual firms, which operate in synergy. Its ownership is linked to Yevgeny



Prigozhin, a wealthy Russian businessman with close ties to the Kremlin and President Vladimir Putin. This puts Wagner in a position where its leadership has access to Putin and the Moscovian political elites; hence, as a PMC, it exerts far more political influence in international relations than probably any of the other PMCs. Of importance – from a scholarly point of view – is that Wagner’s military endeavours speak of significant overlap between public and private interests, and the way Wagner operates around the world makes it an important actor in the conduct of Russian foreign policy.

What makes Russian foreign policy and Wagner’s activities in Africa particularly controversial is that Wagner is regularly appearing as a de facto non-official foreign policy instrument, more often than not facilitating and seeking access to resources in African states. Singh⁴ correctly points out that the most controversial dimension of Russia’s re-engagement with the African continent relates to the many reports and concerns expressed by international organisations, scholars, and investigative journalists on the activities of the Wagner Group as a Russian quasi-private military.

Of course, Africa is not the only theatre of operations where Wagner has been active in recent years. Wagner’s international footprint is well documented in international conflicts, specifically in Crimea, Syria, and Yemen, and most recently also for its involvement in the Russian war in Ukraine. In recent times, Wagner’s footprint in Africa literally touched countries across the African continent, most notably Libya, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Madagascar.

In view of the above, the study on which this article is based, examined the Wagner Group as a foreign policy instrument of the Russian government. Immediately following this introduction, the focus of the discussion turns to instruments of foreign policy, after which the presence and activities of the Wagner Group worldwide and in Africa, in particular, will be under review. The extent to which Russia is utilising Wagner to pursue its strategic ends globally – and particularly on the African continent – is also considered.

Background and Theoretical Perspectives: Instruments of Foreign Policy

Du Plessis⁵ explains that the foreign policy of a country can be implemented by various instruments or techniques. Traditionally, there are at least three categories of foreign policy instruments, namely the political, economic, and military instruments. Sometimes, a fourth instrument is mentioned in the literature, namely the psychological instrument.

Firstly, the political instrument or technique refers to diplomacy. Diplomacy can be defined as the act of working and negotiating with representatives of foreign nations to reach agreement on future rules or issues, involving the development of conventions, treaties, accords, and alliances.⁶ As a result, diplomacy is considered the most direct instrument of foreign policy, and is practiced by diplomats who are mandated to act on behalf of their governments or states as legitimate and recognised political entities. Diplomacy may also be used in support of other instruments of foreign policy and, depending on the need it could serve as an instrument of persuasion or coercion. As an instrument of persuasion, it could serve as a technique to advance arguments and suggest concessions, or it could



assist in adjusting and modifying positions on issues. As an instrument of coercion, diplomacy could be used to apply diplomatic sanctions or forms of coercive measures.⁷

Secondly, economic instruments have gained importance in the contemporary globalising world. States could use foreign aid to achieve their foreign policy objectives, such as assisting other countries to stimulate or achieve economic growth, or building relationships with other nations by addressing issues of humanitarian concern. This could involve foreign military aid, such as augmenting other nations' supply of military equipment and related technological capabilities. Otherwise, states could apply sanctions in an effort to change the behaviour of other states, or to express dislike for a particular behaviour, or to limit opportunities for such behaviour – or even to discourage other states from acting likewise. Typical techniques include trade embargoes, arms embargoes, asset freezes, and travel restrictions.⁸

The psychological instrument of foreign policy is a more indirect means of state action, aimed at the leanings and orientations of states or their leaders. This usually pertains to some form of propaganda, but could also involve the subversion of a target state. Socio-cultural exchanges are further closely linked to the psychological instrument, although such actions are sometimes considered a separate category and forming part of the propaganda–public diplomacy nexus.⁹

Lastly, the military instrument of foreign policy involves the use of armed force. The application of armed force involves the application of hard power in foreign relations; thus, involving the use of militaries by states to influence the behaviour of especially weaker nations, or involving themselves directly in the affairs of other states.¹⁰ As much as the military instrument is associated with the coercive use of armed force in a situation of conventional or unconventional war, it could also involve military techniques short of war. This could typically be military threats, military posturing, military interventions, military aid and assistance, or even the use of militaries in multinational peacekeeping operations.¹¹

One issue that is mostly or often overlooked in textbooks on the matter of instruments of foreign policy relates to the roles of mercenaries or PMCs. Through the ages, mercenaries have been known as soldiers of fortune, individuals who seek opportunities to engage in war or conflicts for personal gain. They are not members of any formal militaries but seek to sell their military skills to the highest bidder. They are not enjoying recognition as legitimate combatants and therefore do not enjoy the same rights as members of formal militaries. This effectively prevents them from enjoying the same rights under international law as service personnel from formal militaries.¹²

Mercenaries providing military services have been prevalent in armed conflict during the 1970s, mainly as covert mercenary activity. In more recent years, especially during the 1990s, the emergence of highly professional PMCs offering their services openly – sometimes using websites for marketing – has become a regular phenomenon in the international community. Practically, PMCs have been active in several cases of armed conflict, such as Iraq, Colombia, and Afghanistan, where they have been contracted by governments for responsibilities ranging from training security forces in Iraq and civilian



police in Bosnia and Kosovo, to flying helicopter gunships in Colombia, and protecting high-level political leaders, such as former Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai.¹³

In Africa, mercenaries emerged as a phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s at a time when many newly independent African states and governments were targets of both external and internal destabilisation attempts. Many leaders or governments therefore turned to mercenaries to assist them in situations of state or regime insecurity, and this continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁴

Given the political need and requirements on the part of many states to use mercenaries, the latter eventually became known as PMCs or private military contractors. This means that, while PMCs are functionally mercenary armies, they are not considered as such, as they are – often or mostly – not employed proactively in front-line combat. However, as Aas¹⁵ remarks, ‘this exercise in semantic acrobatics does not change the fact that private military contractors do everything that conventional mercenaries would’. What makes PMCs controversial – especially on the African continent – is that they are contracted by actors, ranging from states to private firms, who are often involved in extractive industries or activities. They provide a variety of services, such as supporting regular armies militarily but also taking part in operations far beyond classic mercenary activities, such as securing humanitarian missions and protecting mining installations.¹⁶

Most important, from a scholarly point of view, is that PMCs have been on the rise and are increasingly involved in conflicts and various other operations internationally, especially since the 1990s, as several governments of the world’s major powers are known to have outsourced their involvement in armed conflicts. What is of special interest is that the proliferation of PMCs has coincided with a reduction of conventional militaries in several international conflicts. In the case of Afghanistan, for instance, the United States notably pulled out most of its troops as the conflict stabilised, while at the same time, PMCs employed by the US government and involved in Afghanistan increased considerably. Statistically, the ratio of US military personnel to private contractors tripled between 2009 and 2016.¹⁷

Currently, a most notable and controversial PMC in the international community is arguably the Wagner Group. Wagner is known for its close interactions and ties with the Russian government but, apart from Russia, Wagner also has offices in Argentina and Hong Kong.¹⁸ There can be no doubt that in Africa – and other parts of the world – Wagner functions as a branch of the Kremlin’,¹⁹ in other words, as a hard and soft para-military instrument of Russian foreign policy – albeit non-official and unconventional. Before this is explored in more detail, the areas of Russian–African relations need to be outlined and understood.

The Main Focus Areas of Interest in Russian Foreign Relations with Africa

Gurganus and Rumer²⁰ posit that contemporary Russian foreign policy on the world stage displays three long-standing drivers. The most important driver is Russia’s quest



for strategic depth and the need for buffers against external threats, especially in view of the absence of natural protective barriers between Russia and its neighbouring countries. A second driver is the Russian ambition for great power status, as mentioned above. The third is the complex relationship Russia has with the West, which involves both rivalry and forms of co-operation. The latter two drivers affect Moscow's relations with the African continent.

Olivier and Suchkov²¹ explain that the demise of the Soviet Union towards the end of the Cold War brought an end to the special relationship that existed between Russia and a substantial number of African states over several decades. This brought an end to the Cold War days when the Soviet Union was an ideological role model and political ally of many African states as they were moving to self-determination and freedom from the West since the end of the 1950s. Since 1991, Russia's global power and superpower profile decreased substantially, and Russia's international relations ended in a much-reduced Eurasian role, mainly focusing on the 'near abroad'. When Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency in 2000, much had changed: firstly, in terms of Russia making an effort to reclaim a Russian leadership role in world politics; and secondly, various African states growing politically and economically more stable. A number of Russian companies started to do business in Africa, and this time around, relations were focusing on economics and trade rather than ideology. At the same time, both Russia and Africa ideologically shared a common cause in their rejection of Western hegemony in world economic affairs and politics. For Russia, specifically, it was important to pursue a new and more integrated engagement strategy in doing business with Africa as part of its global international relations.

Apart from Russia's new role perception and global aspirations, and a promising "new dawn" in many African states, Moscow was also inspired to re-build its relations with Africa after witnessing the evolving and growing roles of China and India in Africa. This inspired Russia not to be side-lined but instead to buy into the new economic opportunities offered by many African states and forging partnerships with a view to ensuring access to the abundant natural resources on the continent.²² This has paved the way for a rapid expansion of the Russian footprint on the African continent, growing in parallel with burgeoning engagement and related investment by China, as well as a realisation of Africa's economic potential by several Western states and non-state actors. Today, Russia has a clear footprint in Africa. Relationships exist or have emerged in recent years in countries throughout the continent. These relationships involve especially diplomatic ties, trade and commercial links, military co-operation agreements relating to arms sales, and co-operation in the field of energy, including nuclear technology.²³

Siegle²⁴ summarises Russia's interests and foreign relations with Africa as follows:

Africa, with its weak governments, abundant natural resources, colonial legacies, proximity to Europe, and fifty-four votes at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, provides Russia an easy and attractive theatre where it can advance its interests with limited financial or political costs.



Perhaps the three most important issues in relation to Russia's strategic interest in Africa are the following:

- The international community has witnessed the return of Russia as a significant global actor, and under President Putin, the projection of power is a hallmark of the Kremlin's foreign policy. This makes solid relations with African states imperative, as the Africa Group at the UN General Assembly is made up of 54 African Union member states;
- The African continent is rich in mineral resources, some of which are not found in significant or sufficient volumes in Russia;
- Africa is a growing market for various products ranging from foodstuffs and technology to weapons and energy.²⁵ Between 2015 and 2019, Russia has entered into 19 military collaboration agreements with African states, largely concerning weapon sales.²⁶

As far as mineral resources are concerned, Russia – like China, for instance – covets many of Africa's raw materials. This has been clear from projects in countries such as the DRC and the CAR where Russian companies have scaled up their activities relating to the mining of mineral resources such as coltan, cobalt, gold, and diamonds. Zimbabwe is another example where Russia managed to enter into a joint venture concerning the development of one of the world's largest reserves of the platinum group metals. Similarly, in Angola, Russia managed to enter into a deal that provides the Russian economy with a production base outside Russia.²⁷

Furthermore, Russia is currently the largest supplier of weapons to Africa. The most recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) points out that between 2017 and 2021, African states received most of their weapons from Russia. In fact, Russian weapons accounted for 44% of imports. Russian sales were followed by the United States with 17%, China with 10%, and France with 6%.²⁸

In Russian foreign policy, the Wagner Group 'has become an increasingly important instrument in Russia's foreign policy toolkit, especially in Africa where Moscow has sought to expand its influence and challenge the West'.²⁹ It has grown relationships with African governments across the continent – relationships in which two matters are of special interest, namely the trading of military and security services in exchange for mining rights and concessions, and access to political elites. This is reviewed in the section below with special reference to the following four African states as case studies: Libya, the CAR, Sudan, and Mali.

The Rise and Operations of the Wagner Group

The Wagner Group is certainly not the only Russian PMC. In fact, Russian proxy warfare strategy long predates Vladimir Putin, which means that the contemporary Russian PMCs did not start with Wagner or its titular head, Yevgeny Prigozhin.³⁰ Several other Russian PMCs have operated abroad, notably the E.N.O.T. Corporation in Syria and the Feraks group in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Sri Lanka, as well as the Antiterror-Orel Group. According to Rác,³¹ Wagner may appear to be a Russian business company, but



both its management and operations are deeply connected to and intertwined with the Russian military and intelligence community. To this end, Wagner can be viewed as a proxy institution of the Russian state rather than a PMC selling its services on the open markets. Wagner is therefore a useful foreign policy instrument for the Kremlin to extend its global influence.

The Wagner Group clearly operates as a Russian “premier firm” to the extent that it is sometimes called “Putin’s private army”. It is believed that Wagner originated around 2010 in Moscow during a Russian General Staff meeting, but emerged publicly circa 2014. It was founded by Dmitri Utkin, a retired Russian intelligence operative, and is financed by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian oligarch. Utkin is believed to be a staunch admirer of Hitler and Nazi Germany, and apparently decided on the name Wagner in honour of Richard Wagner, who was Hitler’s favourite composer.³²

RÁCZ³³ offers a somewhat different explanation by stating that Utkin established the Wagner Group when he quit the Russian Moran Security Group (another Russian PMC) in 2014, and named the company after his old intelligence call sign “Vagner”. Nevertheless, it cannot be verified whether Utkin was a frontman in the establishment of Wagner or whether he indeed initiated its establishment. What is more certain is that Prigozhin is the funder and driving force behind Wagner and is internationally known as “Putin’s chef”, with past connections to organised crime. Apart from Wagner, Prigozhin was also identified as the funder of the highly controversial Internet Research Agency (IRA), the Russian Internet troll farm that was implicated in meddling in the 2016 US presidential election process.³⁴

In October 2022, Prigozhin acknowledged for the first time that he was behind the founding of the Wagner Group. While he previously denied any connection with Wagner, he eventually disclosed in a statement that his “group of patriots” was formed in May 2014. He also stated that he was proud of his support to ‘heroes who defended the Syrian people, other people of Arab countries, destitute Africans and Latin Americans’.³⁵

Wagner’s first activities were recorded when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and shortly thereafter, its operatives appeared in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. Wagner has also been active in Syria since 2015 where it made international headlines in 2018 when it launched an attempt to assault the Conoco gas plant in the Deir ez-Zor province, an act that brought it into direct military conflict with US Special Operations forces in the area.³⁶ Wagner has evolved over time, and today it functions very much like a private contractor for the Kremlin in several countries across the globe, including Eastern Europe (Ukraine), the Middle East (Syria), South America (Venezuela) and Africa (notably Libya, Sudan, the CAR, Mali, and Mozambique). In recent years, Wagner was accused of targeting civilians, leading mass executions, and looting private property, but the group also acted in the role of rendering security advisory services to various governments, such as Sudan and Mali. Wagner is also active in Russia’s war against Ukraine where it renders support to Russian troops in the eastern part. Interestingly, Wagner’s forces have increasingly been recruited from within Russian prisons.³⁷



While the Wagner Group with its estimated 2 200 to 3 000 personnel³⁸ has operated in several countries worldwide in recent years, its presence and activities have been most visible – and arguably most controversial – on the African continent.

Libya

Libya is a potential energy giant in Africa and located on the European doorstep. It has massive oil reserves, boasting no less than 39% of the oil reserves on the African continent of which more than 60% is exported to European countries, especially Italy, Spain, and Germany. This makes Libya a country of considerable geo-political significance in North Africa.³⁹ In addition, the strategic location of Libya on the Mediterranean Coast and its oil are obviously of importance to the Kremlin.⁴⁰

Libya plunged into turmoil in the aftermath of a NATO intervention in 2011 when it backed an uprising that toppled Muammar Gaddafi as leader. Gaddafi was later killed. It could be argued that the elimination of Gaddafi and the chaos that followed his death opened the door for Wagner in Libya. Since the political departure of Gaddafi the country suffered the political division of two governments and two centres of power: one in the capital, Tripoli, and the other in Sirte. Both governments were supported by rival militias and foreign powers. The Tripoli government was supported and propped up by the UN while the rival Sirte government was led by the influential military commander, Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter. Hifter was backed by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and together these forces launched an attack with the aim of capturing the Tripoli government. The attack was unsuccessful after Turkey and thousands of Syrian mercenaries stepped in on the side of the UN-supported government. In October 2020, a ceasefire between the belligerents paved the way for a transitional government in 2021. Efforts to unify the country coincided with the scheduling of elections towards the end of the year, but the elections never materialised with a continuation of the two rival governments and their two respective prime ministers. The ceasefire provided for a withdrawal of all foreign fighters and mercenaries, but little if anything in this regard materialised. What is of special interest to the topic under review is Wagner's support to Hifter in Sirte and nearby Jufra, further backed by Syrian combatants.⁴¹

Russian mercenary activity was first detected in Libya in early 2017 when a demining contract was awarded to the Russian military consulting company, the RSB-Group, in the port complex of Benghazi by the Libyan National Army (LNA) under the command of Field Marshal Hifter. One year later, Wagner appeared during an LNA offensive to retake the city of Derna, a stronghold of Islamist militias and the Islamic State in eastern Libya. Shortly thereafter, Hifter met with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Yevgeny Prigozhin, and since 2019, the presence of about 300 mercenaries from Wagner in a base in Benghazi started to surface in operations of the LNA.⁴²

Since its entrance into combat operations, Wagner's presence grew to roughly 2 000 combatants, including both Russian fighters and mercenaries recruited from Syria. Hifter's efforts to seize Tripoli in May 2020 as the institutional centre of the country however failed, mainly as a result of an intervention by Turkey. Some Wagner fighters were then



pulled out of Libya to fight on Ukrainian battlefields but many others were redeployed to oil facilities and nearby military bases in both the central and southwestern parts of Libya. The aim was to fortify positions and resist attacks from the Tripoli government and Turkish forces as well as to ensure a chokehold on the most strategic Libyan oil production and export facilities. The Libyan National Oil Corporation stated in July 2020 that Wagner exercised control over the production of the largest oil field in the country, the Sharara oil field in southwestern Libya, as well as the Ras Lanuf petrochemical complex, the Zillah oil field, the Es Sider port, and the Zuetina port. Wagner also exercised de facto control over an important network of military and air bases from Qardabiya near Sirte in the northern parts to Brak near Sabha in central Libya. Wagner even deployed heavy air support in the form of highly potent MiG-29 and Su-24 fighter aircraft from Russia with a view to establishing air superiority. At the time, Wagner had managed to dig itself into “a prime position to intervene in and influence Libyan oil production” in the country’s southwestern oil fields and the Oil Crescent.⁴³ What is of the utmost importance to understand is that the Russian petroleum giant, Gazprom EP International, considers Libya a key area in its operations in North Africa.⁴⁴

It should be noted that the situation in Libya and Wagner’s operations became a matter of serious concern to the UN. In 2022, a UN expert report stated in no uncertain terms that Libya is facing “a serious security threat from foreign fighters and PMCs, especially Russia’s Wagner Group which has violated international law”.⁴⁵

In a submission that served before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament, the following was stated about Wagner:⁴⁶

- The Russian government uses the Wagner Group as an instrument to achieve certain strategic objectives in Libya relating to its geostrategic positioning in North Africa;
- Wagner initially deployed in support of joint Russian, UAE, and Saudi strategic priorities, as well as those of the Libyan host, Marshal Hifter and the LNA. In this regard, Wagner is understood to have been funded by the United Arab Emirates and possibly Saudi Arabia, who are, ironically, US allies;
- Since the failed attempt to seize the Tripoli government, coordination with the LNA, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi diminished, after which Wagner started to operate as an independent actor in Libya. This boils down to Wagner acting as an agent at the service of Russia’s strategic priorities, and being suspected of being on the Kremlin’s payroll;
- Wagner’s footprint in Libya has evolved over the years with an ongoing presence in the country relating to specialised military operations, physical security provision at Libya’s oil facilities, political advisory services, and social media-based influence operations.

One of the key conclusions in the submission to the British Foreign Affairs Committee⁴⁷ is that the Kremlin uses Wagner in Libya because “it reduces the economic burden of military engagement, expends less political capital, and decreases blowback from operations due



to plausible deniability'. This therefore helps Russia to steer clear from directly engaging with other foreign militaries in Libya in an overt or traditional manner, and accordingly, lowering the risk at political level, and probably decreasing the chances of counterattacks from countries such as Turkey, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

Central African Republic

The Wagner Group emerged in the CAR in late 2017, and reflects a case of resource concessions for protection and training similar to other cases in Africa. Initially, Wagner appeared as a PMC rendering military advisory services to the CAR head of state, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, but its activities had gone far beyond advisory services. It was primarily about the facilitation of weapons shipment and military training – all in exchange for diamond- and gold-mining rights as well as geological exploration.⁴⁸

According to Serwat et al.,⁴⁹ Wagner's operations followed the signing of an agreement between the CAR and Russia on Russian military support and weapons in exchange for mining concessions. This paved the way for Wagner military instructors to enter the CAR with large numbers of weapons after the UN Security Council had decided to waive an earlier weapons embargo on the CAR. Wagner did not engage in any combat operations at that point, but international concerns were soon raised about Wagner's alleged involvement in human rights abuses early in 2019. Following these concerns, the United Nations decided to launch an investigation into a case of alleged torture committed by Wagner operatives of a person who was accused of belonging to an armed movement.

The dynamics in the CAR involving Wagner then changed dramatically in 2020 when the security situation in the country deteriorated significantly – transforming from rendering support and training to a direct combat role. This happened shortly before the elections in late December when a coalition of militias led by former President François Bozizé launched an offensive with the aim to overthrow President Touadéra and his government. Bozizé's offensive followed a rejection of his presidential candidacy by the Constitutional Court, finding that Bozizé failed to meet "good morality" requirements, and citing an international arrest warrant for alleged war crimes on his part.⁵⁰

The Russian presence in the CAR was at first welcomed by the CAR population, but their popularity waned after reports increasingly indicated severe human rights violations against civilians, as reported by the UN. Following serious incidents of human rights abuses, Yevgeni Prigozhin funded the making of a controversial film depicting Wagner operatives as heroes in the CAR. However, efforts to portray Wagner as kind and generous, and pointing fingers at French and other Western advisors could not divert the attention on Wagner as a central player in the dire and worsening human rights situation in the CAR. The International Crisis Group and the fortnightly newsletter, *Africa Confidential*, also reported that Wagner has not only targeted CAR citizens from the Fulani and Gbaya ethnic groups – Bozizé is a member of the latter – but also Muslims. As far as the latter is concerned, some rebel groups are predominantly Muslim.⁵¹



With its ability to influence political decisions in the CAR, Wagner has practically become the vanguard of a notable and major Russian push into the central parts of the African continent. Increasingly, Touadéra found himself in the dilemma of being heavily reliant on Wagner and the Kremlin for regime security, which had damaged his relations with Western countries, particularly France. Relations with the United States had also turned sour as Prigozhin was cited for his alleged role in attempting to influence the 2016 US elections. Western disapproval of Prigozhin is also linked to the fact that the CAR relies primarily on Western actors for its annual state budget. As far as the CAR is concerned, Wagner's presence is not acknowledged by the government and there is no contract involving Wagner, but few informed observers doubt that an arrangement exists between the two parties. There is also no evidence of remuneration, which fuels allegations about Wagner's compensation in the form of mining concessions. In fact, a UN Panel of Experts considered Wagner and the Russian mining company, Lobaye Invest SARLU¹ – which is involved in gold and diamond mining rights in the CAR – as 'interconnected'. Moreover, the International Crisis Group has linked Lobaye Invest SARLU directly to Prigozhin.⁵² The export of diamonds from the CAR to Brussels has recently been in the spotlight with a report published by *De Standaard*, a Flemish daily newspaper. It is alleged that Wagner has set up a front company in the CAR, called Diamville, through which diamonds to the value of €132 000 have been exported to the Belgium capital. Furthermore, it was reported in *The Guardian*, Belgium imported €1,2 billion worth of Russian diamonds in the first eight months of 2022. Allegations of direct or indirect diamond imports from Wagner have however been denied by the Antwerp World Diamond Centre, the official mouthpiece of the Antwerp diamond sector, stating instead that Diamville deals exclusively with traders in Dubai.⁵³ In this context, African Defense Forum Staff⁵⁴ summarises their view of Wagner's involvement in the CAR as follows:

Securing lucrative gold, diamond and uranium concessions has been a high priority of Russian operatives in the CAR. With no government accounting of payments to Russian trainers or PMCs, experts believe mining rights are given in exchange for mercenary service.

In a recent report authored by the European Investigative Collaborations (EIC), a transnational investigative journalism project, it has been claimed that the Wagner Group is also involved in the forestry business in the CAR. According to the report, a company called Bois Rouge ("Redwood Trees") received a permit that gives Bois Rouge access to some of the largest undeveloped areas of rainforest in the world in the administrative area of Lobaye. Bois Rouge has been registered in the CAR since 2019, and is apparently headed by a local woman, but the EIC investigation revealed that Bois Rouge is more Russian than African. Pictures taken at the site also revealed the use of Russian equipment and many Caucasian men active in the area. The report also argues that, when the permit was issued to Bois Rouge in February 2021, military operations were conducted jointly by Wagner and CAR forces in several cities located in the Lobaye region to remove rebel armed groups.⁵⁵

¹ SARLU = single-member/one-person limited liability company



Against this background, some observers consider Wagner's operations in the CAR as primarily financial, as Russia is seeing Africa as 'a place to make money and explore new horizons'.⁵⁶ Faulkner⁵⁷ however points out that not all observers regard Wagner's operations as solely a case of generating profits or being strictly resource-oriented, but rather that these operations are linked to Russia's broader geopolitical activities to challenge the French government on the continent. What seems to be certain is the argument that the Russian state relies on Wagner and its networks as well as unconventional methods in the pursuit of its global strategic goals – all of which could be denied by the Kremlin should a political problem or controversy publicly arise.⁵⁸

Sudan

Singh⁵⁹ states that the presence of the Wagner Group in Sudan and the CAR can be regarded as noticeable cases of how Russian arms sales and related military support and the deployment of Wagner Group operatives are intertwined with mining operations. In the case of the CAR, this was primarily in the form of diamond mining, and in Sudan, in the form of gold mining. Wagner emerged as a foreign actor in Sudan in 2017, which coincided with a public confirmation by the Russian government that a meeting with then President Omar al-Bashir took place in Sochi. The bilateral discussions between the two countries culminated in several important agreements, providing for mining concessions, geological explorations, and oil and gas co-operations in Sudan, as well as plans to establish a Russian naval base in Port Sudan. Another notable agreement was that between the Sudanese Ministry of Minerals and a St Petersburg-based company, M-Invest, granting mining rights to M-Invest (and its subsidiaries) to explore gold in Sudan. Of interest in this regard, is that M-invest is owned and operated by Wagner's owner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, according to the US Treasury Department.⁶⁰

The above agreements are typical of the Wagner Group's contracting strategy in African states. In this regard, typical of Wagner's modus operandi, al-Bashir was provided with a portfolio of services, notably information operations, military and police training, and the transport of weapons. In 2019, Moscow publicly confirmed the work of Russian contractors in Sudan, indicating their activities as training Sudanese military and acting as law enforcement officers. Various media reports later linked Prigozhin and the Wagner Group to the violent suppression and discrediting of anti-government protestors who rose up against the al-Bashir regime. None of these efforts could however prevent the military coup that saw al-Bashir being removed from power in April 2019.⁶¹

Importantly, Sudan is the third-largest gold producer on the African continent, behind Ghana and South Africa, and this seems to primarily underlie the presence of Wagner in Sudan. In fact, all indications are that Wagner's activities in Sudanese gold-mining areas have increased in recent years. This should be understood in the context of sanctions implemented against Russia on account of its war in Ukraine. What is also of interest is that General Mohamed "Hemetti" Hamdan Dagalo – one of the leading actors in the military coup that toppled al-Bashir in October 2021, and currently one of the richest people in Sudan after his forces took control of the gold mines in the Darfur area – visited Russia in February 2022.⁶²



In November 2022, the US-based non-profit Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) issued a report, alleging that the Wagner Group funnelled resources to the Sudanese regime in exchange for preferential access to the lucrative gold-mining industry in that country. Of interest is that all foreign mining companies operating in Sudan are obliged to grant the Sudanese government 30% of their shares, so that Sudan can benefit from all gold extraction. The notable exception is Prigozhin's mining operation, a subsidiary called Meroe Goldwas, which was established in 2017 when ties and co-operation between Russia and Sudan were actively solidified. Apart from waiving Meroe's 30%, al-Bashir also granted Meroe Goldwas exploration rights for another potential gold reserve.⁶³

As in other African states, the Wagner Group has been accused of gross human rights violations in Sudan. In fact, Sudanese miners have pointed fingers to Wagner for what they described as massacres along the border between South Darfur state and the CAR. In June 2022, the Darfur Bar Association (DBA) issued a statement that they have monitored Wagner in South Darfur, claiming that, at the time, they spotted Russian mercenaries in the streets and cafes of Um Dafuq, a village not far from traditional artisanal gold mines. They also claimed to have received testimony from relatives of people who were allegedly killed in South Darfur by Wagner operatives, although the killings appeared to be linked to raiding and looting rather than to securing and extracting natural resources. 'There are regular reports of attackers arriving by helicopter, killing artisanal goldminers and rebels, taking everything they can and then leaving,' according to Pauline Bax, deputy director of International Crisis Group's Africa programme. 'Sometimes they come back again a month or so later and do the same thing. It is nothing to do with securing a mining site.'⁶⁴

All in all, the Wagner Group still attracts much international attention, and its activities remain mired in controversy. Clearly, Wagner has become a significant foreign policy instrument in Sudan, also as a supporting actor in Russia's plans in eastern Sudan to build a naval base on the Red Sea relating to the hosting of its nuclear-powered warships. In the western parts of the country, Wagner has found a platform for its operations in neighbouring countries – and a possible source of uranium. Lastly, ever since the Sudanese military seized power in a coup in October 2021, Wagner has deepened its partnership with the new Sudanese leaders, notably General Mohamed Hamdan, the number two in Sudan's ruling Sovereign Council. Hamdan visited Moscow in February 2022 while Wagner is rendering military aid to Hamdan and effectively assisting the Sudanese security forces to suppress pro-democracy grass-roots activities.⁶⁵ All in all, one can concur with Singh⁶⁶ that, while arms sales or military services are the avenues for Russia's political and economic influence in Africa, mining deals, among others, are the result of transactional ties between Moscow and African states – and Wagner is indeed a key actor.

Mali

Mali gained independence in 1960, but France remained the country's preeminent international partner. Over the past decade, the security partnership between the two countries played out especially through counterterrorism operations against Islamist militants. However, this post-colonial relationship has been fraught with challenges, and



Maliens experienced the relationship as unilateral and a form of neo-colonialism. From its side, France paradoxically wanted to carry less of a military burden in the region but at the same time did not want to forfeit its political influence in Mali.⁶⁷

Mali is the Wagner Group's most recent military engagement in Africa. The Wagner Group appeared as a foreign actor in Mali at the end of 2021 following the *coup d'état* in the country in June 2021. Citing the coup, France reduced its military presence in Mali and, in doing so, also ended its joint counterinsurgency operations with the Malian state forces in February 2022,⁶⁸ although Parens⁶⁹ contends that Russia has strong-armed France as a key competitor out of Mali. Be that as it may, Issaev et al.⁷⁰ contend that field research indicates positive perceptions in Mali (and other West African nations) of the Russian return to Africa as well as the expansion of the Russian presence in the region in a security role in the fight against terrorism.

According to Parens,⁷¹ the Wagner Group pursued “the same playbook” in Mali that the contractor had used in the CAR and Sudan. This strategy relates to Wagner's typical response when African governments signal a need for security assistance and, in the case of Mali, there was a feeling that Western countries have not done enough to render assistance in the form of security co-operation and anti-terrorism operations in the region.

Geo-politically, Mali is located on a “fault line” between North and West Africa where religious and political divisions have fuelled a conflict since 2012. The government of Mali has been fighting an insurgency by fundamentalist Islamist movements, including a branch of Al Qaida and Ansar Dine. Since 2012, France has rendered military assistance to Mali against the insurgencies, known as Operation Serval and, subsequently, Operation Barkhane. France also became involved in the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which was established under UN Security Council Resolution 2391. None of these operations however managed to quell the insurgents, and in 2021, the Wagner Group entered the conflict dynamics in the country. Against this background, France started the withdrawal of its forces from the Sahel, and Russia thus effectively replaced France as the Malian government's principal security partner.⁷² Also noteworthy is the fact that the withdrawal of France from Mali followed political conflict between the two countries, which culminated in the expulsion of the French ambassador to Mali from the country while the Malian government also announced that it would no longer continue its long-term defence accords with France.⁷³

The Malian government's shift from its traditional security partners to the Wagner Group coincided with a scaling up of operations against Islamist militants in which Wagner played a significant role. On the downside – as in other conflicts in African states where Wagner became involved – there were many reports concerning deadly attacks on civilians in the regions of Mopti, Segou, Tombouctou, and Koulikoro. In fact, research pointed out that more than 70% of Wagner's operations have involved violence targeting civilians,⁷⁴ which also illustrates the Malian government's inability or unwillingness to ensure the protection of human rights.



From the above it is clear that the Wagner Group as Russia's most infamous PMC has been working to entrench itself in Mali as a key player in counterterrorism efforts in West Africa.⁷⁵ The number of Wagner operatives in Mali was recently estimated to be around 800 to 1 000. In addition to operations with the Malian armed forces against the Islamist militants, Faulkner⁷⁶ and also Doxsee et al.⁷⁷ expect Wagner to become involved in providing security for political elites and security services, such as training the army. Again, the same playbook as in other African states is expected to be employed with the gaining of access to geological exploration and mining rights in return for security services.

In the final analysis, Wagner's operations in Mali are indicative of Russia's geopolitical contest with the West. The vacuum left by the official withdrawal of France in Mali in February 2022, alongside several other European and Sahelian partner states that also withdrew from Mali, was swiftly filled by Wagner. Obviously, this was a serious political setback for the French government from a geo-strategic point of view, but these developments suited the coup leader and current president of Mali's transitional government, Colonel Assimi Goïta. It also opened the door for Wagner to present itself as a welcome alternative to Western security partners after the coups and instability in Mali were criticised by Western states. Moreover, the presence of Wagner does not pose any challenge to the country's military leadership who has continuously dishonoured agreements to facilitate the reinstatement of a civilian government. For the political elites in Mali, Russia's interest and related political and military involvement in the conflict dynamics, in fact, also presented an opportunity to move away from what they experienced as French neo-colonialism. By becoming heavily involved in counterterrorism operations, Wagner is now exercising considerable influence in a region that used to be 'France's highly valued cachet in the region'.⁷⁸

Evaluation and Conclusion

The Wagner Group is the most prominent Russian PMC and arguably one of the most controversial PMCs globally, if not the most controversial. It emerged during the conflict in Crimea in 2014, and since then, spread its footprint across the globe. As a relatively small PMC, it advances Russia's geopolitical ambitions worldwide – and in Africa in particular – although tension between Wagner and the Russian army in Ukraine over Wagner's prisoner recruitment scheme has also been reported early in 2023.⁷⁹

From the four countries under review in the above analysis, the following can be stated in conclusion:

- In Libya, the Russian government uses the Wagner Group as a foreign policy instrument to achieve certain strategic objectives relating to its geostrategic positioning in North Africa. Obviously, the fact that Libya is one of Africa's largest oil producers is an important driver in Russian involvement in Libya;
- In the CAR, the Russian presence in the country in the form of Wagner should be understood through the lens of regime insecurity and political instability. This has presented the political space for the Kremlin and also Wagner as a security actor to become involved in the CAR, seemingly motivated by the opportunity to



secure gold-and diamond-mining rights, but also by the pursuit of global strategic goals;

- In Sudan, Russian arms sales and military support in relation to regime insecurity likewise facilitated Wagner's deployment, while the operations of the PMCs have become highly intertwined with mining operations, primarily gold, in Africa's third-largest gold producer. Over and above mining concessions, geological explorations, and oil and gas co-operations are all, to some extent, underlying Russian drivers;
- In Mali, regime insecurity opened the door for the Kremlin and Wagner's subsequent entrance into the conflict dynamics, which, as in the case of Libya, seems to be motivated by Russia's geopolitical contest with the West – in this case, particularly challenging the French influence in West Africa.

In summary, from Wagner's role in these four countries – and other cases on the African continent not discussed in this article – it should be clear that Wagner has increasingly become a significant para-military instrument in Russia's foreign policy toolkit. This is especially the case in weak and fragile African states where Russia can expand its geopolitical influence. In fact, Wagner could even be described as a quasi-state actor or, at the very least, a frontline agent, which is functioning in close proximity to the Russian president and political elites. As an unconventional foreign policy instrument, Wagner offers the Kremlin the factor of so-called "plausible deniability". This means that the Russian government does not have to suffer any public fallout in relation to troop losses or other political and military embarrassments relating, for instance, to serious human rights violations on foreign soil.

Moreover, critical observers of Russia's contemporary African policy have for some time contended that Moscow's relations with African states are strongly motivated by the need to counter international isolation by the West. This has become of even greater importance since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the plunging of Europe into its biggest military conflict since World War II. Russia is furthermore criticised for a foreign policy in Africa that mostly deals with instruments of conflict rather than with development and peace. It is further argued that Russia is indirectly – through the Wagner Group as a proxy actor – propping up authoritarian rulers and regimes against domestic democratic resistance, often by way of security services rendered to elites. It should also be noted that most of Russia's African trade comes from arms sales.

Critics may rightly argue – or at the very least suspect – that the Kremlin is following a deliberate strategy with Wagner, one that produces a small foreign footprint and puts the Kremlin in a position to conduct its foreign policy in high-risk areas. Wagner is sometimes referred to as a foreign policy instrument of shadow soldiers in a versatile, cheap, and deniable package, the perfect instrument for a former superpower that is keen to re-establish itself as a superpower without being too assertive in the public eye, and accepting little or no responsibility for human rights issues.

Notwithstanding the fact that, for many years, official links have been denied by the Russian government, Moscow's de facto association with the Wagner Group obviously



does not help to link Russian foreign policy in Africa to sound democratic practices and good governance. It rather boils down to a case of pursuing sheer Russian national interest and the old notion of dogs of war involved in sinister operations on foreign soil. Moreover, ongoing reports that implicate Wagner in serious human rights violations – and even a massacre in the case of Mali – do not leave the critical observer of Russian ties with the African continent with the impression of accountability and transparency. Reports rather associate many of Russia’s foreign policy actions in Africa with dubious foreign policy practices in weak and fragile African states.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Theo Neethling holds a DLitt et Phil in International Politics through the University of South Africa and is Professor in the Department of Political Studies and Governance at the University of the Free State, South Africa. His research interests concern Africa's international relations, South Africa's foreign relations, security and politics in the African context, and African futures.
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South Africa's Military Deployment to Northern Mozambique: Lessons from the United States of America's (Mis)Adventure in Afghanistan

Joseph Olusegun Adebayo⁸⁰ 

*Journalism and Media Studies Department
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Cape Town, South Africa*

Abstract

In mid-2021, the government of South Africa deployed troops from the South African National Defence Force to the troubled Northern Province of Mozambique as part of a Southern African Development Community regional force to quell the threat posed by insurgents in the country. Poignantly, the deployment happened at about the same time the United States of America completed the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan after twenty years of military intervention. Shortly after the departure of the American troops, Afghanistan degenerated into anarchy with the takeover of government machinery by the Taliban, bringing to the fore years of discourse on the sustainability of military interventions. Scholars have adduced many reasons for the American “failure” in Afghanistan. One of the most prominent reasons was the failure of American policymakers to understand the role of tribe, religion, and ethnicity in conflict dynamics. Although the socio-political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural contexts of the South African intervention in Mozambique differ from the American context, there are lessons South Africa could learn to avoid some pitfalls. Employing secondary data, the study on which this article is based, examined the 20-year military American involvement in Afghanistan to proffer possible lessons for the involvement of the South African government in Mozambique.⁸¹

Keywords: Afghanistan, Cabo Delgado, Military Intervention, Mozambique, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Introduction

Mozambique has undergone one conflict after another since its independence from Portugal in June 1975. Shortly after independence, there was a bitter civil war from 1977 to 1992 between FRELIMO and RENAMO. Then, after a period of momentary negative peace, fighting resumed in 2013. However, the warring parties eventually signed peace deals in 2014 and 2019. Nonetheless, amidst the fighting between FRELIMO and RENAMO, an Islamist militant group, who identify as the Ansar al-Sunna, emerged,

launching terror attacks in villages and towns in Mozambique’s northern province of Cabo Delgado.⁸² The first major attack was in early October 2017. Since then, the insurgency has escalated, leading to increased attacks on civilians, public infrastructure, and government buildings.⁸³ At the end of 2020, the conflict claimed an estimated 2 400 lives and internally displaced close to half a million people.



Figure 1: Map of Southern Africa showing Mozambique

While terrorist organisations generally seek attention by claiming attacks (sometimes falsely) and making public statements, Ansar al-Sunna’s modus operandi seems different. The group rarely makes public statements, and their motives remain unclear. This has consequently given rise to speculation and conspiracy theories regarding the existence of the group. For example, state officials believe the quest to control Cabo Delgado’s oil, gas and mineral riches is the main motive behind the insurgency. The government also claims unemployment amongst the youth population is the reason behind the attacks, and that global Jihadist organisations are preying on the vulnerability of the unemployed.⁸⁴

According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), which tracks political violence worldwide, the ongoing insurgency in Mozambique has led to over 3 100 deaths and the internal displacement of nearly 856 000 people. UNICEF estimates



that most of the affected are women and children. In May 2020, at the Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit of Heads of State and Governments, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, the government of Mozambique requested assistance from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states to contain growing acts of terrorism within its territory. However, it took over a year before the regional body sent troops to the troubled nation. The delay by the SADC to intervene emboldened the insurgents further, with their activities spreading beyond Mozambique's northern province and threatening to spill into neighbouring countries.⁸⁵

The example of Boko Haram's speedy growth and transformation from a group of stick-wielding Islamists in a remote town in Borno State, North-East Nigeria, into one of the deadliest terrorist organisations in the world should have spurred SADC member states into swifter action. For example, from what was geographically a "Nigerian conflict", the Boko Haram insurgency spread to Chad, Cameroun, and Niger, threatening several other countries in the Sahel region. The decision by SADC member states to deploy a standby force in support of Mozambique to combat terrorism and acts of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, though arguably late, is a commendable one. Although there were no official data on the numerical strength of the standby force, estimates put the figure at about 3 000 soldiers, with the bulk coming from South Africa.⁸⁶

This article focuses on South African (SA) military involvement in Mozambique. Given the pivotal strategic position of South Africa in the sub-region and the continent at large, the success or failure of the regional military intervention in Mozambique would depend to a large extent on the SA commitment – militarily, politically, and economically. Arguably, South Africa gains most when the region is at peace. Conversely, a destabilised sub-region has the potential to affect South Africa adversely. Moreover, a refugee crisis is not what South Africa needs anytime soon. Government statistics put the SA population at 60 million, with estimated 3 million immigrants.⁸⁷ South Africa has been plagued by recurrent bouts of xenophobic violence since at least 2008, with foreigners often accused of taking jobs in a country where a third of the workforce is unemployed.⁸⁸ Escaping the crisis in Mozambique could worsen the immigration challenge South Africa currently faces. Even more worrisome is the possibility of the "crossing over" of radical Islamists from Mozambique into South Africa. Essentially, South Africa is not only in Mozambique for the sake of Mozambique and the SADC. South Africa is in Mozambique because of (and for) South Africa itself.⁸⁹

It is, however, critical for South Africa not to miss the ethnoreligious side of the conflict in Mozambique. There are many underlining remote and immediate causes of disputes, and if not considered when designing peacekeeping or military intervention, these disputes could cause widespread resentment. The "failures" of military interventions by America in Vietnam, Iraq, Venezuela, and Afghanistan show the need to understand the politics of tribes before embarking on military or even diplomatic missions abroad. South Africa must not assume that all Mozambicans would rally around them in support. On the contrary, in sharply divided societies, for instance Mozambique, interventions such as proposed by the SADC often stimulate group conflict with political movements and parties coalescing around more primal identities, such as tribe and religion.⁹⁰



Mozambique: Deconstructing an Insurgency

The origin of insurgency in Mozambique dates to the early 2000s when young men within the Islamic Council of Mozambique began to forge a radical approach to their practice of Islam. After facing opposition from prominent Islamic clerics, the group created a registered sub-organisation within the Islamic Council called Ansaru-Islam. The group, which started in Cabo Delgado, built new mosques, and preached a stricter form of Islam. Their initial focus was on religious debates, practice, and opposition to the secular state. However, in 2010, the villagers of Nhacole in the Balama District destroyed the group's mosque and chased out sect members who fled to Mucojo in the Macomia District. The group also faced stiff opposition in Mucojo. For example, in 2015, violence erupted when sect members tried to impose an alcohol ban forcefully. As a result, the police had to intervene on various occasions.⁹¹

Although the Mozambican government has consistently claimed to be actively fighting insurgents and insurgencies in the country, the crisis does not seem to subside. Five issues have affected the ability of the government's counter-insurgency (COIN) efforts.

- The government was generally clumsy in handling the insurgency, particularly the response of security agencies. There were indiscriminate arrests of innocent members of the public instead of arresting Islamists – this brewed resentment amongst members of the public against the police and other security agencies. This approach is akin to the initial response of the Nigerian police and military to the Boko Haram insurgents in their early days in Maiduguri. There were accusations of indiscriminate arrests (and summary execution) of young men and women in Maiduguri in the guise of arresting Boko Haram members. The action of the Nigerian police and armed forces fuelled community resentment, thereby making initial efforts at ending the insurgency futile.
- The government restricted and clamped down on journalists and human rights organisations. This meant that the only communication that made it to the public sphere was from the government or the insurgents. The implication was that propaganda from both ends became rife.
- The ongoing piracy of the Mozambican coast and the intractable insurgency by RENAMO divided the government's focus and drew attention away from the catastrophe in Cabo Delgado.
- The challenge posed by widespread inequality, poverty, and corruption enabled the insurgency in the first place. But, again, the problem was similar to the Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria, where poverty, a lack of primary education, and religiosity permeate society.
- There is the challenge of a lack of inter-paramilitary cooperation. As a result, the Mozambican military and national police battle for operational control, to the detriment of the war against insurgency.⁹²

Perhaps, one of the most telling challenges of the Salafi-jihadi insurgency in Mozambique is the gradual whipping up of ideological sentiments. The insurgents recognise longstanding



feelings of marginalisation, exclusion, and relative deprivation.⁹³ However, recent direct drivers, such as current economic changes, the way the Mozambican government handles governance challenges, and the influence of regional and global jihadi groups, have escalated the conflict. Moreover, the group has been able to win over some members of their host communities subtly, further complicating an already complex war.

Here lies one of the significant challenges of military intervention, especially from an SA perspective. Because the insurgency in Mozambique has gradually evolved into an ideological one, there is a need to understand that the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) must consider the complexities of local group dynamics beyond military intervention.⁹⁴ The Mozambican government has already revoked its earlier stance that foreign elements sponsored the conflict. Instead, the government approached the European Union to help them (with the finances?) to address the feelings of marginalisation by sections of the country. Chua argues that the failure of American policymakers to understand or consider group dynamics and political tribes in the lead-up to American military intervention in Afghanistan could be one of the reasons America failed in Afghanistan. She remarked thus:

The Taliban is not only an Islamist but also an ethnic movement. The vast majority of its members are Pashtuns. Pashtuns founded it. It rose out of and derived its staying power because of threats to Pashtun dominance. Unfortunately, American leaders and policymakers missed these ethnic realities entirely, and the results have been catastrophic.⁹⁵

The Polemics of Contemporary Military Interventions

Military interventions, especially the need for or against them, have assumed different meanings in the last decade, i.e., 1990 to 2020. For example, during the Cold War (1947–1991), military interventions allowed “powerful” states to dominate “weak” ones. However, there have been justifications for military interventions recently, especially where the goal was to avoid humanitarian catastrophes and to re-establish international peace and security. Punitive intervention saw the light in the late 1980s. The United States (US) air strike on Libya in 1986 was the first example. A new pattern of collective intervention preceded an extraordinary diminution of other unilateral practices in the early 1990s. Missile attacks by the United States on Iraq in 1993 and against military installations in Afghanistan and Sudan in August 1998 triggered much of the then new interventionist debate. These attacks prompted the rising discussions on the legitimising effect of humanitarian interventions resulting from unilateral state-centred interventions. Whether unilateral or multilateral, humanitarian intervention became central to the polemics of the new debate on intervention.⁹⁶

The challenge with humanitarian interventions is that organisations or governments often premise interventions on an assumption of an understanding of local contexts by the intervening organisation or nation. For example, UN-led military interventions in Africa have not achieved the desired results, despite billions of dollars spent and the use of superior weapons compared to armed militia groups in the countries where UN



military forces operate. Vested interests have hampered UN military interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR). In addition, the UN failed to fully understand the underlying sociocultural and socio-political issues. United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO) operates to neutralise armed groups and to reduce the threat posed to state authority and civilian security space for stabilisation activities. However, in most African countries where the organisation operates, it has failed to achieve its lofty goals set during its formation in 1999. For example, in South Sudan, the organisation has been unable to stem the growth and incessant raping of young women and girls and maiming of innocent civilians by armed militia groups. The underlying issues are sometimes more profound than what military interventions alone can settle.⁹⁷

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan once admitted that the United Nations lacked the institutional capacity to conduct military enforcement measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Mr Annan, while presenting his UN Report on Reform, stated that the United Nations could not implement decisions on the Security Council rapidly and effectively, calling for the dispatch of peacekeeping operations in crises. Increasingly, the United Nations has reduced its missions and peacekeepers globally. Apart from the cost of such missions, the bottom line is that most UN missions do not succeed in achieving their set goals. Although this article focuses on SA involvement in the SADC intervention force in Mozambique, South Africa could glean many lessons from past UN military interventions especially their challenges.⁹⁸

Theorising an Intervention: The Just War Theory

South African (SA) military intervention in Mozambique can be premised within the ambit of the just war theory. Although eclipsed for nearly two centuries (1700–1800), the theory has regained prominence at the forefront of public discourse because of two conditions of the contemporary world:

- A new international system has replaced the once-dominant European balance-of-power system with a more diverse powerplay and “players”; and
- The magnitude, range and impact of military weapons available for warfare in the modern world were unimaginable years ago. These “new” weapons have unprecedented and unquantifiable destructive capabilities, thereby radically altering the technique and rationale of (and for) warfare.⁹⁹

The just war theory is premised on Christian philosophy, although scholars suggest that the idea extends back to Christianity.¹⁰⁰ The theory states that:

- Taking a human life is wrong;
- States must act swiftly in a manner that defends their citizens, the state, and justice; and
- Defending moral values and protecting innocent human life require a willingness to use force and violence.¹⁰¹



The main components of the just war theory are *Jus ad Bellum* – the decision of the justification for war; and *Jus in Bello* – the conduct during the war.

Given the potential of the Mozambican conflict spilling over into South Africa, one can safely argue that South Africa is “right” in providing its troops for military intervention in Afghanistan.

Scholars have further broken down the features of *Jus ad Bellum*.¹⁰²

- There must be a just cause to go to war;
- The decision ought to be made by a legitimate authority;
- Force is to be used only with the right intention and as a last resort;
- There must be reasonable hope for success, with peace as the expected outcome; and
- The use of force must be proportionate and discriminate

It is safe to assume that SA military intervention in Mozambique met the conditions or features of *Jus ad Bellum* mentioned above. There is a just cause for the intervention. The continued Islamist insurgency poses a real threat to the peace, security, and territorial integrity of South Africa. As stated earlier in this article, the potential impact is beyond a possible spilling over of violent acts into SA territory (although that is a possibility). The probable influx of refugees seeking safety in South Africa poses a socioeconomic threat. South Africa is already grappling with an immigration challenge that has fuelled feelings of relative deprivation, frustration, aggression, and xenophobia among local people.

The decision to intervene in Mozambique was also legitimate as the South African Presidency sanctioned it following the 16-nation SADC resolution to support the Mozambican goal of quelling the insurgency.

The use of proportionate and discriminate force is debatable. What is proportionate? What is discrimination? These questions become even more pertinent in a multi-ethnic and ethno-religiously divided nation, such as Mozambique. Furthermore, given the massive recruitment of civilians, some under aged, in the Mweni region of the country, differentiating between civilians and combatant insurgents is a Herculean task. Chances are therefore that disgruntled local Mozambicans would accuse the SA military of war crimes at some point in the intervention. The accusations have already started. For example, clips depicting some members of the SANDF hurling a corpse over a pile of burning rubble in Mozambique have irked public concerns. The gory clip also showed a soldier pouring a liquid over the body as other soldiers, dressed in SA military uniforms, watched, and filmed the scene on their mobile phones. Such images could raise local dissatisfaction with the military, making the already tricky intervention even more challenging.¹⁰³

An essential feature of *Jus ad Bellum* critical to the study reported here was that there must be reasonable hope for success, with peace as the expected outcome. This feature was one of the main focuses of the study. Further, the researcher considered the point at which the SA military would achieve success in Mozambique. Sociopolitical conditions



regarded as a success were defined, and it was questioned whether “success” should be according to UN protocols or SA foreign policy. Lastly, the researcher had to decide how success would be measured. It is vital to state that the current study did not take the very robust SA foreign department for granted. It is, arguably, one of the most professional foreign departments on the continent. The chances that policymakers and experts in the Presidency had asked and answered these salient questions and more before committing to military intervention in Mozambique are therefore high indeed. However, as social scientists, it is pertinent that we do not assume anything. Sometimes, policymakers can find the missing link between policy conception and policy implementation in a well-thought-out research article, a conference, a colloquium, or a policy brief. There are however (but should not be) assumptions in the humanities and social sciences.

The US (Mis)adventures in Afghanistan

For two decades (2001–2021), the United States stationed its troops in Afghanistan in a war that claimed over 2 300 US military personnel and various injuries to over 20 000 others. Estimates put the cost of the Afghan (mis)adventure at over \$1 trillion. Operation Enduring Freedom, as the US mission in Afghanistan (and the larger-scale global war on terrorism) was code-named and had clear mandates by then-President George Bush.¹⁰⁴ The orders were to destroy al-Qaeda, which had attacked the United States on 9/11, and to overthrow the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which had hosted them. However, the conflict also claimed close to half a million Afghans, i.e. government forces, Taliban forces and civilians. One would have expected such considerable numbers of human and material sacrifices to translate into a more stable Afghanistan. Unfortunately, however, the consensus is that the US mission was a failure, especially after America had conducted a rushed, poorly planned, and chaotic withdrawal that left many Afghans and the world apprehensive about the potential ripple effects on peace and security in the Middle East and globally.¹⁰⁵

The US-led military mission in Afghanistan, which started in 2001, had its roots in the global Cold War of the 1970s, especially with the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets in December 1979. The invasion led to sanctions by the United States against Moscow, entangled in efforts to stabilise communist Afghanistan against rising Islamic backlash. The government of President Ronald Reagan embraced the anti-communist insurgents, the Mujahideen, a group the government of President Jimmy Carter armed and referred to as “freedom fighters”. As a result, there had been a history of conflicts between the two nations, with deep-seated resentments even before the 2001 US mission to Afghanistan.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps unwittingly, one of the fallouts of the US-led military mission to Afghanistan was the unholy alliances that Islamist groups formed to wage war against the United States. Soon, the American military mission in Afghanistan became perceived as a US-led war against Islam, not Islamism. Since Afghanistan is a Muslim country, the US-led war validated al-Qaeda’s ideology of “saving Islam from foreign infidels” and winning the support of not just other Islamist groups but also some members of the Muslim world.¹⁰⁷



Here lies an important lesson for SA involvement in Mozambique and future military involvement in Africa and globally. The rise of radical Wahhabism² in Mozambique means that Islamist groups have radicalised young Mozambicans into believing that the ongoing insurgency is a wholly religious one – an attempt to plant Islam throughout the entire Mozambique. Any country attempting to halt that process would inevitably be regarded as an enemy of Islam, moving the conflict to ideological warfare. Ideological warfare is often most difficult to handle. It is one thing to fight insurgents, but to fight an ideology premised on religious conviction is something entirely different. As a result, South Africa could unwittingly be termed an “enemy of Islam”, thereby courting disaster in the form of “new” regional enemies.

It is crucial to differentiate the American invasion of Afghanistan from the South African military mission in Mozambique. The American invasion of Afghanistan was an emotional response aimed at satisfying the collective psychological need for revenge for the 9/11 attacks rather than a strategic consideration. South Africa however deployed its troops to Mozambique to help quell rising insurgency and terrorism among Islamic State-connected insurgents. One can argue that the South African move is strategic rather than impulsive.¹⁰⁸ However, even the best strategies fail when faced with on-the-ground realities. The SA-led SADC intervention force already met a series of setbacks, namely logistics hiccups, a lack of inter-military cooperation in intelligence gathering and sharing, especially with Rwandan and Mozambican troops, and poor coordination in general. These challenges sound similar to the early issues American troops faced in Afghanistan.

Focus on Terrorism rather than Insurgency

One of the reasons adduced for the American failure in Afghanistan was the inability of the United States and its allies to create and train home-grown Afghan national security forces capable of handling the security challenges plaguing the nation. It was obvious that the US-led troops would not be in Afghanistan forever. Experts argue that the United States focused on the Taliban as an extremist group rather than as a significant political insurgent force. In failing to address the real-world level of Afghan progress in governance, security, and economics, it treated one symptom of a far broader disease in many ways and, in doing so, did much to defeat itself.¹⁰⁹

Suffice it to add that in Mozambique, the SA, and SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) focus on counterterrorism and COIN operations. The scale and precision shows intentionality of purpose. The goal should be building the capacity of the Mozambican army and government to stem the remote and immediate causes of violent extremism or the propensity for young people to join extremist groups.

The United States undermined the legitimacy of the Afghan state by focusing on the “War on Terror”. They further undermined efforts by the international community to accelerate peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. Moreover, the approach adopted by the United

² Wahhabism advocates a purification of Islam, rejects Islamic theology and philosophy developed after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and calls for strict adherence to the letter of the Koran and hadith (i.e., the recorded sayings and practices of the Prophet).



States enabled a slanted narrative from the Taliban about its goal of violently resisting the oppressive and authoritarian tendencies of the United States against perceived weak states, particularly Islam. The Taliban, with the unintentional help of the United States, thus established itself as an alternative authority.¹¹⁰

Ignoring Underlying Ethnoreligious Differences

Another reason why the United States failed in Afghanistan was a lack of attention to underlying ethnoreligious divisions already existing in Afghanistan. The multi-ethnic Islamic population in Afghanistan further consists of fractious political clans and tribes. Victory over an Islamist group by members from certain ethnic groups would unwittingly mean victory for the “other” ethnic groups. There is no winning such a war. It was a vicious pendulum, which led to dissatisfaction wherever it swung. The American problem in Afghanistan was a failure to understand that it was not simply about a war against radical Islam. It was also an ethnic problem rooted in a cardinal rule of tribal politics: ethnoreligious groups do not give up their dominance quickly once they are in power.¹¹¹

The war in Mozambique has similar remote and immediate causes, and South Africa should pay attention to the dynamics to avoid the mistakes of the American military mission in Afghanistan. Rather than focus on terrorism alone, South Africa should examine the ethnic dimensions of the conflict. There are feelings of relative deprivation from certain ethnic groups in Mozambique, particularly the Mweni, who reside on the coast. The Mweni ethnic group has consistently complained of marginalisation due to a lack of economic development and political participation; thus, making them ready recruits for any group, such as Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama (ASWJ), which promises an improvement of their socioeconomic position.¹¹²

Using Fraym’s human geography data,¹¹³ a recent study examined the ethnic dimension of the conflict in Mozambique.¹¹⁴ Researchers combed a base layer map depicting the percentage of Makua language speakers with attack locations. Findings showed that 93 per cent of terrorist attacks were conducted in areas with low-density Makua speakers; thus, affirming the ethnic component of the insurgency. Suffice it to say that the study highlighted a cluster of attacks in the Cabo Delgado Makau areas in the interior, and Makonde communities on the northcentral border with Tanzania. Researchers argued that this could be due to a change of tactics by ASWJ in 2019 by refocusing its operations on the coast and road networks for easy escapes after attacks. The shift indicates that ASWJ faced difficulties recruiting fighters in non-Mweni areas, further confirming the ethnic dimension of the conflict.¹¹⁵



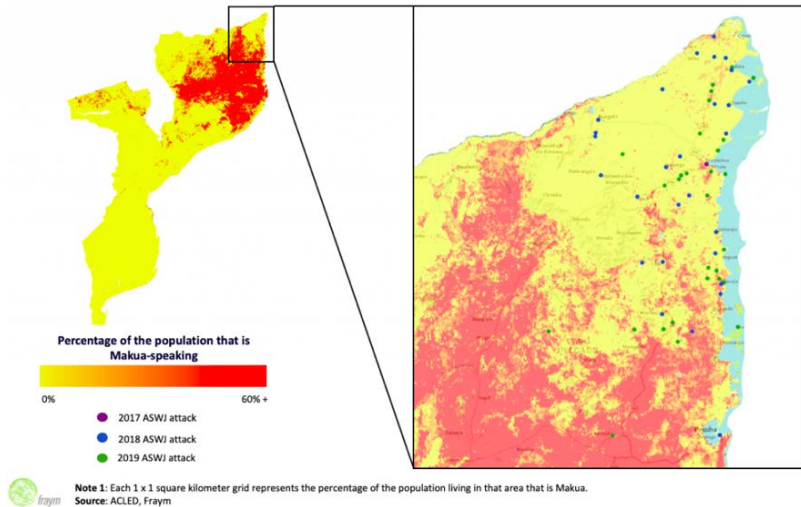


Figure 2: Square kilometres representing the percentage of the population living in Makau¹¹⁶

This article however does not suggest that ethno-religiously diverse nations are more prone to civil wars or insurgencies than homogenous ones. Several racially and ethnically diverse nations are not engrossed in civil war or overt physical violence, such as Brazil and the United States of America. However, such countries could be experiencing some form of structural violence, although very few ever spiral into outright civil war.¹¹⁷ Insurgencies, like the one in Mozambique, are often fuelled by conditions that favour insurgency, such as small, lightly armed bands practising guerrilla warfare from rural base areas. While this position is arguable, it is pertinent to note that the Mozambican conflict, like the Boko Haram conflict in Northeast Nigeria, is entangled in difficult-to-discern ethno-religious dynamics where it is increasingly difficult to differentiate cultures from ethnicity and religion. As conflicting, even confusing as this may sound, the bottom line is that the SANDF intervention in a sociocultural and sociopolitical terrain, such as Mozambique, about which they have little or no knowledge, should be considered completely neutral. ‘Befriending’ a group could be mistaken for supporting one ethnic group over another, causing dissatisfaction and, ultimately, failure.¹¹⁸

US policymakers acted with ignorance of the peculiarity of the Afghan context. In addition, US officials failed to interact with locals, making assumptions and conducting military operations hoping these would lead to security and stability. The lack of contextual knowledge meant that US policymakers and troops in Afghanistan implemented projects that sometimes unwittingly appeared to support one powerbroker or ethnic group at the expense of another. The action by the United States stoked local conflicts and created opportunities for insurgents to form alliances with disaffected parties.¹¹⁹

Unrealistic Timelines and Expectations

Interestingly, the SANDF mission in Mozambique has not generated much public interest. Many South Africans are probably unaware that their troops are stationed in a nation just a few thousand kilometres away, and that the success or failure of the mission could affect their lives in one way or the other. In addition, the country grapples with a myriad of other sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues of its own. Still, the near lack of attention to (or even interest in) the activities of SANDF could lead to complacency on the part of the military, such as an unverified video showing SA soldiers allegedly cruelly burning a dead body.¹²⁰

America's military missions abroad have consistently been subjects of national discourse in the United States. Americans thus often hold the military to their word when the US military lists timelines and expectations. Nonetheless, one of the primary reasons the US mission in Afghanistan failed was because of unrealistic timelines and expectations rather than a plan dealing with what was realistically achievable with the knowledge of what was on the ground in Afghanistan. The United States hence prioritised its political preferences for what Afghanistan should look like. Moreover, it was all on US terms. US officials were vague about the exact resources required to undertake the mission, and how long it would take to achieve the set goals. Instead, US officials provided implicit deadlines that ignored sociopolitical and sociocultural dynamics in Afghanistan. As stated earlier, it was a hurried step to assuage an angry US public following the 9/11 bombing.

Unsurprisingly, twenty years after the invasion of Afghanistan, and with nearly \$1 trillion spent, the United States hurriedly left the country almost the same way they came in. One of the goals of the US mission in Afghanistan was to flush out the Taliban. Ultimately, the United States handed over a deeply fractured Afghanistan to the Taliban when it left. The SA government must set realistic and achievable goals and timelines for the SANDF to avoid the mistake America made in Afghanistan. Again, it is vital to restate that the SANDF has very professional military strategists who must have liaised with the Presidency to ensure that the goals and timelines of the military mission in Mozambique were deliberated and agreed upon. This policy-directional article aims to contribute to ensuring that the SANDF and the South African presidency are meticulous and precise in their approach to the execution of the military mission to Mozambique.

Undertaking military missions with unrealistic goals and a lack of timelines is like playing a football game without goalposts, duration and referees. It is an aimless venture that will ultimately lead to burnout. Already, the SANDF has extended its mission to Mozambique. Military missions globally are often stretched for one reason or the other. The fact is that war operations are punctuated by unpredictability and uncertainty, especially COIN and counterterrorism operations. Already there were deadlines set by the SA government before the initial deployment. As stated in the just war theory, not only is there a need for a just cause to go to war; there must be reasonable hope for success, with peace as the expected outcome. The keyword here is "expected outcome".¹²¹ Expectations must be set (with obvious considerations for the unpredictability of wars) and continually measured. Such expectations have to include a possible end date for involvement in an intervention.



The aim of setting deadlines is not to have rigid start and end dates. As stated earlier, military missions are unpredictable. However, the Presidency has to ensure that the SA mission to Mozambique does not snowball into a never-ending war, like the American mission in Afghanistan, which lasted twenty years. The deadlines provide ‘break’ periods to assess the mission vis-à-vis set goals and objectives to determine whether progress is being made. Without such ‘windows’, the mission could become endless.¹²² The SANDF statement during the announcement of the extension of the military mission thus stated:

We must create conditions for the people of Mozambique to start picking up where things have fallen between the cracks and start going on with their lives, so governance aspects must also be strengthened because the problem cannot be resolved purely through the military.¹²³

Corruption

The ultimate point of failure for our efforts ... wasn’t an insurgency. It was the weight of endemic corruption.¹²⁴

The continued stay of the SANDF in Mozambique could also breed government and military corruption. Military missions are expensive.¹²⁵ Brown University’s Cost of War project estimated that America spent \$290 million daily for 7 300 days of war and nation building in Afghanistan. When the United States hurriedly left Afghanistan, it left abandoned air bases, untraceable lethal weapons, uncompleted construction projects, and an army of Afghans who had become rich through US-aided corruption. No matter how well-intentioned military interventions are, they sometimes become channels for organised crime by both the military and government officials. Corruption becomes prevalent when the war lingers for longer than necessary or anticipated. A total of 115 US service members were convicted of stealing, rigging contracts, and taking bribes. Since 2015, crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan have been valued at more than \$50 million.¹²⁶

The problem with corruption in military interventions is that it often “succeeds” in nations with a propensity for corruption. For example, the 2021 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Report suggested the United States fuelled corruption in Afghanistan by injecting tens of billions of dollars into the Afghan economy, using inadequate oversight and contracting practices, and partnering with malign powerbrokers. According to the report, the US government was slow to recognise the magnitude of the problem, the role of corrupt patronage networks, the way corruption threatened US goals, etc.¹²⁷

The United States might have avoided the many pitfalls it experienced in Afghanistan, especially from endemic corruption, if the US government had made anticorruption efforts top priority in contingency operations. The United States should have also developed a shared understanding of the nature and scope of corruption in Afghanistan through intentional political economy and network analyses. Moreover, whether wittingly or unwittingly, alliances with powerbrokers with the aim of achieving short-term gains risk empowering such powerbrokers to initiate and take part in systemic corruption.



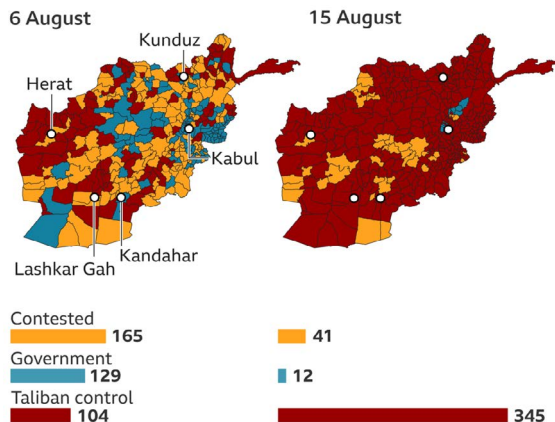
South Africa faces many corruption issues in government – from state capture to inflated tenders and power sector corruption. A Joint Standing Committee in Defence (JSCD) report estimates that corruption in the SANDF is rife. The report states that fraud in the SA Army is R1,065 billion, followed by Logistics (R400 million), the SA Navy (R295 million), the Command and Management Information System (CMIS) at R234 million, Joint Operations at R138 million, and the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS) at R58 million. The continuous stay of the SANDF in Mozambique could breed corruption that might make the continuation of the mission a profit for a few in the military and the government. At that point, continuous extensions would be celebrated by ‘beneficiaries.’¹²⁸ South Africa can learn from the aforementioned “mistakes” of the US military intervention in Afghanistan to prevent a similar occurrence in Mozambique, and future military missions.

Conclusion

They have got to fight for themselves.¹²⁹

In the aftermath of the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, President Biden stated that the onus now lies with the Afghan people to fight for the soul of their nation. Biden argued that after spending \$1 trillion in twenty years in Afghanistan, it was time for the United States to hand over the process of rebuilding Afghanistan to the Afghan people. The statement could have been prevented if things had been done correctly – if the timeline of the intervention was clear and defined whether the Afghan Army were equipped and capacitated to execute the process of national rebuilding.

How the Taliban swept across Afghanistan



*Contested is where fighting is ongoing or strong Taliban presence

Source: BBC Research. Districts according to 2005 government boundaries



Figure 3: How the Taliban swept across Afghanistan¹³⁰



Within ten days of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban took control of towns and cities across the country. As can be observed from Figure 3, on 6 August, there were 165 contested provinces, 129 government-controlled areas, and 104 areas controlled by the Taliban. Ten days after the US departure, only 41 sites were contested, and the government-controlled regions reduced significantly from 129 to 12. The Taliban controlled 345 areas against 104 ten days earlier. Twenty years later, the United States left Afghanistan worse than when they arrived.

It is important to restate that the SA mission in Mozambique is a regional effort to stem the spread of terrorism in the SADC region, and not a sole mission of South Africa. However, as stated earlier, South Africa has the most to lose if the conflict in Mozambique snowballs into other countries in the region. The SA mission is therefore national before regional.

South Africa must also assert itself as a regional and continental superpower.¹³¹ One of the early challenges that the multinational force in Mozambique faced was a lack of logistics and coordination.¹³² There seems to be a subtle power tussle amongst contributing nations to the multinational force, although there is an agreement that South Africa will lead the troops of SADC in Mozambique. While knowledge of local geographical and sociopolitical terrain favours the appointment of local military officers – in this case, the Mozambican Army, as coordinators of the intervention – South Africa nonetheless has to play a significant leading role while respecting the territorial integrity of Mozambique. There is no need for political correctness. South Africa is in Mozambique to protect SA interests.

In many ways, the SA military involvement in Mozambique is similar to the Nigerian military involvement with the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1980s and early 1990s. Nigeria bore over 70% of the financial and military cost of sustaining the regional army unit. Years after the war, estimates put the cost of the war for Nigerian taxpayers at almost \$8 billion. Beyond the financial burden, Nigeria lost thousands of troops in the wars. However, Nigeria took the decisive lead in the operation, providing most of the ECOMOG force commanders and leading the planning, coordination, and execution of the intervention. It is critical to restate that South Africa – as the primary contributor of troops and logistics to the mission – should take a clear lead in the operation in Mozambique.¹³³



ENDNOTES

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Swans of the 70s: The First Women of the South African Navy's Permanent Force

Leon Steyn¹³⁴ 

*Department of Military History
Stellenbosch University*

Abstract

The service of women in the South African Navy and its predecessors can be divided into three distinct historical periods. Firstly, there was the service of the so-called Swans with the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War, followed by the service of women in the Navy's Permanent Force from 1972 with the South African Defence Force, and lastly, their employment in the Navy since 1994 when a new democratic dispensation saw the establishment of the South African National Defence Force. While the first and last eras mentioned above have received a good measure of attention in academic writing, the second has not.

This article attempts to provide much-needed focus on a neglected but important era in our naval history. It details the first permanent appointment of women in the South African Navy in 1972 and 1973, which marked the departure point of women's service in a permanent capacity – an important groundbreaking event that would lead to expanded utilisation in later years. The article discusses their experiences, particularly their utilisation and challenges to integrate into a male-dominated Navy during the early and mid-1970s.

The research methodology employed for the study on which this article is based, combined the traditional “top-down” (archival sources) and grassroots “from the bottom-up” (oral history) approaches. This method offered a balanced and corroborated view of these important trailblazing events that occurred 50 years ago.

Keywords: South African Navy, Women, Swans, Manpower, Gender, Military

Introduction

The research underlying this article was directed at the rediscovery of women whose stories had been forgotten or never told. Interviews were conducted with those who first joined the Navy's Permanent Force (PF) in 1972 and 1973. Their most poignant feedback to the writer was a ‘thank you for telling our story’ and with that, the realisation that their narrative has in fact never been shared. This article is therefore as much a commemorative

contribution (celebrating 50 years) as it is a way to uncover aspects of their service that have never been told.

The Forerunners: Swans during the Second World War, 1939–1945

The first instance of women who served in uniform with South African (SA) naval forces occurred during the Second World War. In comparison to the land and air force, the Seaward Defence Force (SDF) and subsequent South African Naval Forces (SANF) were the smallest of the three Union Defence Force (UDF) services, but their own rapid wartime expansion in 1940 and 1941 nevertheless required an immediate increase in personnel. The manning of requisitioned vessels for the SDF had been solved partly by the recruitment and utilisation of Cape Coloured sailors, but it was the requirement for even more personnel, specifically to bolster the new naval fixed defences ashore, that prompted the formation of a women's branch of the SANF, known as the Women's Auxiliary Naval Service or WANS – on 9 October 1943.¹³⁵ Soon after its establishment the women of the WANS started to refer to themselves as “Swans”. This became a general reference to women who served in the naval forces, and the term remained in popular use.

The establishment of the WANS organisation allowed for one officer and 280 ratings,¹³⁶ and the structure comprised communication, clerical, accounts and stores branches and several geographical detachments.¹³⁷ The work performed by these branches were all of a non-combatant nature, but the recruitment call for a technical branch stated, ‘recruits must be prepared for service anywhere in the Union’ and that they ‘must also be prepared to perform duties other than those of a non-combatant nature’.¹³⁸ The Technical Branch of the WANS had been created to support the SANF's Anti-Submarine Fixed Defences (A/SFD), and was the largest branch with around 130 Swans assigned as watch keepers at SA harbours fitted with A/SFD installations. As part of these tasks, Swans were trained to operate detection and defence apparatus, such as indicator guard loops, harbour asdics¹³⁹ and depth charge throwers. The port of Saldanha Bay on the Cape West Coast served as an important convoy assembly point, and a unique controlled mining operations section, manned by women, was employed for its defences.¹⁴⁰

Esté Kotzé argues that the war provided the first intersection between military masculinity and civilian femininity. Even though the utilisation of women was of an auxiliary and support nature, such service provided the first instances of gender integration in the armed forces.¹⁴¹ Even though the Swans were affiliated to their own corps, their service and duties converged with those of men on a daily basis. Furthermore, their service in uniform provided an important reference for and motivation to the future utilisation of women in the South African Navy (SAN) many years later.

The 1950s: Nationalist Masculinity

There was considerable interest among women to continue to serve in the UDF after the war. The Chief of General Staff at the time, General Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, firmly supported the continued utilisation of women. A Women's Defence Corps (WDC) was established on 28 November 1947, which trained women as typists, clerks, storekeepers,



radar operators, and ambulance drivers. The appointment of FC Erasmus as Minister of Defence on 26 May 1948, however, spelled the premature end of the WDC. While Erasmus' opposition to the utilisation of non-whites¹⁴² in the UDF was politically motivated, his resistance to the utilisation of women was guided by a strong traditional opinion that the military was reserved for men only. Such ideology was firmly rooted in the view Afrikaner Nationalists held of women, mostly as 'loyal loving wives to their husbands'.¹⁴³ This ability, to maintain 'a strong vigil on the home front', was most prominently displayed during times of conflict and specifically during the Anglo-Boer War.¹⁴⁴

Erasmus rejected the findings of a national commission that recommended the amendment of the Defence Act in 1949 to make provision for the military training and utilisation of women. Erasmus disbanded the WDC in 1951 and from then on, women could only be appointed in the UDF as civilians.¹⁴⁵ Women's rights activists were angered by this decision, and the League of Women Voters described Erasmus' decision as blatant discrimination, which withheld women of their rightful choice to make a contribution to the defence of the country. Their objections did little to change Erasmus' mind, and he maintained his viewpoint for the rest of his tenure as Minister of Defence.¹⁴⁶

The Revitalisation of the SADF: Dealing with Manpower Shortages

In the early 1960s, the South African Defence Force (SADF) embarked on an aggressive programme of expansion. This was part of a deliberate effort by government to promote united white nationalism as a whole. The SADF was actively utilised to bolster the confidence of the nation and to promote a sense of security, especially in the wake of the Sharpeville shootings (21 March 1960), the ensuing state of emergency, and an assassination attempt on the life of the Prime Minister, HF Verwoerd (9 April 1960).¹⁴⁷

The Navy was already the benefactor of the Simon's Town Agreement that was finalised in 1957, and the fleet grew exponentially with the addition of new ships. The transfer of the Simon's Town naval base and dockyard facilities from Britain to South Africa similarly demanded the enlargement of the organisation.¹⁴⁸ Such a requirement for more naval personnel was dealt with in three ways:

- The recruitment of coloured men from 1965, and Indian men from 1974;
- The introduction of Conscription or National Service in 1968;¹⁴⁹ and
- The reintroduction of women to the PF of the Navy, the focus of the current study and of this article.

Regardless of the views expressed by the Minister of Defence Jim Fouché, who had succeeded Erasmus in 1959 – stating, 'the SADF had no urgent requirement for the services of women in a military capacity'¹⁵⁰ – steps were nevertheless taken to investigate such possibilities. In 1965, the Mossop Commission was appointed to investigate the employment of women in the PF as a consequence of the ongoing manpower shortages. The commission found that there were a number of areas where women could be employed advantageously, and no fewer than 1 942 posts were identified that could be filled by women. However, the defence budget – already committed to the operational expansion of



the SADF – could not afford the required expenses at such short notice. A separate corps for women would demand the establishment of a command structure, administrative and training facilities, separate accommodation, medical and ablution facilities, and the design and fabrication of new female uniforms. In March 1967, the newly appointed Minister of Defence, PW Botha, decided against the militarisation of existing female posts, but approved the appointment of civilian women in more applicable posts.¹⁵¹ To this end, the Navy proceeded to appoint 14 civilian women to its communications centres. This group underwent a six-month training course starting January 1971, at Signal School where they were instructed in telecommunication.¹⁵² This group of civilian women were widely regarded as the frontrunners to the so-called “Comms Swans” that joined the PF towards the end of 1972.

This admission of women into a traditional male sanctum – albeit on a small and gradual scale – challenged military society’s outlook on women and femininity. The majority of male officers and men welcomed the utilisation of women in the Navy during the early 1970s, in fact, the Chief of the Navy, Vice Admiral HH Biermann, was a leading proponent. As early as 1963, he ‘reiterated that navy personnel deficiencies were “dangerous” in terms of envisaged requirements and insisted this would necessitate the vigorous recruitment of women.’¹⁵³ Then there were those who recognised the presence of women (or perhaps their “loveliness”) but had difficulty to believe that they could make a professional contribution to the organisation, and that women were ancillary and just a short-term solution to the manpower problem. The admission of women to Signal School – an operational training environment traditionally dominated by men – was well noted by the men. In a military environment where ‘male recruits were [supposedly] closed off from civilian life in an effort to transform them from “boys to men”’,¹⁵⁴ the presence of civilian dressed young women elicited a wide range of reactions. Seaman (later Warrant Officer) Peter John Haupt – who served there during his national service year in 1972 – candidly remarked, ‘we used to watch their moves whenever we passed them ... there were some lovelies!’¹⁵⁵

‘Not taken too seriously’ is how one Swan perceived the general acceptance at the time.¹⁵⁶ Annette Ross’ recollections about male resistance (or the lack thereof) summed up the experience of most Swans at the time:

During my entire time in uniform I never experienced any incident or behaviour that would lead me to conclude that there was resistance from the males in the Navy. In almost every case they went out of their way to make us feel welcome. If there was any such resistance or resentment, this was kept to themselves. I expect however that this is in large measure due to the fact that we would not be going to sea. That might have been a step too far for the time and I think might well have led to some pushback.¹⁵⁷

The SADF’s official magazine *Paratus* certainly demonstrated a certain degree of dichotomy. The front page of the February 1973 edition featured the State President’s Guard standing to attention in front of the sacrosanct “mother and child” statue at the Voortrekker Monument. Then, further on in the same edition, the achievements of women in uniform are celebrated, but – on the last page – the reader is presented with a scantily



clad female model!¹⁵⁸ The SA military media seemed intent on illustrating that military recruitment would not destroy female sexuality and that femininity remained intact even if female members assumed masculine roles.

“Botha’s Babies”¹⁵⁹: The Civil Defence College

The rapidly changing Southern African strategic landscape of the 1960s had forced the SADF to reassess the nature of new threats. There were indications that the nature of warfare was changing, moving from the conventional to unconventional forms of war, such as insurgency.¹⁶⁰ One way to prepare for this was to improve resilience among the SA white society and to bolster the SA civil defence capacity. Women were expected to make a contribution towards such preparedness. To this end, a Civil Defence College (CDC) was established on 1 January 1971 in the town of George as a military training institution of the South African Army. The first group of 128 women commenced their military training in February 1971, but Kotzé pointed out that, at the time, ‘the role of the women was seen as being of the military but [that] they were not soldiers’.¹⁶¹ The mission of the college was ‘to train young white women in civil defence techniques so that they would be prepared, in times of crisis, to serve under orders of their local [male] commanders’.¹⁶² The military head of the CDC went so far as to say, ‘women inside or outside of the military must remain the driving force for men’.¹⁶³ Women were not however considered or expected to play significant leadership roles within the military.

By 1971, the manpower problems of the SADF had not dissipated, and the Director: General Personnel argued for the utilisation of women in certain PF posts that would allow men to be released for more physically demanding work. Approval was duly given that women could be recruited in a military capacity for officer and other rank training. As a result, 50 women – then under training at the CDC – showed an interest to join the PF of the SADF.¹⁶⁴ Vice Admiral Biermann indicated in August 1971 that 295 naval posts were available for women in uniform. At the time, these particular posts were filled by civilian women, such as those employed at SAN telecommunication centres. It was Biermann’s intent to militarise these posts for telecom operators (65 posts), writers (40 posts), and stores personnel (190 posts), while a further 66 typists and 91 clerical posts were earmarked for militarisation. It was however made clear that no live-in facilities (barrack accommodation) were available for women in Simon’s Town. At the time, Biermann maintained that recruits would have to find their own accommodation, and for that reason, only local girls who lived in the Cape Peninsula area were to be recruited.¹⁶⁵

In the meantime, the CDC continued with training, and in its second year of its existence (1972), trained a total of 130 young women. The institution then became a feeder for the future employment of women in uniform, i.e. not just in the SADF, but also in the South African Police. Such utilisation was confirmed by Botha’s announcement on 3 October 1972 that women could be recruited from the ranks of the CDC to the different Arms of Service for employment in the PF. Botha also approved the recruitment of women from the private sector or “civvy street” for direct attestation to the various Arms of Service.¹⁶⁶

‘I don’t like the term “juffer” but I can suggest nothing better. Can you?’¹⁶⁷



The process to find the most appropriate Afrikaans description for female members of the Navy proved surprisingly cumbersome. English terminology and rank designations of the Second World War WANS organisation were brought across without any changes, but at Navy Headquarters, the choice between the Afrikaans terms “Swaan” and “Seejuffer” seemed a difficult one to make. The SADF’s Language Bureau recommended the use of the word “juffer” taken from Dutch, meaning “voorname, aanzienlijke dame”. Senior officers on the staff of Navy Headquarters – and apparently ‘the girls themselves’ – were however not in favour of the term “seejuffer”, and preferred the term “Swaan”.¹⁶⁸ The recommendation by the Language Bureau was however upheld, and final approval was eventually given in March 1974 for the use of the Afrikaans and English rank designations as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Afrikaans	Afkorting	English	Abbreviation
Seejuffer	SJ	Swan	SWAN
Bevare-seejuffer	BESJ	Able Swan	ASWAN
Baasseejuffer	BSJ	Leading Swan	LSWAN
Bootsjuffer	BJ	Petty Officer Swan	POSWAN
Eerste Bootsjuffer	EBJ	Chief Petty Officer Swan	CPOSWAN
Adjudant-offisier	AO (Mej of Mev)	Warrant Officer	WO (Ms or Mrs)
Adelbors	ADB (Mej of Mev)	Midshipman	Mid (Ms or Mrs)
Onderluitenant	OLt (Mej of Mev)	Sub Lieutenant	SLt (Ms or Mrs)
Luitenant	Lt (Mej of Mev)	Lieutenant	Lt (Ms or Mrs)

Figure 1: The first Swans: December 1972¹⁶⁹

On 11 October 1972, the Navy received authorisation for the restricted employment of women in the PF, and specifically the Telecommunication Branch. This news was received enthusiastically by the civilian women who were serving at the SAN communication centres at Simon’s Town, Youngsfield and Silvermine. Barbara Bland (16) and Patricia Wood (17) from Simon’s Town, Megan Lewis (17) from Kommetjie and Juanita Retief (18) from Parow were the first to show an interest to join the Navy’s PF. Their fathers were all serving in the Navy at the time – a recruitment trend that would repeat itself in subsequent years. Bland, Wood, Lewis and Retief attested for service in Simon’s Town on 1 December 1972, and became the first women to join the Navy’s PF. Prior to that, a special arrangement was made to train the group, and they were accommodated at Naval College in Gordon’s Bay for a short basic training course from 11 November to 14 December 1972. The design of a naval uniform for women had just been initiated, and the group remained in civilian clothing and overalls during training.¹⁷⁰

This internal re-appointment of civilian women to the PF was followed by an “open advertisement” on 27 November 1972 when the Navy announced a limited number of PF vacancies for women in the Telecommunication Branch. Unmarried white SA women under the age of 22 years who were in possession of a Standard 8 (now Grade 10) or



high school certificate (Grade 12) were invited to apply. Applications were considered in mid-December 1972, and the first enlistments were scheduled for early January 1973.¹⁷¹

Finding an Instructor for the Girls: Zelda la Grange

To accommodate the subsequent basic training, a female instructor had to be found. Male Gunnery Instructors (GIs) remained in charge of regimental training at both SAS *Saldanha* (basic training) and Signal School (specialisation training) but a female instructor was needed as a link and facilitator. Zelda la Grange (later Grobbelaar) of Wynberg was appointed on 15 December 1972. La Grange was already 32 years old – more than ten years older than the other girls who joined, but she was specifically selected for that reason. Instead of being trained and utilised in the Telecommunication Branch, she was selected to become the first female instructor for the ensuing Swan intakes at SAS *Saldanha*. According to La Grange,¹⁷² the selection board was impressed by her physical condition, dress, and bearing. To prepare her for the first basic training course, she received her initial instructor training at SAS *Simonsberg*, and was promoted to the rank of leading swan, a mere two weeks after she had joined the Navy.¹⁷³

La Grange spent the first few months supervising the January 1973 intake that was undergoing specialised communication training at Signal School. She was then detached to SAS *Saldanha* to receive the second Swan intake of the year in June 1973 – the first basic training course for Swans commenced there. The course lasted until the end of August, before the January 1973 group – on completion of the training at Signal School – commenced their long overdue basic training at SAS *Saldanha* in September 1973.

Two basic Swan training courses were scheduled per year, and when not engaged at SAS *Saldanha* for that purpose, La Grange was employed in an administrative function at SAS *Simonsberg*. She also managed to complete a leadership programme and petty officer's qualifying course during this time. It was here that she demonstrated the spirit and determination that endeared her to many in the Navy. She later explained:

I was the only woman in the class and I was not going to let a bunch of guys beat me. It was tough and it encouraged me to do better than usual – which got me through in the end.¹⁷⁴

La Grange continued as an instructor at SAS *Saldanha* until 1976 when she was promoted to the rank of petty officer and transferred to Gunnery School. She represented the Navy in service shooting, which resulted in a suggestion from the Officer Commanding at Gunnery School that she follow the gunner's course. La Grange passed the course and qualified as the first female gunner in the Navy. At the time, *Navy News* reported on her accomplishments:

Zelda is particularly well-known as an outstanding instructor and, through her determination and dedication has proved that she stands aside for no man – in fact she successfully breached the hitherto all-male ranks at the SAN Gunnery School in 1982 and became the first women to “man” the guns at Lower North Gun Battery.¹⁷⁵



Zelda la Grange was a qualified gunner and weapon controller, but on account of the exclusion of women from combat posts at sea, she was only utilised intermittently as an instructor ashore and actually employed at Gunnery School as a Media Centre Coordinator.¹⁷⁶ In 1984 (by now promoted to the rank of chief petty officer), she was transferred to The Homestead in Fish Hoek as its first master-at-arms (MAA). In jest, *Navy News* referred to La Grange's position as "mistress-at-arms", but La Grange was proud of the appointment:

[I saw the task as] a challenge and a sort of homecoming. I had a lot to do with the original conversion from a hotel to a Swans residence and having come up through the ranks myself, I have experienced the sort of problems and good times that the Swans have at the moment. I feel I can communicate with the girls and relate better as a mother confessor or even act as a father figure when they need it!¹⁷⁷

La Grange's career unfortunately took a turn for the worse. Due to health issues, she failed to complete the important Military Training for Ratings Part 3 (MTR3) course, required for promotion to the rank of warrant officer. The 1990 rationalisation, during which the Navy personnel component was cut by 22%, dealt a further blow when La Grange was one of 2 400 naval personnel that were retrenched.¹⁷⁸ She however re-joined the naval reserve and subsequently advanced to the rank of warrant officer class 2. Zelda la Grange was highly praised and recognised amongst her peers (male and female alike) for her early pioneering work and accomplishments.¹⁷⁹

Second Group: The January 1973 Swan Intake

Even though direct appointments from "civvy street" were permitted, the CDC was not neglected as a source of recruitment, and the Navy enlisted five former trainees from the CDC in George for the January 1973 intake. They were the twins Margaret and Anne Linden, Rosemary Buss, Susan Barnard, and Marina Mong. Because of the lack of military accommodation for women in Simon's Town, the five CDC girls were accommodated at the military hospital in Wynberg on their arrival in Cape Town.¹⁸⁰ The CDC girls who joined made up a quarter of this intake. Rosemary Buss later shared her motivation to join the Navy:

[I] was at the college and was so taken with the [navy] uniform and the presentation and with nothing to lose decided to join. [I was] very excited together with the other girls who were all in the same platoon. Sorry but I hate to admit it, but it was the Commander in his uniform that did the trick.¹⁸¹

The Navy indeed offered "something different". Further efforts in 1973 to recruit more CDC trainees however were not as successful. The Navy team that visited George in August 1973 reported that the girls under training were primarily candidate officer material and not interested to follow careers as junior rates or non-commissioned officers.¹⁸²

Apart from the five CDC trainees, 15 other girls were selected for the January 1973 intake. They were all Capetonians and (again) a noticeable number were Navy offspring! Dale



McMurray was one of the selected 20. She was the daughter of Captain (later Commodore) Andrew McMurray and Anne Henny, a former (WW2) Swan herself. McMurray recalled that the recruitment drive was very much a “word-of-mouth” affair and that it was probably her dad who told her about the new scheme to recruit women to the Navy. Most were either uncertain about what they wanted to do in life or willing to do something more exciting than the typical office-based work. ‘I didn’t know what to do with myself ... I thought that it sounded like a challenge, so I applied to join.’¹⁸³ Another recounted, ‘I was uncertain of my career and [first] worked as a typist which was extremely boring.’¹⁸⁴ The influence of military family or friends no doubt “assisted” them to make the choice to join the Navy.

McMurray clearly remembered her interview for selection, and how one senior officer on the panel – as a closing remark – candidly quipped, ‘sex is here to stay’.¹⁸⁵ Passing remarks such as this – although casual in nature – were not uncommon and purported the maintenance of male dominance through the use of vocal expressions. Even though the entry of women into the Navy in 1972 and 1973 was supported by its leadership, the military remained “male territory” and women’s gradual penetration into the perceived masculine space must have disrupted the man’s world to some degree.¹⁸⁶



Figure 2: Following selection, the Swans attested in the Navy’s PF on 8 January 1973. Three of the seven girls can be seen in CDC uniform with the recruitment officer, Lieutenant Commander “Speedy” van Eck.¹⁸⁷

The design and production of the first female naval uniforms were yet to be finalised and, as a result, the basic training course scheduled to start at SAS *Saldanha* in January 1973 was deferred. The group was therefore first sent to Signal School to proceed with the communication course. There they received rudimentary basic instruction while still in civilian clothing! (see Figure 3). Dale McMurray reflected on what turned out to be a somewhat irregular training year:

Before we went to Saldanha, we first spent approximately nine months up at Signal School on a daily basis. We did not have uniforms until the end of our communications course, and we were trained to drill during that time, over and above the comms course. We drilled in our mini-skirts and slops. All of us passed the comms course [and] on completion of the course we were issued with our uniforms and then shipped off to Saldanha to do basic training. We lived in dormitories [the] same as the men but separately. [The] same rules applied with inspections etc. No men [were] allowed in our dorms and no women in their dorms. Mostly we were treated the same, however, there were the odd few that took the equal part too far. One GI (Gunnery Instructor) roared out a command; looking at my sister during parade drill, after noticing blonde [hair] down on the side of her face; [and ordered] all those who hadn't shaved that morning to fall out! Degrading to say the least, but those sort of things did happen. Generally we were treated more gently than the men, [but] we participated in all activities, boat pulling, rifle drill, cleaning stations, the same as the men.¹⁸⁸



Figure 3: The January 1973 Swan intake receiving instruction from the GI, Chief Petty Officer Laubscher at Signal School. Civilian clothes (particularly mini-skirts) were not ideal for training.¹⁸⁹

Margie Fishley (née Mitchell) also joined the PF in 1973. After school, she travelled overseas for two years, and when she returned home, she was uncertain what to do. On advice of a friend who was serving in the Navy, she applied, thinking of the opportunity as a 'good challenge'. Like Dale McMurray, she started telecom training at Signal School and basic training at SAS *Saldanha* afterwards:

We were all trained as telecom operators. We were given a mess¹⁹⁰ where we had meal breaks, and used to sit on Nuisance's¹⁹¹ grave for smoke breaks. While at Signal School, we also had GI Laubscher drilling us in the

driveway in front of our mess. Warrant Eggleston was put in charge of us. We also went to the shooting range, wearing very “flattering” grey overalls. I think the GI was a bit wary of 20 Swans waving rifles around! It was also while we were at Signal School that we were issued with our new uniforms. That was when we became famous. The press were there in full force while we proudly paraded our new uniforms.

[At Saldanha] we were accommodated in the officer’s mess and taught how to make beds Navy style. Also packing away our uniforms was a bit of a mystery to the “manne” they weren’t quite sure where we should keep our underwear and other female requirements! We were really people of interest, lots of finger pointing and sniggering at our marching for the first few days, and peeping over the wall at our underwear hanging on the washing lines! The uniforms we were given were more or less action working dress, this was when we went up to Saldanha, up until then we wore civvies. We had black trousers, white shirts, blue jerseys and black lace up shoes. Grey overalls for the shooting range and assault course.¹⁹²

Important functions: The Telecommunications and Tactical Data Branches

The first branch or mustering to which women were appointed in the Navy was the Telecommunications Branch. The utilisation and suitability of women were specific to the requirements of this particular mustering. During the early 1970s, the clouds of displeasure at the policies of the SA government were gathering pace. The Navy’s communication network between land and sea was an important strategic capability that had to be maintained, especially during those years of increased isolation facing the Navy. An extensive and modern network had been inherited from the Royal Navy in 1957, known as Cape Naval Radio (CNR), which covered the entire South Atlantic area and a great part of the Indian Ocean. As part of the Simon’s Town Agreement, the CNR station was relocated from Simon’s Town to Youngsfield where a Communication Centre (ComCen) was established to control naval shipping as well as merchant service traffic. Telecommunication links were maintained with a host of other naval communication centres and stations in Africa, such as Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), Luanda, Dakar, Lagos, Accra, Freetown, the Royal Navy communication centre in Whitehall as well as the US Navy communication station in San Juan (Puerto Rico). At national level, the ComCen at Youngsfield enabled all the major military commands in the Western Cape to communicate with other commands and units of the SADF through Defence Headquarters in Pretoria.¹⁹³ Most importantly the Navy’s ComCen relocated from Youngsfield to the newly built Silvermine complex in 1973 (see Figure 4).

Two distinct career paths were available to Telecommunication Operators –commonly referred to as “TOs”. Those who were selected to serve at sea were trained and qualified to become Tactical TOs, but this was restricted to men only, given the fact that women were not allowed to follow a career at sea. The 20-week training course at Signal School involved the use of signal flags, lamps and lights as well as semaphores – communication devices typically used on naval vessels.¹⁹⁴



Women, on the other hand, were trained at Youngsfield, Silvermine, naval area headquarters and communication centres as TOs for duties ashore. Their 29-week TO training course at Signal School included theoretical telecommunication subjects, an introduction to electronic warfare, the use of radio teleprinters, and the ability to receive and send Morse code expertly. Proficient typing skills were an important requirement that called for a high level of sight, hearing and hand coordination. TOs were required to deal with important and – in almost all cases – confidential information on a daily basis, and candidates therefore had to demonstrate intellectual capacity, reliability, and integrity. Naval authorities agreed that women suited these requirements well, and Swans therefore comprised the majority of TOs ashore from 1973 onwards. In turn, their utilisation freed up a significant number of men to take up TO positions at sea.¹⁹⁵

The establishment of the advanced Maritime Operational Centre at Silvermine in March 1973 and the rapid conversion to computer technology required the creation of a new branch in the Navy. A Tactical Data Branch was therefore established on 8 May 1973 in which 24 new posts were created. Women were thought to be the most suitable candidates, and the new branch therefore mostly comprised Swans who became known as tactical data operators (TDOs). Apart from the equipment at Silvermine, computers had also been installed at the new Submarine Training School and the upgraded Torpedo and Anti-Submarine School in Simon's Town where Swans were employed during training courses as TDOs. To qualify as TDOs, the Swans had to complete basic military training and the associated nine-month specialist training after which promotion up to the rank of warrant officer was possible.¹⁹⁶



Figure 4: Swan Barbara Bland with Commander JM Brink, the officer in charge of the Silvermine communications centre in 1973.¹⁹⁷

“The Swans’ Nest”: The Homestead

In order to accommodate the Navy’s new non-commissioned women (separately), a Naval Women’s Mess, better known as The Homestead, was established in Fish Hoek. This was a former farm homestead that was built in 1827, and later enlarged to serve as a hotel. The Navy purchased the three-star luxury facility – located a stone’s throw away from the Fish Hoek beach – early in 1974.¹⁹⁸ The first group of Swans took occupancy on 8 April 1974. In order to utilise the new facility fully the Navy made it compulsory for (single) women in uniform to live in at The Homestead. It was only under extraordinary circumstances that members could “live out”, but there were no unnecessary restrictions to control the movement of the girls after hours, and they had relative freedom to come and go as they pleased. Accommodation consisted of double cabins with en-suite facilities, while Swans who continued their studies were afforded single cabins. A well-equipped galley provided meals to the large dining hall area, while after hours’ leisure was mostly spent in the reception area, the TV lounge, or on the beach.¹⁹⁹



Figure 5: Zelda la Grange (third from the right) in animated discussion at The Homestead in Fish Hoek, surrounded by younger Swans.²⁰⁰

The first female officers that required single accommodation after 1974 were re-located to the Naval Base Wardroom in Simon’s Town – also a former holiday hotel, near Seaforth – known as Rhodesia by the Sea.²⁰¹ Their entry into the male world of the wardroom afforded them more freedom and some form of gender integration.

The First Female Officer

The first female officer appointed in the SAN PF was Lorina Liebenberg. She had obtained a diploma in social work in 1972, and worked as a child welfare officer. Liebenberg noticed a newspaper advertisement for a welfare worker in the Navy, and decided to apply, to ‘move to a man’s world’,²⁰² as she explained at the time. Liebenberg was accepted for the position, and following a short naval orientation course at Naval College, she took up her post in the Navy’s welfare section at the medical centre in Simon’s Town in March 1973.²⁰³ The next year she married a naval officer, Lt Henri Laurie, whom she had met in Simon’s Town, and subsequently resigned her commission. In later life, she settled in Kimberley where she continued to work as a civilian welfare worker until her untimely passing in 2019.²⁰⁴



Figure 6: Centre of attraction. Lt Liebenberg enjoying “stand-easy” with fellow male junior officers in the wardroom of the frigate SAS President Kruger in April 1973.²⁰⁵

Lorina Liebenberg was just one example of direct officer appointments that were made during the 1970s. Direct recruitment was not limited to women, but provided the SADF with professional workers and graduates who, by virtue of their academic qualifications, could be considered for appointments as officers. Fran Hulett, a nursing sister at the military hospital in Wynberg, became the second female officer in the new Swans establishment when she was recruited by the Navy in 1974. She was appointed as a lieutenant, with the specific task to advise on the recruitment of Swans and to act as a divisional officer and mentor for the girls.²⁰⁶

The Mother Hen: Fran Hulett

Fran Hulett wanted to join the Navy from an early age, but unable to do so, trained to become a nurse instead, and joined the SA Medical Corps in 1965 as a nursing sister at the military hospital in Wynberg. She had to wait until April 1974 to join the Navy when she was transferred and appointed as the first senior staff officer (SSO) of the Swans. At the time, Hulett acted as the liaison officer between the girls undergoing training and the various naval departments. According to Hulett, the Navy realised that they ‘needed help in handling women’.²⁰⁷ Apart from the day-to-day administration, she advised on the recruitment of women and on aspects of their training. The management of the Swans residence in Fish Hoek, The Homestead, was another important responsibility, and there she became the proverbial residence mother. She was there to listen to the everyday problems and to advise those who could not cope. Hulett later remarked about her motherly role that ‘men did not know what to do with the tears’.²⁰⁸

In later years, Hulett reflected positively on her experience in the Navy, drawing comparisons to her earlier service and subsequent interactions with male officers from other arms of services:

I used to go with them [the Swans] to inter-force events. We went to Bloemfontein and Pretoria. I had to be very protective over the girls. In the Army there was a totally different attitude towards females. The Air Force was “in-between”, [but] there was a difference between the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. For me it was a good “culture shock” to come here [to the Navy]. We had to go to a conference in George. Remember the ‘George’ girls? Two [of] our [naval] officers [a Lt Cdr and Cdr] accompanied me. We arrived at the hotel and were shown where to put our stuff down, and of course the girls were in one section and the officers were all waiting in the lounge. The girls were youngsters, kids really. I came through, passed two Army generals and an Air Force brigadier. I walked through and they made those disgusting noises that they like to make. I was furious, absolutely furious! The two [Navy] guys who were with me, got up and picked them out! The only one who apologized, was the Air Force guy, who turned out to be an ex-patient of mine.²⁰⁹

The cultural differences that existed between the Army, Air Force and Navy informed the different ways in which women in uniform were regarded during the mid-1970s. FC Erasmus’ Afrikaner “transformation” of the UDF during the 1950s had shifted the composition of the PF to be predominantly Afrikaner-dominated, with the exception of the small English-oriented Navy in Simon’s Town. Fifteen years after the end of his tenure as Minister of Defence, the effects of this affirmative action policy were still evident. In 1974, Afrikaners comprised approximately 85% of the total PF strength in the Army, 75% of the Air Force, and 50% in the traditionally Anglophone Navy.²¹⁰ Rear Admiral Chris Bennett holds the opinion that this rift was further expanded when the long-serving Admiral HH Biermann was succeeded by General Magnus Malan as Minister of Defence in 1976. The latter ‘perceived the Navy to be rather snooty and a select “club” situated down in the



Cape'.²¹¹ Conversely, naval senior officers tended to look down openly on Army and Air Force colleagues in the north "as belonging to the 'uncultured' crowd".²¹² 'Deeply rooted gender norms'²¹³ held by Afrikaners were traditionally rather conservative (and critical), while English-speaking South Africans generally held liberal (and accepting) views of the future role of women in uniform and their participation in defence.²¹⁴

In 1975, Hulett became the first woman in the Navy to be promoted to the rank of lieutenant commander. She received further recognition for the valuable work she had done when she received the SADF Commendation Medal from the Chief of the Navy in 1976, the first woman in the SAN to be bestowed this honour.²¹⁵ But much like Lt Liebenberg and other Swans who decided to "tie the knot", Hulett had a short career in the Navy. She resigned her commission in September 1979, married, and relocated.²¹⁶ The post of SSO Swans was abolished in 1991 as women were fully integrated and absorbed into the Navy. The Homestead in Fish Hoek subsequently became a combined senior rates mess and was renamed Southern Floe.²¹⁷

Although the career progression of women was generally on a par with that of their male counterparts, it was often curtailed by their own commitment to marriage and motherhood. In this regard, SADF policy and the lack of service benefits to accommodate aspects, such as maternity, complicated matters and resulted in stunted career paths. The SADF went so far as to offer a so-called "marriage gratuity" to those who remained single for the first five years of their service in the Permanent Force. The only maternity "benefit" offered to married women (in 1977) was twelve months unpaid leave (without loss of seniority).²¹⁸

Going to Sea: First Sea Training and Subsequent Developments

The naval careers of women were strictly limited to shore-based appointments and mainly restricted to the telecommunication mustering. Their utilisation was aimed at allowing men to go to sea in support of deployments. The first permanent appointment of a woman to sea only occurred in 1996. Before that – for more than 23 years – Swans were only temporarily accommodated on navy ships on special occasions.²¹⁹

The first opportunity to go to sea occurred when 12 Swans under the direction of Lieutenant Hulett spent ten days at sea (19–29 May 1974) on board the fleet replenishment vessel SAS *Tafelberg* on passage between Simon's Town and Durban. The training cruise was aimed to expose the Swans to shipping communication, watch-keeping and naval life in general. The Swans received lectures and tours on replenishment at sea, navigation, stores administration, the engine room, first aid, and nuclear, biological and chemical defence. They were slotted into the watch system, and worked the same watches as the men while their duties also included bridge look-out, bridge wireless office duties, tactical communication, and shifts as mess cooks. SAS *Tafelberg* – being the largest vessel in service at the time – was spacious enough, and the Swans were accommodated separately in vacant midshipmen's cabins. They were popular guests, and "well entertained" in the Senior Rates Smoke Room until 21:30 every evening, until the coxswain escorted them back to their quarters. Hulett reported favourably on the behaviour and discipline of the Swans noting that they had gained valuable experience. In terms of her own experience,



Hulett noted that the officers on SAS *Tafelberg* generously accepted her presence in the Wardroom.²²⁰



Figure 7: Swans conducting “both watches” on board the fleet replenishment vessel SAS *Tafelberg* in 1973.²²¹

Although it was not the case at the time, the venture could have served as an early assessment for the future utilisation of women on board SAN ships. At the time, the success relied heavily, as Hulett explained, on ‘the complete understanding, encouragement and unfailing help provided by the crew of SAS *Tafelberg*’.²²² After all, the Swans were temporary guests on board, and were accommodated and treated as such.

Cygnets: The First Officers

On 8 April 1973, the Chief of the Navy, Vice Admiral “Flam” Johnson wrote to the Chief of Defence Staff that there were officer’s posts in the Navy available for women – in administration, stores, as inspectors and at specialist branches. Johnson also pointed out, ‘resistance to the use of women in certain posts would have to be overcome’.²²³ Employing women in officer’s posts in the Navy was however subject to certain limitations. Women had to be utilised ashore, as there was no provision to accommodate them on board ships and in posts that did not require an intimate technical knowledge of ships.

The first appointments of women to officer’s posts had been effected when Liebenberg and Hulett were transferred to the Navy in March 1973 and April 1974 respectively. The



selection of the first female SAN officers from within its own ranks occurred towards the end of 1974 when five Swans were selected for a month-long officer's orientation course at Naval College (see Figure 8).

The first "full-length" midshipman's course for Swans occurred a year later, and ran concurrently with the course for men from March to July 1976. Seven Swans, Midshipmen Croft, Devine, Dixon, Herselman, Swart and Whitehead were selected. Anne Croft (later Trueman) had worked briefly as a typist after she had matriculated but "found the work extremely boring".²²⁴ Her older brother was a naval officer and encouraged her to join the Navy, which she did in 1975. Following basic training at SAS *Saldanha*, she completed the telecommunications course at Signal School and worked at Silvermine for a few months. The standard of training for midshipmen at Naval College in Gordon's Bay was high and not all midshipmen completed the demanding course.²²⁵



Figure 8: The first officer's orientation course for Swans was held between 4 December 1974 and 8 January 1975 at the Naval College, Gordon's Bay. Standing (L-R) Sub Lieutenant Stander, Midshipmen Struwig, McMurray, Jurgenson and Ross.²²⁶

Following midshipman training, Anne Croft completed a number of admin courses and was then posted to the office of Prime Minister John Vorster, as an assistant to his press secretary. Her tour of duty "outside the Navy" was typical of the wider application of female naval officers to other staff divisions of the SADF and even the Ministry.²²⁷ By the end of 1977, Croft was re-assigned to the Navy projects office where, amongst others, she facilitated the return of naval members and their families to South Africa following the cancellation of the French corvette and submarine projects. Her final posting was to the Navy public relations office, serving there as a sub lieutenant, before she resigned in 1979 to travel overseas.²²⁸



Keeping it in the Navy or not

Croft herself remembered most of the men in the Navy as ‘very respectful’ and ‘absolute gentlemen’.²²⁹ One could argue that a number of navy men – and especially male officers – were smitten by the Swans’ entry into the Navy. Swans were however also enamoured of the presence and stature of male officers. By the late 1970s, the number of ‘dual naval weddings’²³⁰ were most noticeable. Annette Ross, who completed the first midshipman’s course in January 1975, married Lieutenant Commander Andrew Rennie on 6 September 1975, while Maksie Viljoen, who attended the midshipmen’s course in 1976, married the course training officer Commander Jacques de Vos. There were several others that followed suit.²³¹

But not all Swans left the Navy because they wanted to get married. Dale Slatem (née McMurray) reflected on the events that unfolded towards the end of the 1970s:

The month I left in 1979 something like 26 officers left, male and female and some highly qualified ones, because of the early retirement of my dad [Commodore McMurray], [Commodore] Jupp and [Commodore] Kramer. Magnus Malan replaced them with broederbonders [*sic*] and as a result those 26 left.²³²

As explained above, after the appointment of General Magnus Malan as Chief of the SADF in September 1976 following the retirement of the long-serving Admiral HH Biermann, there was an exodus of officers. Malan was a member of the Broederbond, and during his tenure, he often advanced the cause of Afrikaner senior officers, mostly at the cost of English-speaking senior officers who were considered to be part of ‘the old guard’.²³³ Such political disruptions affected both male and female members, especially those who held a more liberal view. During the mid-1970s, the majority of senior naval officers and senior rates in Simon’s Town were of English orientation and they were obviously circumspect of the Afrikaner Nationalist ambitions.²³⁴

The presence of women became increasingly noticeable at a higher level, and by the early 1980s, positions were held by seasoned Swans who had progressed through the ranks.²³⁵

The Aftermath

Twenty-five women had joined the SAN PF in (December) 1972 and (January) 1973. In April 1983, a parade was held in Simon’s Town to observe the ten years since the Swans were reconstituted. From the first group, only six had remained in the service of the Navy. They were Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Roach (née Retief), CPO Squier (née Buss), CPO Grobelaar (née La Grange), CPO McMeekan (née Lingard), Petty Officer (PO) Harmer (née Smit) and PO Visser – all received the Good Service Medal for ten years of service.²³⁶ Three of them remained in the service to retirement by which time they had all progressed to the rank of warrant officer. This represented a small percentage but nevertheless proved that career progression could be achieved by women who had managed to stay on in the service “to the end”.



In 1992, twenty years after the Swans had been reconstituted, the last traditional Swans basic training course was presented at SAS *Saldanha*. From 1994 (there was no course scheduled in 1993), basic training courses were integrated into what became known as the Military Training for Ratings Part 1 course. At the time, approximately 300 women were serving in the SAN PF – a small but very noticeable six percent of the Navy’s total complement.²³⁷

The previous government’s policy of racial segregation affected women of colour who wanted to join the Navy more severely than their male counterparts. Coloured men (from 1965) and Indian men (from 1974) could join the Navy in limited numbers, but their female counterparts could only do so from 1987.²³⁸ Even then basic training remained segregated until 1991. This disparity – especially as it related to the late recruitment of Africans (both male and female) to the Navy – was only fully redressed from 1994 onwards. A new democratic dispensation and a process of integration and transformation in the SANDF ensured the implementation of race and gender equality in the SAN.²³⁹

Conclusion

This article focused on the first appointment of women in the Navy in 1972 and 1973. The motivation behind the recruitment and employment of women in the PF of the SADF and the SAN was rooted in the persistent manpower shortage that affected the organisation during the 1960s and 1970s. Their constricted but purposeful employment in support functions served a bigger purpose than just to allow more male sailors to be utilised at the “sharp end”. The unique abilities of women, especially in the telecom and training environment, enabled the SAN to maintain and develop important new capabilities from the mid-1970s onwards, especially in the telecom and technical data environment.

Moreover, the militarisation of women provided further weight to the wider militarisation of SA white society as a whole, which was an important component of the government’s national strategy during the 1970s. It was such policy that excluded women of colour from joining the SAN until it was partially resolved in 1987 and only fully re-dressed from 1994 onward.

The career progression of women was generally on a par with that of their male counterparts, but often cut short by their own commitment to marriage and motherhood. In this regard, SADF policy and the lack of service benefits to accommodate aspects, such as maternity leave, complicated matters and resulted in stunted career paths. As a result, a very small percentage of the original 1972–1973 group remained members for more than ten years, and even a smaller percentage to retirement. Irrespective of the years of service, those who were interviewed, revealed a very positive loyalty to their class and to the SAN overall.

The first Swans of the 1970s achieved many “career firsts” that broke new ground to the many other women who would ultimately follow in their footsteps.



ENDNOTES

- ¹³⁴ Commander Leon Steyn is the officer-in-charge of the South African Naval Museum in Simon's Town and a master's graduate (*cum laude*) of the Department of Military History at the Faculty of Military Science of Stellenbosch University. His thesis focused on human transformation of the South African Navy between 1957 and 1993.
- ¹³⁵ HR Gordon-Cumming, *Official History of the South African Naval Forces during the Second World War 1939–1945* (Simon's Town: Naval Heritage Trust South Africa, 2008), 199–201.
- ¹³⁶ A junior enlisted sailor who is not a warrant officer or commissioned officer.
- ¹³⁷ MPH Laver (ed.), *Sailor-women Sea-women, SWANS: A History of the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943–1949* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), 46–58.
- ¹³⁸ MPH Laver (ed.), *Sailor-women Sea-women, SWANS: A History of the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943–1949* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), 61.
- ¹³⁹ Sea-bed mounted sonar.
- ¹⁴⁰ MPH Laver (ed.), *Sailor-women Sea-women, SWANS: A History of the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943–1949* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), 88–96.
- ¹⁴¹ MPH Laver (ed.), *Sailor-women Sea-women, SWANS: A History of the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943–1949* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), 215.
- ¹⁴² The terminology reflects the racial terms that were in use during the period under discussion and the historical record of the time. No negative connotation is implied.
- ¹⁴³ Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of Free State, PV 467, JJ Fouché, File 3/13/2 Speeches Defence General, 1962–1964, J Fouché speech, 'Die Rol van die Vrou ten Opsigte van Selfverdediging en Landsverdediging: Bloemfontein Damesklub, 18 September 1964'.
- ¹⁴⁴ HM Ross, *A Woman's World at a Time of War: An Analysis of Selected Women's Diaries during the Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902* (MA thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 2006), 97–98.
- ¹⁴⁵ L Jooste, *FC Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging 1948–1959* (MA thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1995), 93–94.
- ¹⁴⁶ L Jooste, *FC Erasmus as Minister van Verdediging 1948–1959* (MA thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1995), 93–94.
- ¹⁴⁷ R Warwick, *White South Africa and Defence, 1960–1968: Militarization, Threat Perceptions and Counter Strategies* (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 2009), 49–51.
- ¹⁴⁸ See A du Toit, *Southern Sentinel: The Anglo-South African Simon's Town Agreements and the Collective Defence of the Cape Sea Route during the Cold War, 1945–1975* (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2019).
- ¹⁴⁹ IJ van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015), 240–241.



- ¹⁵⁰ Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of Free State, PV 467, JJ Fouché, File 3/13/2 Speeches Defence General, 1962-1964, J Fouché speech, 'Die Rol van die Vrou ten Opsigte van Selfverdediging en Landsverdediging: Bloemfontein Damesklub, 18 September 1964'.
- ¹⁵¹ JL Snider, 'The Reconstitution of the SWANS', in MPH Laver (ed.), *Sailor-women Sea-women, SWANS: A History of the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943-1949* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), 394-395.
- ¹⁵² Correspondent, 'Van heinde en verre', *Paratus*, 22, 5 (1971), 28.
- ¹⁵³ R Warwick, *White South Africa and Defence, 1960-1968: Militarization, Threat Perceptions and Counter Strategies* (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 2009), 261.
- ¹⁵⁴ N Mankayi, 'Male Constructions and Resistance to Women in the Military', *Scientia Militaria*, 34, 2 (2006), 45.
- ¹⁵⁵ PJ Haupt, *First Swans TO(R) Course*, Naval Heritage Trust Facebook group comment, 5 January 2018. <<https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10155313069348233&set=gm.1980042572244467>> [Accessed on 5 January 2018].
- ¹⁵⁶ SAN Museum Oral History Project, File: Dale Slatem (née McMurray).
- ¹⁵⁷ SAN Museum Oral History Project, File: Annette Rennie (née Ross).
- ¹⁵⁸ See *Paratus*, 24, 2 (February 1973), 52, 65.
- ¹⁵⁹ The Minister of Defence, PW Botha, was a staunch proponent of the CDC and it was established in his constituency of George.
- ¹⁶⁰ IJ van der Waag, *A Military History of Modern South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2015), 241.
- ¹⁶¹ EM Kotzé, *Perspectives on Masculinity, Femininity and the South African Military: Gender Relations with Specific Focus on the Impact of the South African Army Women's College and the SADF 1971-1998* (MA thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 2015), 62.
- ¹⁶² EM Kotzé, *Perspectives on Masculinity, Femininity and the South African Military: Gender Relations with Specific Focus on the Impact of the South African Army Women's College and the SADF 1971-1998* (MA thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 2015), 63.
- ¹⁶³ EM Kotzé, *Perspectives on Masculinity, Femininity and the South African Military: Gender Relations with Specific Focus on the Impact of the South African Army Women's College and the SADF 1971-1998* (MA thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 2015), 62; Anon, 'Ons Maak 'n Sukses van 'n Eksperiment', *Paratus*, 23, 8 (1971), 40-43.
- ¹⁶⁴ JL Snider, 'The Reconstitution of the SWANS', in MPH Laver (ed.), *Sailor-women Sea-women, SWANS: A History of the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943-1949* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), 394.
- ¹⁶⁵ DoD Archives, C Navy Group 11, Box 311, File: VSH/1/55/12 Vol. 1, Administration Recruiting of Women Defence Corps Chief of the Navy to Director General Personnel, VSH/1/20/7 (V), dated 7 August 1972, Recruiting of Permanent Force Women at the Civil Defence College; JL Snider, 'The Reconstitution of the SWANS', in MPH Laver (ed.), *Sailor-women Sea-women, SWANS: A History of the South African Women's Auxiliary Naval Service, 1943-1949* (Simon's Town: Swans History Publication Fund, 1986), 394.



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Perceived Barriers Affecting Adherence to Healthy Eating and Exercise Guidelines among Obese Active-Duty Military Personnel of the South African National Defence Force

Magdeline Alcock

*South African National Defence Force
School of Health Systems and Public Health
University of Pretoria²⁴⁰ *

Jacqueline E Wolvaardt
*School of Health Systems and Public Health
University of Pretoria²⁴¹ *

Abstract

The World Health Organization defines overweight and obesity as an excessive or a disproportionate accumulation of body fat that impairs health. The South African military community is a subset of the general population, and is not exempt from the effects of overweight and obesity. Military recruitment and operational preparedness are directly affected by obesity as it affects members' physical fitness, overall health, and capacity to perform duties optimally. The South African Military Health Services uses a multidisciplinary approach for the treatment and prevention of obesity and related conditions. Assessing perceived barriers to physical activity and healthy eating within the military environment could contribute to the development of effective and relevant programmes to address weight management and mitigate the health consequences of obesity. The current cross-sectional study was conducted in Bloemfontein, and comprised 58 randomly selected active-duty military personnel diagnosed with obesity, who completed a self-administered questionnaire. Correlation analysis was used to investigate the association between continuous data by calculating the Pearson's correlation coefficient. Analytical statistics, namely the independent T-test or analysis of the variance, was used to compare mean values among groups. The five items identified as barriers to healthy eating habits were liking food too much, difficulty controlling cravings, staying motivated, perceiving healthy food to be expensive, and a lack of will power. The five items identified as barriers to physical activity were a lack of will power to get started, social activities that do not include physical activity, a lack of physical training centres and shower facilities at work, no motivation to stick to a plan for healthy eating, and being too busy. Factors related to the military environment did not affect perceived barriers. A multidisciplinary and coordinated approach might enable the target population to attain better health outcomes, as the identified barriers were related to social and environmental factors and perceptions

of self-efficacy. Further investigation into the enablers and motivators of behaviour change in this population would shed more light on addressing the apparent lack of motivation that persists among active-duty military personnel.

Keywords: Obesity, Adherence, Lifestyle, Military, Barriers, Motivation, Behaviour.

Background

Healthy eating and increased physical activity are lifestyle changes that have been shown to be the most affordable and most cost-effective factors in the control and management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).²⁴² However, individuals who report more perceived barriers to behaviour change have poorer motivation and self-efficacy to change than those who report fewer perceived barriers, according to health behaviour theories, such as social cognitive theory (SCT) and the health belief model (HBM).²⁴³ SCT proposes a multidimensional causal framework in which self-efficacy beliefs combine with objectives, outcome expectancies, and perceived environmental barriers and facilitators in the control of human motivation, behaviour and wellbeing. Among the components of the HBM, perceived barriers have been cited as the most significant predictor of behaviour change.^{244,245} Common examples of these perceived barriers to regular physical activity and practicing healthy eating habits are the absence of exercise facilities, finding time to exercise, willpower, and the cost of healthy food.^{246,247} Various studies have reported on the barriers to healthy lifestyles experienced by workers as reported in a systematic review by Mazzola.²⁴⁸ Barriers may differ across subgroups of the population. Moreover, the role that the working environment plays in daily health decisions has not been explored sufficiently in the South African National Defence Force, which is one such subgroup. “Barriers” in the context of this study, were defined as elements that active-duty military personnel (ADMP) describe as making it difficult to make healthy food choices or engage in physical activity. For this reason, we wanted to explore associations between perceived barriers to healthy eating and participating in physical activity, and sociodemographic variables of the overweight and obese ADMP, as well as the military-specific aspects, such as rank group, deployment, course attendance, and physical training opportunities.

Overweight and Obesity Globally and in the South African Context

Excessive body weight or the disproportionate accumulation of fat may impair health, and is a known important risk factor for the development of NCDs and higher mortality worldwide.^{249,250} Known negative effects of overweight and obesity are the higher prevalence of chronic diseases (such as Type 2 diabetes and hypertension) among the obese population when compared to those with a normal body mass index (BMI).^{9,251,252} The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported a substantial global increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity amongst adults.²⁵³ BMI is a measurement of weight in relation to height (reported as weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in metres or kg/m²), and is used as a screening tool for risk of developing lifestyle diseases. The WHO considers a BMI of ≥ 25 kg/m² as overweight, and a BMI of ≥ 30 kg/m² as obese. Findings show that globally 39 per cent of adults (18 years and older) are overweight, while 13 per cent are obese. Furthermore, between 1980 and 2014, the prevalence of obesity nearly doubled worldwide.²⁵⁴



According to the 2014 South African Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (SANHANES-1), obesity levels have increased in South Africa and with them, there was an increased risk of metabolic complications associated with chronic diseases.²⁵⁵ Data from the SANHANES-1 indicate that the BMI, waist circumference, and waist–hip ratio all show an increasing trend among South Africans aged 15 years and older.²⁵⁶ When compared to the 2003 South African Demographic and Health Survey, the SANHANES-1 shows that the greatest increase in mean BMI was in the age group 55 to 64 years of age (28,5 kg/m² to 31,3 kg/m²), and in people living in the Free State (26,4 kg/m² to 29,6 kg/m²).^{257,258} The 2017 South African Demographic and Health Survey reported a combined prevalence of overweight and obesity of 68 per cent for females and 31 per cent for males.²⁵⁹ The same survey reported a 20 per cent prevalence of severe obesity (BMI more or equal to 35 kg/m²) for females and 3 per cent for males.²⁶⁰

The role of diet and physical activity in health and weight management is well known. Healthy eating and increased physical activity are lifestyle changes that have been shown to be the most affordable and cost-effective factors in the control and management of NCDs.^{261,262} Furthermore, diet and exercise have been identified as major components of the strategy to prevent and control obesity in South Africa.²⁶³

Barriers to Healthy Eating and Exercise among South Africans

Various barriers influence participation in exercise and/or physical activity, and practicing healthy eating habits among the South African (SA) general population. Many of the studies conducted focused on specific subgroups of the population, such as female caregivers,²⁶⁴ adolescent girls in rural populations,²⁶⁵ healthcare workers,²⁶⁶ physiotherapy students,²⁶⁷ and first-year university students.²⁶⁸

These studies commonly cited preferences of family members for unhealthy food,²⁶⁹ budget restrictions,²⁷⁰ and the cost of healthy food.^{271,272} The availability of healthy food is not perceived as a barrier in urban settings, but the cost of such food is.²⁷³ The availability of healthy options is viewed as a barrier in some,²⁷⁴ but not all, rural settings.²⁷⁵ The convenience and taste of fast food was emphasised in urban settings,²⁷⁶ while peer pressure and aspirations to buy more socially acceptable fast foods were cited in a rural setting.²⁷⁷ A lack of motivation for physical activity²⁷⁸ and not enough free time²⁷⁹ are commonly perceived barriers to physical activity.

Overweight and Obesity in the Military Community

The global pattern in overweight and obesity has been noticed in several military communities around the world.^{280,281,282,283} Obesity in the military community directly affects the readiness to deploy, as well as the performance of duties in the deployment areas. In a 2010 report from the United States, the impact of obesity on military readiness, recruitment, and retention was highlighted. In the 17–24-year-old group, 27 per cent did not meet the BMI standard, and was the primary reason why this group could not enlist.²⁸⁴ In 2015, a longitudinal study done over 13 years showed a high prevalence of overweight and obesity amongst active armed forces personnel in the United States. The most significant increase in the prevalence of obesity was among female soldiers.²⁸⁵



Obesity threatens the overall health as well as the recruitment ability of the military. Bin Horaib et al. report a 40,9 per cent prevalence of overweight and a 29 per cent prevalence of obesity among the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Military.²⁸⁶ Data from the British Army in 2011 revealed that, of the 50 635 study participants, 56,7 per cent were overweight, and among these, 12 per cent were obese.²⁸⁷ Predictors associated with the prevalence of overweight in military personnel were found to be age, gender, marital status, and military rank.^{288,289}

Obesity in the South African National Defence Force

Although data exist for the prevalence of obesity in the SA context, there is a paucity of data for the military community despite the fact that obesity could affect recruitment for military service, military readiness to deploy and/or be operational, as well as retention of military personnel. In a recent study, Haasbroek et al. found a prevalence of overweight and obesity of 38,6 per cent and 36.1 per cent respectively at an Air Force Base in South Africa.²⁹⁰ A study done in an Army Support Base in Gauteng found a prevalence of overweight (26,3 per cent) and obesity (42,1 per cent) in women and 31 per cent and 35,7 per cent in men respectively.²⁹¹

The South African Military Health Services (SAMHS) offer comprehensive health care and uses a multidisciplinary approach for the treatment and prevention of obesity and related conditions through its own health centres and three military hospitals.²⁹² The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) also makes provision for regular participation in sport and recreation as well as fitness testing in its Physical Training, Sport and Recreation Policy.²⁹³ Despite the provisions made for exercise, not all members comply, and Ngoepe found that fewer women (44 per cent) than men (71,2 per cent) met the requirement of the recommended weekly physical activity.²⁹⁴

The health status of ADMP has been identified by the Department of Defence (DoD) as a strategic issue, as combat readiness of DoD members is directly affected. As part of performing standard physical examination, the BMI and waist-to-hip ratio are measured.²⁹⁵ The BMI is used as an appropriate and simple indicator to relate weight-for-height to health outcomes. Apart from athletes and the elderly, the BMI has been shown to be a relatively dependable indicator of adult body fat.²⁹⁶ The maximum cut-off BMI for ADMP in the SANDF of $\leq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$ is considered acceptable, and a BMI of $> 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$ is used as a cut-off point for referral for intervention.²⁹⁷

All uniformed members of the SANDF are required to do a Concurrent Health Assessment (CHA), which comprises social, psychological, dental, audiology, and medical screening. The CHA focuses on identifying potential health risk factors in ADMP. A comprehensive range of healthcare services (e.g. dietitians, biokineticists, nurses, social workers, psychologists, etc.) is available via the SAMHS, should any of the screening processes indicate a need for intervention.²⁹⁸ Even though lifestyle interventions – which commonly involve combining diet, physical activity and behaviour change – are efficacious strategies, these programmes are often plagued by poor attendance and poor adherence.²⁹⁹ Perceived barriers, which refer to an individual's evaluation of the potential obstacles to adherence,



may lessen the likelihood of engaging in a health behaviour. There are numerous studies that have explored predictors of behaviour change in the general population.^{300,301,302} Despite the availability of healthcare practitioners (HCPs) to provide education and guidelines in terms of nutrition, advice about exercise, and policies to promote physical training in the SANDF, ADMP appear to face particular barriers that prevent adherence to recommendations regarding healthy eating and exercise. Factors affecting adherence to dietary and exercise advice and the influence of the unique environment of the SANDF have not been explored sufficiently. The current study examined which factors may be affecting non-adherence of ADMP to diet and exercise guidelines as experienced in the SANDF.

Methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted.

Participants

Computerised records were used to identify ADMP with a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m². Participants were randomly selected from these health records, and BMI assessments were performed over the period January 2017 to December 2018. A sample size of 100 was considered adequate for a population of 1 168 members from the 12 participating units. Using a Microsoft Excel[®]-generated random number selection, 115 members were invited to participate.

Measures

A thorough review of the literature of perceived barriers to following healthy eating and exercise guidelines was completed as part of the design of the questionnaire.^{303,304,305,306} Participants were asked to indicate the likelihood of barriers prohibiting them from following healthy eating habits on a 17-item survey from the work of Sun et al. (2019) who used a four-point Likert-type scale (where very unlikely = 1, somewhat unlikely = 2, somewhat likely = 3, and very likely = 4).³⁰⁷ Barriers to physical activity were assessed by using the Barriers to Being Active Quiz, a 21-item questionnaire developed by the Centers for Disease Control.³⁰⁸ Socio-demographic information and information on participants' working environment were included.

Procedures

Participants were selected based on previous anthropometry measurements, which indicated that they are obese. After recruitment, participants were invited to the health facilities to complete the surveys. Informed consent was signed by all participants, and they received instructions on the completion of the surveys. Anthropometric measurements were performed by the principal investigator to ascertain whether the participants were indeed still obese. Weight measurements were taken twice on the day of assessment for accuracy using a calibrated Seca 876 scale. Participants were weighed without shoes and in minimal clothing. Weight was recorded in kilograms to two decimal places. Height was measurement using a Seca 217 stadiometer, and recorded in meters to two decimal places.



The BMI was calculated in Excel® using the formula weight divided by height in meters squared (kg/m²). The average of two weight readings was used for BMI calculations. Only two participants had a BMI of < 30 kg/m² and were subsequently excluded from the study.

Data Analysis

The SAS statistical software suite was used for data analysis. According to the Shapiro–Wilk test for normality, the distribution of age of the participants did not follow a normal distribution ($W=0.947$, $p=0.0136$). Consequently, the median and inter-quartile range was reported. Sample characteristics were described by means of descriptive statistics.

In the current study, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to calculate the internal consistency of items in the two barrier subscales, namely barriers to healthy eating and barriers to physical activity. The barriers to healthy eating subscale consisted of 17 items, and the reliability analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.864. The subscale had a good internal consistency ($\alpha > 0.80$). The barriers to physical activity subscale consisted of 21 items, and the reliability analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.895. This subscale also had a good internal consistency ($\alpha > 0.80$). Each of the items in the subscales was scored by allocating a numerical value to each category of the Likert-type scale (very unlikely = 1, somewhat unlikely = 2, somewhat likely = 3, and very likely = 4). Barriers with a high likelihood consequently also had a high score. For each participant, a total healthy eating barrier score was calculated by adding the scores of all 17 items. The same was done for the physical activity for all 21 items. Correlation analysis was used to investigate the association between continuous data and categorical data by calculating the Pearson's correlation coefficient. Analytical statistics, namely the independent T-test or analysis of the variance (ANOVA), were used to compare mean values among groups. A significance level (α) of 0.05 was used.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (182/2019). Defence Intelligence and 1 Military Hospital Research Ethics Committee gave approval for the study to be conducted on military personnel and premises prior to the commencement of the study. Permission was also granted by the Area Military Health Unit Free State and the Directorate Ancillary Health. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Each participant received an information sheet about the study, and could withdraw at any time.

Results

Fifty-eight members agreed to participate (response rate was 50 per cent). Figure 1 represents the process of participant selection. Duplicate records were identified through a search in Excel®.



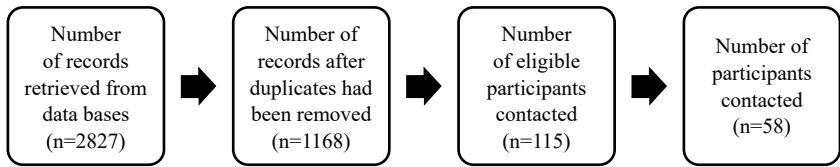


Figure 1. Sample population

The majority of the participants were black (African) (64 per cent) with a median age of 43 years and median BMI of 35,7 kg/m² (Table 1).

Of the 58 participants, 31 (53 per cent) were male. The sample included mostly non-commissioned officers (NCOs) (n=47), which included military skills development members (MSDS) to Warrant Officers while the officers included ranks from lieutenant to lieutenant colonel (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic information

Socio-demographic characteristics	n (%)	Socio-demographic characteristics	n (%)
Gender		Age (years)	
Male	31 (53%)	Median	43 (IQR 35.50)*
Female	27 (47%)	Range	28 to 59
Race		Anthropometry	
Black (African)	38 (64%)	Height (mean)	1.67 m
White	9 (15%)	Weight (median)	98.7 kg (IQR 91.00–111.00)*
Coloured	10 (17%)	BMI (median)	35.7 kg/m ²
Khoisan	1 (2%)		
Marital status	57 (98%)	Highest level of education	58 (100%)
Single	17 (20%)	< Grade 12	7 (12%)
Married or life partner	30 (53%)	Grade 12	28 (48%)
Divorced	8 (14%)	N1–N4	2 (3%)
Widowed	2 (4%)	Grade 12, certificate	5 (9%)
Arm of service	58 (100%)	Grade 12, diploma	10 (17%)

Socio-demographic characteristics	n (%)	Socio-demographic characteristics	n (%)
SA Army	34 (59%)	Bachelor's degree	4 (7%)
SA Air Force	7 (12%)	Master's degree	2 (3%)
SA Military Health Services	17 (29%)	Doctoral degree	0
Rank group	58 (100%)	Living arrangements	57 (98%)
MSDS**	4 (7%)	Living in mess	7 (12%)
Junior NCO	22 (38%)	Living outside	50 (86%)
Senior NCO	21 (39%)		
Junior officer	7 (12%)		
Senior officer	4 (%)		

*IQR = inter-quartile range; **MSDS = military skills development

Most of the households consisted of three members (n=15), or four members (n=12); though it ranged from 1 to 8 members. Twenty six per cent of participants were deployed, while 19 per cent were on course for six months or longer in the two years preceding the question. One participant did not respond to the question.

Except for one participant who did not respond, only 12 other participants (21 per cent) had never been referred for diet and/or exercise advice for weight management during their military career. The remaining 45 participants (77 per cent) had received referrals at least once for weight management. Close to two-thirds (64 per cent) of the participants had received structured diet plans to achieve weight loss (Figure 2).

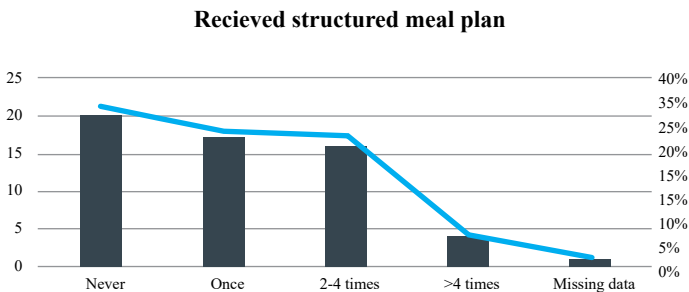


Figure 2. Frequency of receiving structured meal plan.

Fifty-nine per cent of the participants (n=34) reported that they had received diet and exercise advice from other HCPs, such as doctors, nurses, or occupational therapists.



The most common barriers to healthy eating were factors related to motivation and/or self-control. The mean and standard deviation (SD) of the 17 items in the barriers to healthy eating subscale are reported in Table 2.

George and Mallery's rule of thumb for the Cronbach's alpha score is when $\alpha > 0.9$ (excellent), > 0.8 (good), > 0.7 (acceptable), > 0.6 (questionable), > 0.5 (poor), and < 0.5 (unacceptable). The Cronbach's alpha score of $\alpha=0.864$ for the healthy eating subscale can therefore be considered as good.

Table 2: Mean item score for barriers to healthy eating

Item or statement	Mean	SD
I like food too much	2.78	0.96
Sometimes I have difficulty controlling cravings	2.67	1.28
I have trouble staying motivated when my efforts to control eating does not result in weight loss	2.62	1.25
Whenever I buy healthier food, it is too expensive for me	2.53	1.11
I lack willpower to follow healthy eating guidelines	2.52	1.23
Healthy foods are not as nice (enjoyable) to eat as the food I usually eat	2.48	1.19
I have trouble estimating portion sizes	2.38	1.20
I do not have family or friends or colleagues that support my efforts	2.17	1.16
The thought of not being able to eat what I want depresses me	2.16	1.23
I feel social group pressure in situations where eating a lot of food seems to be expected	2.14	1.15
I am so busy that I don't have time to prepare healthy food	2.14	1.03
Healthy food is often not available when it is time for me to eat	2.09	1.01
I don't know what are the healthy foods I should be eating to lose weight	2.05	1.07
There are limited options of healthy foods at restaurants	1.95	1.07
I don't know how to prepare healthy foods	1.86	1.12
I do not have control over the food prepared for me to eat	1.78	0.99
There are limited options of healthy foods at supermarkets near me	1.69	0.84

For each participant, a total healthy eating barrier score was calculated by adding the scores of all 17 items. The mean for this group was 38.00 (SD= \pm 10.66).

A lack of motivation and social support and resources (facilities), and being too tired or too busy were the top perceived barriers to physical activity (PBPA) cited by

participants (Table 3). There was a lack of any significant relationship between any of the socio-demographic variables and the perceived barriers to healthy eating and physical activity. The Cronbach’s alpha for barriers to physical activity was 0.895, which could be considered good.

Table 3: Mean item score for barriers to physical activity

Item or statement	Mean	SD
I’ve been thinking about getting more exercise, but I just can’t seem to get started	2.84	1.12
My usual social activities with family or friends do not include physical activity	2.75	1.15
If we had exercise facilities and showers at work, then I would be more likely to exercise	2.66	1.26
I want to get more exercise, but I just can’t seem to make myself stick to anything	2.62	1.18
I’m just too tired after work to get any exercise	2.55	1.05
Day is too busy to include physical activity	2.52	1.13
It’s easier for me to find excuses not to exercise than to go out to do something	2.51	1.18
I’m too tired during the week and I need the weekend to catch up on my rest	2.19	1.13
None of my family members or friends like to do anything active	2.16	1.11
My free times during the day are too short to include exercise	2.16	1.12
I don’t get enough sleep as it is. I just couldn’t get up early or stay up late to get some exercise	2.09	1.11
It’s just too expensive. You have to take a class, or join a club or buy the right equipment	2.03	1.11
Physical activity takes too much time away from other commitments—time, work, family, etc.	1.91	1.01
I’m getting older so exercise can be risky	1.89	0.92
I’m not good enough at any physical activity to make it fun	1.84	1.04
I’m embarrassed about how I will look when I exercise with others	1.81	0.95
I don’t get enough exercise because I have never learned the skills for any sport	1.72	0.95
I don’t have access to jogging trails, swimming pools, bike paths, etc.	1.72	1.06
I’m afraid I might injure myself or have a heart attack	1.66	0.91
I really can’t see learning a new sport at my age	1.60	0.94
I know of too many people who have hurt themselves by overdoing it with exercise	1.55	0.96

For each participant, a total physical activity barrier score was calculated by adding the scores of all 21 items. The mean for this group was 44.64 (SD=+/- 12.51).



Factors related to the military environment and application of the Physical Training, Sport and Recreation Policy were explored (Table 4).

Table 4: Reported factors related to the exercise environment

Factor	No	Yes	Not applicable
Allowed to participate in physical training	84%	16%	
Availability of exercise facilities (gym) in unit	57%	43%	
Uses private gym	43%	57%	
Access to facilities	43%	19%	36%
Unit physical training programme	40%	60%	

Participants answered the open-ended question: “What is the most important thing that stops you from exercising?” Of the 58 participants, 15 participants (26 per cent) indicated that they had no reason for being physically inactive. The remaining 43 participants gave 51 reasons why they were not physically active. Since the participants gave more than one reason, the total is more than 100 per cent (Table 5).

Table 5: Main reasons for not exercising

Reason for not exercising (n=43)	Frequency	Percent
Lack of motivation/willpower/discipline	9	21%
Workload/Work schedule	8	19%
Lack of time	6	14%
Laziness	6	14%
Physical injury	6	14%
Procrastinating	3	7%
Training – Attending courses	3	7%
Family responsibilities	2	5%
Health reason	2	5%
Boredom, not enjoying exercise	1	2%
Consider physical labour at work and home as part of exercise	1	2%
Exercise is hard work	1	2%
Lack of exercise partner	1	2%
Lack of PT [physical training] instructor in unit to draw up a programme	1	2%
Lack of shower facilities at work	1	2%

Most participants (86 per cent) stayed outside of the mess (thus not consuming meals provided by the mess). The information on the home food environment was only reported



by those living outside of the mess (n=50). Thirty-three participants (66 per cent) indicated that they prepared meals themselves, whereas 21 (42 per cent) reported that their spouse or partners prepared the meals. Others indicated that a child (n=8) or helper (n=2) prepared meals. There were several participants (n=13) who indicated a combination. Twenty-seven participants (54 per cent) ate at least three meals per day. The median budget spent on food and/or groceries was ZAR2 500.00 per household (IQR 2000 to 3000).

The following findings reflect a correlation between participants' budget for food and groceries and PBHE and PBPA scores as reported by those living outside of the mess (n=50). The correlation between the grocery budget and the PBHE mean score was weak ($r=0.03$) and not significant ($p=0.8578$). This finding implies that the grocery budget did not have a significant association with the total score for PBHE. There was a weak positive correlation between budget and PBPA mean score ($r=0.16$). This correlation was however also not significant ($p=0.2689$). This finding implies that the grocery budget did not have a significant association with PBPA scores.

Pearson's correlation coefficient test was performed to determine any linear correlation between the PBHE data and the demographic data, and between the PBPA data and the demographic sets of data. There was a weak negative correlation between age and the mean total score for PBHEs ($r=-0.23$), and between age and the mean total score for PBPA ($r=-0.08$). Neither correlation was significant ($p=0.0822$ and $p=0.5644$ respectively).

The mean scores for PBHE and for PBPA were compared to each of the socio-demographic variables (Table 6), using a one-way ANOVA test. The results for one participant were excluded due to missing information.

Table 6: Correlation between socio-demographic variables and mean total scores for PBHE and PBPA

Variable (n)	PBHE (DF) [F-value]	PBHE (p-value)	PBPA (DF) [F-value]	PBPA (p-value)
Gender (58)	(1.56)=[1.13]	0.29	(1.56)=[0.18]	0.67
Race (58)	(3.54)=[0.69]	0.56	(3.54)=[0.36]	0.78
Educational level (58)	(6.51)=[0.88]	0.52	(6.51)=[1.15]	0.35
Rank (58)	(4.53)=[1.64]	0.18	(4.53)=[0.77]	0.55
Marital status (57)	(3.53)=[1.37]	0.26	(3.53)=[0.35]	0.79
Living arrangement (57)	(1.55)=[1.38]	0.25	(1.55)=[2.21]	0.14
Deployment (57)	(1.55)=[0.40]	0.53	(1.55)=[0.22]	0.64
Course (57)	(1.55)=[2.84]	0.10	(1.55)=[0.53]	0.47
Referral by dietitian (57)	(3.53)=[0.15]	0.93	(3.53)=[0.25]	0.86



Variable (n)	PBHE (DF) [F-value]	PBHE (p-value)	PBPA (DF) [F-value]	PBPA (p-value)
Advice received from healthcare practitioner other than dietitian (57)	(1.55)=[1.11]	0.30	(1.55)=[1.99]	0.16
Structured diet plan (57)	(3.53)=[1.60]	0.20	(3.53)=[1.83]	0.15

DF = degrees of freedom; F-value = F distribution

Discussion

The current study identified the main barriers to healthy eating and exercise as perceived by active-duty military personnel (ADMP) at one location in South Africa. The sample had a good representation of the different races considering the geographic location. The SA Army had the highest representation in the sample group, which reflected the location – which was land locked – and the number of army units in the area. The majority of the participants were NCOs, and did not have a tertiary qualification (which is not a requirement for NCOs).

Participants indicated individual factors: food taste preference, controlling cravings, motivation, cost of healthy food, and a lack of willpower as the five top barriers to healthy eating. This finding is similar to those reported internationally and locally for the general population. Reported barriers related to price,^{309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315} time constraints,^{316, 317, 318} and daily habits,³¹⁹ such as a lack of discipline.³²⁰ Individual factors were: fondness of good food,³²¹ the preference for fast food or preferred food,^{322, 323} a lack of willpower^{324, 325} and peer pressure.³²⁶

Studies in military populations consistently found the lack of time as a key PBHE.^{327, 328, 329} The relative unimportance of time in the current study could be because of different settings, as many SA households include extended family members and/or staff and operational activities. Another barrier on which the current participants did not report was “lack of knowledge” as a key PBHE, although other studies in other settings have reported on this barrier.^{330, 331, 332} Similarly, Sigrist et al. did not find a lack of knowledge as a major barrier among senior military officers.³³³ In the current study, the participants – of whom the majority were not senior military officers – did not view a lack of knowledge as a barrier to either healthy eating or physical activity. This was expected as ADMP have access to various sources of health information, including contact with an HCP and/or a dietitian. The results from the HCP contact and nutrition intervention activities support this notion. In this study, the majority of the study population had been referred to an HCP for weight management at least once, and close to two thirds of participants had received structured diet plans for weight loss. ADMP have access to various sources of health information through regular HCP contact, awareness newsletters on the intranet, and nutrition education presentations and campaigns. The study by Ngoepe on another SA military community found that the median frequency of healthy and unhealthy food intake was the same for men and women in terms of the four food groups,³³⁴ which might



explain the lack of any difference between the genders in the current study. Literature reports that personal taste and food preference determine food choices in the general population despite the awareness of health issues.^{335, 336, 337, 338} The current study echoed this finding. In our study, the availability of healthy food options and preparation scored the lowest as a barrier.

The main PBPA identified by participants were related to a lack of motivation, social support, a lack of resources (facilities), and being too tired or too busy. Our findings on physical activity are in line with the literature, with barriers to physical activity identified at both individual and socioeconomic level. Shuval et al. found fatigue, a lack of motivation and time at individual level, as well as a lack of exercise facilities for urban residents, as major barriers.³³⁹ The perceived barriers of lack of motivation³⁴⁰ and time³⁴¹ have similarly been cited in SA studies in the general population. Sigrist et al. found that, in addition to time constraints, a dislike of exercise and the unavailability of exercise facilities were the most common PBPA among US army officers.³⁴² The PBPA with the highest mean score in the current study reflects the lack of willpower or motivation. Factors related to willpower (not able to start, unable to stick to anything, finding excuses) have high mean scores and these could be attributed to self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, as described by Bandura, is a person's conviction in his or her ability to manage his or her own functioning and events that affect his or her life. Motivation, wellbeing, and personal accomplishment can all be affected by a strong sense of self-efficacy or a lack thereof.³⁴³ Agazio et al. found perceived self-efficacy and interpersonal influences to be significant predictors of health-promoting behaviours, including physical activity, in active-duty women.³⁴⁴ In the current study, the main reasons for not exercising were confirmed in the responses to the open-ended question.

The current study found routine social activities that do not include physical activity to be a key barrier. McDowell et al. report that engagement in leisure-time physical activity was less likely among older service members.³⁴⁵ Addressing leisure-time activities could be an opportunity to empower members and enhance self-efficacy. Interestingly, the lack of facilities at work had a high mean score, even though 43 per cent of the participants indicated that their individual units had a gymnasium or exercise facility. Nineteen per cent indicated that they had access to these facilities, but only 16 per cent were given the opportunity to exercise during working hours. This unexpected poor access to exercise facilities for a workforce that has to be deployment ready could have been due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions during the study period. Prohibition on all sport and physical training activities in the SANDF were only lifted in October 2021, which could explain these low percentages.

There were no significant differences in the independent variables (gender, marital status, age, race, rank or educational level) between the groups in the scores for PBHE and PBPA. The weak negative correlation between age and PBHE and PBPA implies that the older members had lower scores, although this association was not significant. De Mestral found a gradual decrease in barriers to healthy eating with age in women in the general population.³⁴⁶ In contrast, McDowell et al. found older ADMP had less adherence to nutrition and physical activity recommendations than young service members.³⁴⁷ This



finding could be attributed to more structured meal and activity patterns of younger ADMP who dine in messes or who are based on unit duties and mustering.

There was a lack of a significant relationship between the socio-demographic variables and the PBHE and PBPA. Findings by Kullen et al. reflected the same results for age and gender in PBHE in a military population; however, they found differences between occupational groups in terms of PBHE.³⁴⁸ In the current study, the rank group with the highest mean score for PBHE was junior NCOs, and the lowest score was the MSDS group. Junior officers and junior NCOs scored the highest PBPA, however. These rank groups are considered the workforce that executes most of the daily tasks. Senior NCOs and senior officers are found in leadership and management positions and might have more flexibility in their work schedules than their junior ranks. In this case, the higher PBPA could reflect this military hierarchy, where ADMP are given the opportunity to exercise at work, but cannot do so due to work responsibilities. Only seven participants were living in catered military accommodation, i.e. in a mess, at the time of the study. The living-in members however reported higher PBHE and PBPA, although this finding was not significant. There are various factors that could have influenced their meal patterns and food choices, such as availability and accessibility to healthier food options, not having control over food that they do not prepare, and the timing of meals in dining rooms.³⁴⁹

The relationship between being on course or deployment was insignificant. The results show that members who were deployed (n=15) or on course (n=11) had lower scores for both PBHE and PBPA than members who were not deployed or attending courses. Courses often include physical activity and fitness as a component and could therefore contribute to a reduction in the perceived barriers, particularly in relation to time, access to training equipment, opportunity to exercise, and group support. There are different types of courses with varying levels of activity and academic focus, which might have a different outcome in terms of perceived barriers.

We wanted to understand the extent to which members had access to HCPs, and how this affected perceived barriers. Our results show that a large proportion of the sample had either been referred to and had received nutrition and exercise information or a structured meal plan during the course of their military career. Literature shows previous exposure to nutrition education leads to increased knowledge. This explains why a lack of knowledge was not a key barrier in this study.³⁵⁰ However, increased knowledge does not necessarily translate into behaviour change. Neither access to HCPs nor knowledge had a significant association with perceived barriers. This finding is important, and warrants further investigation. The participants were diagnosed with obesity between 2017 and 2018 and had still not reached their target BMI of < 30 kg/m² at the time of the current study in 2020 in spite of knowledge and available healthcare services. The number of study participants who had been on a structured meal plan indicated that members were seeking treatment but this had not translated into reduction of their BMI.

The organisational environment could affect physical activity. Having available exercise facilities does not automatically mean that these facilities are accessible. Similarly, having permission to exercise does not translate into having the time to do so during a working



day. The results show that, while 43 per cent indicated the unit had access to exercise facilities, only a small fraction of the study participants was given the opportunity to exercise due to Covid-19 restrictions. It has been proved that physical exercise is strongly linked to accessibility and opportunity. Even if exercise choices are available at work, the fact that employees might become sweaty when exercising might function as a further deterrent, especially if there is a lack of shower facilities (making it difficult to turn their intentions into actual healthy exercise behaviours).³⁵¹ The results of the current study do not necessarily reflect normal circumstances, as no PTSR activities were allowed during the study period due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic however did not explain the prior lack of success to reduce weight.

Sigrist et al. found that, despite the fact that exercise is an important element of military culture, one-fifth of the participants in their study said they disliked it. Military fitness and weight standards might be the driving forces behind these officers' frequent exercise, outweighing any motivational elements, such as personal medical history, counsel from a healthcare professional or support from family, friends or co-workers.³⁵² Self-control issues have been examined in various studies, and appear to have a significant effect on whether people make good decisions and engage in healthy habits.³⁵³ Self-efficacy has also been studied by Agazio et al., as a predictor of healthy habits among military personnel. While requirements are specified by military regulation, self-efficacy on an individual level is required to make the commitment to achieve targets.³⁵⁴

Health promotion and the concurrent health assessments are implemented in the military to ensure a healthy deployable workforce. For these health promotion activities, intervention, and initiatives to be successful, they must recognise that there are barriers to people adopting and engaging in healthy eating and physical activity habits. HCPs could strengthen self-efficacy by empowering ADMP with skills to overcome perceived barriers. One example could be to guide members to set goals that are achievable yet challenging enough to facilitate a sense of accomplishment. The PTSR policy might not be implemented consistently, as not all units have a designated sports officer, and work requirements may not allow time for a training programme to be implemented effectively, especially where members are deployed or tasked outside of their usual work environment or attending courses. Having on-site physical training programmes might be beneficial to encourage physical activity and better adherence.

By identifying these common barriers, specific elements could be targeted to attain good employee health.

Limitations

Due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the mobilisation of SANDF personnel during disaster management, many members were deployed internally making the process of finding available participants difficult. Moreover, some of the members who were contacted were transferred out of the region at the time. The sample size was thus smaller than desired limiting generalisation of the results to the obese military population in South Africa.



The current study did not explore body image perceptions, as this might contribute to the perceived need or desire to lose weight. When presented with body image silhouettes, 87,9 per cent of South Africans indicated that their ideal body image was “fat”, which can be attributed to culturally acceptable norms.³⁵⁵ Exploring body image perception could shed further light on the motivational aspect to adhere to eating and exercise guidelines and personal factors in this regard. The current study did not explore participants’ views of the potential consequences of continued overweight or obesity for continued employment in the armed forces. The single study site, the cross-sectional study design, the absence of a pilot study, and the use of self-reported data were further limitations in this study. The exploration of an under-researched topic was a strength of the study.

Conclusion

Military regulations governing fitness and weight standards do not appear to be enough of a driving force to motivate ADMP to exercise or eat a healthy diet. As alluded to by the social cognitive theory and the health belief model, individuals who report multiple perceived barriers have poor motivation and self-efficacy to change. From this study, it is evident that a lack of motivation plays a vital role in healthy eating and physical activity among ADMP. Although physical activity is an essential part of military culture, it cannot be assumed that ADMP enjoy exercise. Efforts should be made to include and promote leisure-time activity with family and friends to incorporate physical activity into their lifestyles, which was identified as an important barrier. HCPs could intervene more effectively by implementing strategies that strengthen self-efficacy and motivation to overcome barriers.

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ENDNOTES

- ²⁴⁰ Magdeline Alcock completed an undergraduate B.Sc Dietetics at the University of the Western Cape in 2000 and her Master of Public Health degree at the University of Pretoria in 2022. She joined the South African National Defence Force (SAMHS) in 2002 at Air Force Base Langebaanweg. Since then she has gained 10 years' experience in the clinical dietetic environment at 1- and 2-Military Hospital. She is currently based in Bloemfontein in a community nutrition capacity. She is passionate about keeping our soldiers as healthy as possible for as long as possible and has focussed her master's research on this topic.
- ²⁴¹ Jacqueline Elizabeth Wolvaardt completed an undergraduate degree in nursing (BCur), a Master of Public Health, a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education and PhD in Curriculum Development and Instructional Design at the University of Pretoria. She is an Associate Professor at the School of Health Systems and Public Health at the University of Public Health. Her research areas of interest are strengthening health and health systems and undergraduate health professions education. She is an associate editor on two journals and serves on a board of an international journal.
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Dieter Felix Gerhardt: A Case Study of Russian Espionage in South Africa

Henning van Aswegen³⁵⁶ 
Independent Researcher

Abstract

My contestation in this research article is that Dieter Felix Gerhardt, a South African naval officer based in Simon's Town, was a paid penetration agent for the Russian Military Intelligence Service, *Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije*, in the South African Defence Force. This contestation cannot be accepted as true without due scientific investigation and analysis by way of a case study as my primary research method. For this case study on Dieter Felix Gerhardt and his wife, Ruth Johr, exploratory research was not necessary or attempted, because the phenomena of espionage, intelligence services, and counterintelligence exist in sovereign countries (mostly by way of legislation), as elements and instruments of government structures and policy. The case study on Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr was approached from the perspective of intelligence studies; therefore, the intelligence terminology and nomenclature used will be defined, explained, and referenced.

Keywords: Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr, Espionage Recruitment Methods, Intelligence Targets, Clandestine Communications, Psychology of Espionage, Counterintelligence and Counterespionage, Tradecraft.

Introduction

Intelligence Science is the study of the intelligence process, tradecraft, jargon, terminology, cryptonyms, abbreviations and usage of intelligence and espionage.³⁵⁷ It is the theoretical analysis of intelligence and espionage within the context of threat perception, international relations and strategy, political science, human security, social security and national security. 'Intelligence Studies is research into the intelligence process itself: analysis and estimates, clandestine collection, espionage, counterintelligence and covert action.'³⁵⁸

In the study reported here, my objective was to provide a scientific description of the phenomenon of intelligence and the conditions under which espionage was used by the Russian government to obtain military information on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the South African Defence Force (SADF). In this study, I investigate how the Russian military intelligence service, GRU, was able to recruit and handle Dieter Gerhardt and his wife and courier, Ruth Johr, who were not double agents,³⁵⁹ but who were willingly and wittingly engaged in the conduct of espionage.

Background

In *Research Methods*, Dane defines a case study as ‘involving a series of intensive, in-depth observations; and many of those observations may provide information that can be used to rule out additional alternative observations’.³⁶⁰ For this current study, I have used the case study single participant design, i.e. Dieter Felix Gerhardt as the single participant in one espionage operation over a specific, extended period, 1963–1983. An independent variable in the case study model (in this case, Dieter Felix Gerhardt’s conviction and prison sentence for espionage), stands alone, uninfluenced and unchanged by any other variables that a scientist or writer is trying to measure and analyse. Discussing the value of the case study method in political science, Viotti and Kauppi augment Dane’s model by stating ‘the independent variable is useful in explaining some outcomes, but not all outcomes. Dependent variables are simply what one is trying to explain – they are characteristics of a subject that may take on different qualitative or quantitative values.’³⁶¹

The practical application of the dependent variable in this article comprised an intensive study over time, rather than a single observation. In this case study, Dieter Felix Gerhardt’s actions and conduct over a period of twenty years, 1963–1983, were analysed and measured as a successful or unsuccessful intelligence operation. A dependent variable (sometimes called an outcome variable) – in this case, the decisions, conduct, actions and behaviour of Dieter Felix Gerhardt – is the object being measured and dependent upon the value of other variables. In this specific instance, the case study research model was similar to the behaviourist political science model, defined by Bekker as the empirical emphasis on verifiable facts.³⁶² Both models allow for the measurement of the conduct of political actors, rather than only the institutions or organisations within which they operate.

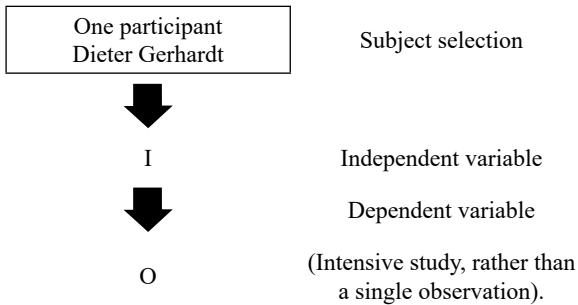


Figure 1: Dane’s single participant case study in design notation. Because there is only one participant, no group numbers are assigned to either the independent or the dependent variable.³⁶³

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this illustrative case study was to conduct a detailed, holistic investigation into the espionage activities of Dieter Felix Gerhardt, and his Swiss-born wife, Ruth

Johr. The secondary purpose of the case study was to analyse the motivation and reasons, advanced by Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr themselves during their high treason court case in Cape Town, for becoming GRU spies in the SADF.

I have compared Dane and Soy's case study models of research, and they differ in that Soy places a strong emphasis on the collection of primary data on the single participant in the case study, whereas Dane emphasises the importance of both the dependent and independent variables present in the data-gathering and studying process.³⁶⁴ Both Dane and Soy however agree that the purpose of the study should be concise, and clearly and briefly defined. Grossman further distinguishes between different types of case studies, noting that local knowledge can be used by researchers when a certain amount of information is already known about the subject matter, and the researcher has personal knowledge and experience to contribute to the research article. The purpose of the study can then be pursued accurately by way of illustration, which is descriptive in nature of an incident or identified situation being studied to unearth new, previously undisclosed information.

Espionage Literature and Research Material

Apart from one interview with Media 24 journalist André Pretorius on 12 November 2011, Dieter Gerhardt refused to talk about the spying incident in which he and his wife, Ruth Johr, participated.³⁶⁵ One of the South African Police Security Branch (SAP-SB) investigators in the case, Major General Herman Stadler, released a brief two-page statement to *Nongqai Magazine* on the Gerhardt incident, a copy of which has been obtained for this research article.³⁶⁶ The other two primary sources of original documentation accessible were the court documents of the case, and an interview the researcher conducted with a former head of the CI/CE Chief Directorate of the South African (SA) intelligence services.³⁶⁷ This person was one of the investigation team members of the SA government, following Dieter Gerhardt's arrest on 8 January 1983. However, Judge JP Munnik, of the Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division, ruled by order of the court dated 5 September 1983, that the court case be held in camera and the court records be sealed. Judge Munnik said in court that he was invoking the provisions of Section 153(1) of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977, to make this ruling and order.³⁶⁸

Second-hand research material, consisting of opinions, interpretations, and commentary by politicians, journalists, writers, and researchers who were not members of intelligence services or the investigating team or who had no first-hand knowledge, expertise or experience of either espionage or intelligence science or of the Gerhardt case in particular, were not considered for this case study.

Problem Statement

The research problem I sought to address in this case study, was the public statement made by Dieter Felix Gerhardt to Media24 on 12 November 2011, that he became a Russian spy for ideological reasons, and the contradictory court verdict at his high treason case, which found and stated that he became a Russian spy for monetary gain.



To gain a fuller understanding of why this discrepancy matters, a case study of in-depth research focused on the conduct and espionage activities of Dieter Gerhardt, and his wife Ruth Johr, was needed.

Research Objectives

The primary research objective of this case study was to determine the reasons why Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr became GRU spies in the SADF, to assess Dieter Gerhardt's access to intelligence targets, and to analyse the damage that was done by their spying activities.

The secondary objective was to track Dieter Felix Gerhardt's meteoric rise in the SADF, from liaison officer with the SA weapons procurement corporation, to head of the Simon's Town Naval Base, and how he started spying for GRU, the Russian military intelligence service.³⁶⁹ To explain the espionage activities of Dieter Felix Gerhardt from 1963 to 1983, and those of his wife Ruth Johr from 1968 to 1983, I applied an illustrative case study research model for analysis and measurement of conduct, decisions and behaviour.³⁷⁰

The Geopolitical Context

The Dieter Gerhardt espionage incident took place during the Cold War – a sustained period of conflict and tension starting in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, and ending in 1989 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Holsti defines the Cold War as follows: 'The most pervasive and consistent conflict in the global system has been the competition, struggle, and occasional crisis between the socialist regimes of the East and the private enterprise, constitutional democracies of the West.'³⁷¹ Before the eras of *détente* and peaceful co-existence, the Cold War was characterised by an arms race between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, consisting of most member countries of the (former) Soviet Union. Camilleri and Falk say that the Cold War era provided the East-West power block and superpowers (the United States and Russia), 'with a pretext for maintaining and extending their respective spheres of influence in the Third World'.³⁷² South Africa is generally regarded as a pro-Western democracy in Africa, and one could therefore argue that the country broadly fell within Camilleri and Falk's definition of the Third World.³⁷³

Viotti and Kauppi³⁷⁴ argue that the clash between Western and Eastern civilisations, or democratic–capitalist countries versus autocratic–socialist countries, embodied in the Soviet Union, were none more visible than in the nuclear arms race and between the intelligence services of those countries. Lowenthal states, 'the prosecution of the Cold War was a major defining factor in the development of the most basic forms of practices of espionage and counterespionage'.³⁷⁵

The predecessor to GRU, the Cheka, was established in 1918 by Leon Trotsky (born Lev Davidovich Bronstein), Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's Minister of Foreign Affairs, immediately after the November 1917 Bolshevik revolution.³⁷⁶ The Cheka existed for eighteen years, gaining a reputation as a particularly ruthless and oppressive internal intelligence service, before being replaced by GRU in 1942.³⁷⁷ GRU is the leading Russian government organisation responsible for managing military espionage operations and military intelligence, and for advising the government on military strategy and preparedness.³⁷⁸



GRU is also tasked by the Russian government with military, economic and technological security and counterespionage.³⁷⁹ Similar to the Soviet-era Russian Committee for State Security, the KGB³⁸⁰ members of GRU were hard-core Chekists called “siloviki” – dedicated, ruthless communists who enforced the authority of the new Bolshevik government in Russia.³⁸¹ During the Cold War, the GRU had more personnel and agents on its books than the KGB.³⁸²

Gerhardt’s Background and Upbringing

Dieter Felix Gerhardt started his career in the SA Navy (SAN) as a sea cadet (“a boy seaman”) in 1952 and his career as a Russian spy in 1963. Magnus Malan, the former head of the SADF and the South African Minister of Defence from 1980–1994, states in his book, *My life in the SA Defence Force*, that Dieter Gerhardt was predisposed towards spying, because –

He was a difficult character since childhood – his whole life consisted of rebellion. As a member of a German-speaking family, he was opposed to the English; he rebelled against his father; as a declared agnostic he rebelled against the church; and eventually, he also rebelled against the political dispensation.³⁸³

Gerhardt’s background (he was born on 1 November 1935), gave no indication or premonition of his later espionage activities. His German immigrant parents were middle-class and supporters of the South African Nationalist government. Gerhardt’s father, Alfred Edgard Gerhardt was arrested during the Second World War, accused of being pro-German and an enemy of the state by the pro-British Smuts government. Alfred Gerhardt was incarcerated by the Smuts government at the Koffiefontein concentration camp in the Orange Free State, together with a motley combination of Afrikaner Nationalists, anti-Smuts agitators and Nazi sympathisers. When sent home after the war, Alfred was an embittered man, carrying a grudge against the Smuts government, which led to his divorce from his wife, Julia.³⁸⁴ Rumours of vehicle theft and delinquent misdemeanours plagued the Gerhardt family, after which Alfred asked Commodore (later Rear-Admiral SC Biermann) to arrange for young Dieter to be accepted into the SAN in 1954 as a sea cadet.³⁸⁵ Magnus Malan writes in his autobiography that Biermann told of how Dieter’s father pleaded with him to accept his difficult son into the Navy. Gerhardt senior asked Biermann to ‘take him under your wing, so that he can learn some discipline’.

Dieter Gerhardt was tall for his age, ungainly and somewhat clumsy, earning him the nickname “Jumbo” among his classmates.³⁸⁶ At the conclusion of his training in Simon’s Town in 1956, Gerhardt was awarded the Sword of Honour as the best student on the training course for sea cadets.

Gerhardt matriculated in the SAN and then embarked on what can generally be described as a naval engineering career. From 1954 to 1958, Gerhardt was assigned to the Engineers Division of the Navy, attending a Qualifying Course in Basic Engineering with the Royal Navy in Cyprus, before being appointed Chief Engineer, SAS Natal. He was sent to the



Royal Naval Engineering College in Plymouth, England for further training as a submarine specialist – a particular honour for young SA personnel. Subsequently, Gerhardt also attended engineering training courses in Cyprus and Iceland, before returning to England from September 1962 to May 1964, to attend the Royal Navy Weapons Electrical Course (UK). During his stay in England in 1958, the 23-year-old Gerhardt met and married Janet Coggin, then 21 years old.³⁸⁷

Recruitment as a Spy

In this new chapter of his life, Dieter Gerhardt the spy would be born. According to an interview conducted with Janet Coggin forty years later, the handsome and gregarious Gerhardt was popular amongst his friends and her family.³⁸⁸ After the birth of their first child, Annemarie Julia, the Gerhardts returned to South Africa, first settling in Simon's Town and then Noordhoek. Their second child, Ingrid, was born there in 1960.³⁸⁹ Once again returning to South Africa after his training courses abroad, Gerhardt was appointed Engineering Officer of the *SAS President Kruger* in 1965, and he remained here until 1967. In 1968, Gerhardt was sent to Naval Headquarters in Pretoria, to undergo a Staff Officer Technical Training course, after which he was appointed Senior Technical Inspection Officer.

Dieter Gerhardt was not recruited as a spy in a conventional way; he was a walk-in spy who willingly and wittingly offered his services to a foreign intelligence service.³⁹⁰

Dieter Gerhardt alleged to government investigators in 1983 that he contacted senior members of the South African Communist Party (SACP), as a 25-year-old in 1960.³⁹¹ This statement was seriously doubted by National Intelligence Service (NIS) investigators during their questioning of Gerhardt after his arrest and was rejected by the judge in his verdict after Gerhardt's high treason trial in Cape Town. At the time (1963), the South African Security Police and Republican Intelligence were still in the process of identifying the senior members of the SACP, all of whom were in Johannesburg.³⁹² Gerhardt could not provide the date when he allegedly travelled to Johannesburg, where he stayed, or how he knew which members of the communist party to contact.³⁹³ Gerhardt said that he informed the SACP that he wanted to do his part in the struggle against apartheid and that Bram Fischer, then leader of the SACP, had relayed his personal particulars to members of the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU.³⁹⁴ Gerhardt could not explain how the communists reacted when he, a serving naval officer, approached them out of the blue, or why they would take him seriously. Nor could he explain when and where this alleged meeting took place. To this day, Gerhardt claims an ideological reason for his spying against Western interests, a claim which, according to a former head of SA counterintelligence, is 'a fabrication'.³⁹⁵ Prior to approaching the Russian embassy in London as a walk-in, Gerhardt approached the US embassy in London to sell SA secrets to them.³⁹⁶ When rejected, he approached the Russians who were at first very apprehensive and disbelieving of the young SA walk-in. It was only during a second visit at which Gerhardt produced numerous classified documents and material that the Russians became more accommodating and eager for his services. During this second visit to the embassy, the Russians realised that they had struck gold. The well-known human



intelligence (HUMINT) weakness, or perhaps a profound miscalculation about the value of this walk-in South African, had dire consequences for the shared geo-political interests of NATO, the United States and South Africa.³⁹⁷ ‘Gerhardt had extensive knowledge of South Africa’s defence strategy, the country’s ties with Britain, the USA and NATO and South Africa’s nuclear programme, which was developed with American assistance.’³⁹⁸ The SA military analyst Al J. Venter states:

For many years South Africa was regarded as the responsible party for the Southern flank of NATO – a very real arrangement, although it was never formalised – and the South African government made full use of the unspoken special relationship as its isolation deepened.³⁹⁹

Gerhardt was a spy who fell into the lap of the Soviets in London, while undergoing training as a member of the SAN at the Maritime Warfare School of the British Navy in 1963. After walking into the Russian Embassy in London and offering his services, Gerhardt was told to come back within one month with proof of his access to secrets and documents. A month later Gerhardt returned to the Russian Embassy, bearing gifts in the form of secret documents relating to the design of Britain’s navy missile system. The Royal Navy completely trusted the young naval officer from South Africa on their training courses, and gave him unprecedented access to some of their most sensitive warfare systems – information he duly passed on to his Russian controllers.⁴⁰⁰ Gerhardt handed the Russians copies of some of the manuals and documents he obtained while undergoing training at the Maritime Warfare School and therefore originally sold British, not SA, secrets to the Russians. The fact that Gerhardt sold British secrets and documents to the Russians was a nail in the coffin of his ANC-SACP-Apartheid motivation story. The information contained in these documents convinced the Russians to appoint Gerhardt as their spy – his only request being that they pay him for his services.

For the Russians, Gerhardt was an unexpected gift and they appointed him under the codename “Felix“ (his middle name). During his spying career, Gerhardt would at times use the pseudonyms “Pilyatsky B. Felix”, “Felix” or “DFG”. Gerhardt eagerly started stealing British and SAN documents and continued this nefarious practise for the rest of his 18-month sojourn in England. The quality of the documents Gerhardt provided to the Russians in England quickly made him one of their most valuable military spies.⁴⁰¹

RU Training and Instructions

Upon conclusion of his training in 1963, Gerhardt left on a ski vacation in Switzerland, but instead travelled secretly to the Soviet Union to undergo intensive espionage training. Gerhardt flew to Moscow with his SA passport via Vienna, Austria and Budapest, Romania. In Moscow, the GRU showed Gerhardt how to use miniature spy cameras, how to develop the film and convert them into microscopic negatives, to be placed in and on letters that could be sent from a normal post box. Gerhardt received intensive training in the use of miniature photographic equipment, observation and evasion methods, how to use disguises, the manufacturing of false passports and espionage techniques. The GRU and his newly appointed handler, Gregori Shirobokov, also trained Gerhardt in Morse



code, counter-surveillance techniques, ways to handle questioning and interrogation, and how to beat polygraph tests.⁴⁰² To protect his identity, the Russians took multiple photos of Gerhardt in various guises to use in false passports and to use as false identities. These photos would come in handy should Gerhardt be caught or exposed as a spy by SA authorities, necessitating an escape.⁴⁰³

The interest of the Soviet Union in South African nuclear power development was Gerhardt's primary instruction and intelligence-gathering request from the GRU. The development of nuclear weapons by South Africa at Pelindaba en Velindaba, west of Pretoria, was Gerhardt's biggest and continuing intelligence-gathering instruction from his Russian masters for his 20 years as a spy. During his spying career, Gerhardt photographed manuals of secret NATO and SA military weaponry and wrote confidential reports on the South African nuclear development programme and domestic political situation, including economic growth data, and South Africa's bilateral and multilateral foreign relations.

'We know there is a spy, but who is spying?'

Unbeknown to Gerhardt and the GRU, standard intelligence indications came to the attention of the British intelligence services that the Russians had access to specific classified military information. The information and realisation did not come from a defector or agent in place, but rather from routine CI/CE deductive analysis. The realisation that someone, somewhere with access to NATO and concomitant military documents was active and spying, triggered a hunt for a mole in Britain. Dieter Gerhardt was not a suspect at that time; the British were focused on finding one of their own. The initial, cursory investigation into the information leakage and loss in Britain revealed only a relatively low-level agent. Subsequently, the information loss continued, so a new hunt for a mole commenced under deep cover, so as not to alert the Russians or the active spy.

Despite the fact that Magnus Malan, the former Commanding Officer of the SADF and Minister of Defence, writes in his autobiography that the SADF became aware of a security breach at the arms procurement company ARMSCOR in 1973, Gerhardt continued spying for the GRU for ten more years. In the end, Dieter Gerhardt was identified and compromised not by the SADF and its Directorate Military Intelligence, but by a foreign intelligence service, the French DST.⁴⁰⁴

Ruth Johr, Gerhardt's Wife and Support Agent

In her book, *The Spy's Wife*, Janet Coggin says that Gerhardt told her during their marriage that he was a Russian spy and that she was shocked by his revelation. The journalist Jonathan Ancer states in his book, *Betrayal: The Secret Lives of Apartheid Spies*, Gerhardt confessed his spying to Coggin in 1966, during an outing to Newlands Forest on the slopes of Table Mountain. Coggin accused Gerhardt of trying to recruit her as co-spy and collaborator, something she refused to do.⁴⁰⁵ Following his confession to her, Coggin, by now the mother of three young daughters, developed an intense disapproval and distrust of her husband. Eventually, Coggin and her three daughters left South Africa and settled in Ireland. Coggin and Gerhardt were officially divorced in 1967.⁴⁰⁶ According to Coggin,



Gerhardt was an egoist, a 'traditional apartheid-accepting South African' for whom money, rather than ideological conviction, was the driving force for his spying.⁴⁰⁷ Coggin says she was unaware of the extent of her husband's spying, assuming he was just an overly ambitious officer in the SAN.⁴⁰⁸ Coggin did not know that Gerhardt's first contact with the Russians took place under her and her parents' noses in England and that he had also approached the Americans to spy for them.

In 1969, while on a skiing holiday at the luxury Klosters Ski Resort in Switzerland, Dieter Gerhardt met his second wife, Ruth Johr. Gerhardt and Johr got married about nine months later, on 15 September 1969. At this time, Gerhardt seemed to be completely unaware of Johr's own spying activities on behalf of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) (East Germany).⁴⁰⁹ In a later media interview, Gerhardt said about Johr:

When we met, I told her my views about the apartheid regime. Before the wedding, I learned about her family background and her views, and I knew that the struggle against apartheid was in line with her opinions. Nevertheless, we – Gregori Shirobokov (Gerhardt's GRU-handler), and I – decided to let her in on the secret in stages. Each time I would unravel another part of the picture until I told her the whole truth.⁴¹⁰

During a visit to Moscow in January 1970, the GRU instructed Gerhardt to take Johr into his confidence and tell her everything. Gerhardt did precisely that. Also, ironically, during a visit to Newlands Forest adjacent to Table Mountain in Cape Town. In response, and in all probability on instructions of the Ministry for State Security (STASI), Johr told Gerhardt about her own spying activities on behalf of the Soviet Union. East Germany was, at that time, part of the Soviet Union, and the intelligence services of all member states, including the GRU and the STASI, worked together on mutual intelligence operations. With these revelations, an unbreakable bond between Gerhardt and Johr formed, because they were now not only spying for the same spymasters, but also for each other's benefit. Johr agreed to become involved in spying, together with Gerhardt, for the GRU.⁴¹¹ The time frame of the Gerhardt couple's espionage is relevant here, because of the Soviet Union's stated aim of attaining 'competitive military equality' with the West by way of political and military infiltration of independent states in Africa.⁴¹²

Dieter Gerhardt's rise in the ranks culminated in his appointment as Senior Staff Officer of Force Development at the SAN Headquarters in Pretoria. On 1 March 1977, Gerhardt was promoted to the management position of Director Naval Engineering, in Pretoria, giving him even more access to classified information and files. At the height of Gerhardt's spying activities in 1977, the two superpowers of the world, the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective sets of supporter states, were deeply involved in the Cold War.⁴¹³

This arrangement between Gerhardt and Johr, plus the fact that they were now married, fitted the GRU like a glove. Their marriage provided plausible cover for both the spy and his courier, as well as plausible deniability because they provided each other with alibis when necessary.⁴¹⁴ In Johr, Gerhardt now had an ideal courier, with no further need to make use of intermediaries to post or send letters and information to the Soviet Union.

Johr would regularly travel to Switzerland, under the guise of visiting her family and then deposit information, reports, military documents, and microfilms in dead letter drops or post boxes obtained in Geneva for exactly this purpose. Johr had a convenient, believable cover story and nobody, particularly the SA Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), questioned her regular forays to Europe and meeting places like Madagascar, Norway, France and Spain.

Shortly after their conspiratorial discussion at Newlands Forest, Johr travelled to Geneva and on to Moscow for extended training by the GRU. Here, Johr, under the codename “Lina” received training in espionage techniques, tradecraft, counter-surveillance and evasion and the manner to act as a courier and support agent for her husband Dieter. On her regular visits to Switzerland, Johr would deposit documents stolen from the SAN in secret post boxes in either Geneva or Zürich, where the GRU would unload the boxes and send the information back to GRU headquarters in Moscow.⁴¹⁵ Johr faithfully and obediently supported her husband in all his spying endeavours, earning the couple huge amounts of money paid by a grateful GRU for their treason. However, in Simon’s Town and in Pretoria, the Gerhardts’ lavish lifestyle, opulent furniture and frequent ski holidays to Switzerland started to raise suspicions. The questions were often deflected by Gerhardt explaining that his wife Ruth had very rich family in Switzerland. Gerhardt lied to other inquisitive townsfolk by saying that his parents were very rich or that he had inherited a lot of money.⁴¹⁶ Most of the money paid to Gerhardt and Johr was safely deposited in a secret Swiss bank account.⁴¹⁷ Johr admitted to this fact in her statement, submitted to the court by her legal counsel in Case SS239/83.⁴¹⁸

Under questioning from Lieutenant Denise Benson of the SAP-SB during the investigation phase, Ruth Johr readily admitted that she acted as a courier for her husband. “Lina” helped Gerhardt and the GRU from the date of her marriage to Gerhardt in September 1969 and continued faithfully for thirteen long years. During this time, Johr twice visited the Soviet Union (officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or USSR), where she underwent intensive GRU training to perform the duties of a courier and liaison officer and a radio operator–cryptographer receiving one-way radio broadcasts from the GRU. Ruth confessed to travelling to Switzerland 21 times since 1969 to deliver film and documents to the Russians. Most of these meetings and contact consisted of dead drops, post boxes and brush meetings.⁴¹⁹ Gerhardt, Johr, Gregori Shirobokov and Vitaly Shlikov used “accidental bumping” or “fleetingly passing each other” techniques to exchange espionage materials and/or briefcases. GRU preferred this method of exchange with Gerhardt and Johr to minimise the possibility that their communication network may be exposed by a defector. Johr sat on pre-arranged park benches, at bus stops, and on benches in the train stations of Geneva and Zürich with a briefcase containing the films and stolen documents. Shlikov would sit next to her momentarily, with an identical briefcase, which he left behind when departing with Johr’s briefcase. During these brush meetings, no words or even glances were exchanged between Johr and Shlikov, just the transfer of money, copied documents and films took place. Some of the money Johr received from Shirobokov and Shlikov was hidden in false compartments of briefcases and travel bags. Johr demonstrated to investigators how the brush meetings in Switzerland took place, and the investigators made a training video of her demonstrated actions and procedures.



Investigators, ironically, named the video *Tools of the Trade*.⁴²⁰ Ruth brought information back from Switzerland and Moscow to Gerhardt, which was important for the proper functioning on their clandestine communications apparatus, for example schedules for radio transmissions and details of future meeting places.

That Ruth Johr (alias “Lin” or “Lyn”), using her Swiss passport No 0365237, was one of the best GRU couriers ever, is not doubted. Her cover story for travelling to Switzerland to meet with the family was only part of the cover story and nobody in the NIS (National Intelligence Service), SAP-SB, CIA (*Central Intelligence Agency*) and SIS (Secret Intelligence Service) ever ascertained the other part of the cover story.

The Russian newspaper *Izvestia* reported as follows on the Gerhardt-Johr spy case:

Despite her trials during the investigation, trial and long imprisonment, ‘Lina’ retained warm memories of trips with ‘Felix’ to the USSR, about the GRU employees who worked there with her. She told fellow inmates at the Pretoria Central Prison that she did not regret that she helped her husband fulfil her obligations to the GRU. She gave her consent to participate in this Felix espionage operation, without hesitation, infinitely believing him and his cause. Her love and trust in him, was the one philosophical factor that defined her life.⁴²¹

Gerhardt’s career in the SAN flourished, giving him ever-increasing access to information and documents that could be valuable to the Russians. In 1972, the Russian spy was promoted to Senior Staff Officer of the Commanding Officer of the SADF in Pretoria. Gerhardt was now the liaison officer of the SADF with its principal weapons supplier, ARMSCOR, the Armaments Development Corporation of South Africa. As a statutory body, ARMSCOR developed and managed South Africa’s independent arms industry and arms procurement for the SADF. In his new post, Gerhardt had direct and unrestricted access to not only top-secret SA military documents, but also NATO documents. Because he was the ARMSCOR naval liaison officer, Gerhardt was informed and knew that the SA Atomic Energy Corporation acquired gun barrels from the SAN to build nuclear devices at Pelindaba and test them at the Vastrap underground facility in the Northern Cape.⁴²²

By 1982, Dieter Gerhardt and his courier Ruth Johr became nervous and paranoid, believing that they were being followed and that they were witnessing signs of surveillance. Gerhardt’s GRU handler, Gregori Shirobokov, demanded more and more information from the Gerhardts, demands they were struggling to meet because of Dieter’s weakened position as head of the Simon’s Town dockyard and subsequent reduced access to high-grade secret military documents. The Directorate: Military Intelligence (DMI) never shared their findings or reports of Magnus Malan’s concerns about Dieter Felix Gerhardt with the SA civilian intelligence service. If, as Gerhardt was worried about, he was under surveillance or investigation in 1982, then it would have been by the DMI and not the NIS.⁴²³

At the end of 1982, Dieter Gerhardt was informed by the SAN that he was scheduled to attend a further training course in the United States at Syracuse University, New York.



Gerhardt later told counter-intelligence investigators:

My nerves were *kaput* (exhausted) in that period. The situation seriously affected my relations with Ruth. On the night before the trip, we had a terrible quarrel. She demanded that I not go. I demanded that she leave South Africa. We parted with a slamming of the door. At JF Kennedy Airport, I noticed the passport control official noting something after checking my passport. I can read upside down, and I understood he was marking me as problematic. The game had begun.⁴²⁴

If this statement of Gerhardt is true, it begs the question why a professional spy, already believing that he was receiving unwanted attention, and realising that immigration officials were taking note of his arrival, would not make urgent plans to warn his handler and make good his escape? In 1982, a further indication surfaced in France that a high-level spy on behalf of the Russians was functioning within NATO or the military establishments of Western powers. A Russian agent in place had offered his services to the French, providing information on documents that crossed his desk. The information was standard-type source reports, but with the source thereof unidentified. The agent in place did not work at a particular desk or geographical area, so it took a very long time to determine the likely country and probable area in the country where the information was being collected. The reports contained references to military, air force and naval intelligence, but were too vague to pinpoint Simon's Town in South Africa.

Gerhardt and Jahr's Arrest: The Farewell Dossier

Dieter Gerhardt left South Africa on Pan American Flight PA181 from Johannesburg to JF Kennedy Airport in New York, for a three-week engineering mathematics course at Syracuse University. Both the plane ticket and the study course had been paid for by the SADF, and Gerhardt would receive a generous daily living allowance while in the United States. Gerhardt then took an expensive New York Helicopter Flight HD135 from JF Kennedy Airport to Newark Airport, and from there Allegheny Airlines Flight AC3321 to Syracuse.⁴²⁵ Gerhardt had planned to leave Syracuse on 24 January 1982, and had booked an open ticket from New York to Cardiff, Wales, via London, and/or New York to Geneva, Switzerland. Because of his arrest in New York on 8 January 1983, these flights did not happen, and it is unclear whether an already suspicious and paranoid Gerhardt had planned the flights as part of his escape route.

The identity of Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Jahr as witting⁴²⁶ GRU agents was compromised in the Farewell Dossier, given to the French counterintelligence service DST (*Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire*) by a witting agent-in-place in the KGB.

The identity of the Russian agent in place was Vladimir Vetrov, codename "Farewell", working for the French internal intelligence service, the DST. Farewell did not identify Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Jahr by name, but the dossier he compiled of four hundred Russian spies present and active in Western democracies, contributed to the hunt for the mole within the Western military establishment and specifically the SADF. The South



African Intelligence Services since 1963, Republican Intelligence (RI), the Department of National Security (DoNS), and the NIS maintained liaison relations with the French DST since 1964, through the channels of NIS counterintelligence (CI) and the service's Regional Representative in Paris, France. Based on the information provided by Farewell in the Farewell Dossier, the DST advised the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), that they had uncovered information about a Russian spy in the American military, not an SA spy. This information was not passed on by the DST to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), or the MI5 (internal intelligence service), or the SIS (external intelligence service) of Britain, but only to the FBI because of its counterintelligence responsibility and capabilities.⁴²⁷

On 8 January 1983, one week after Gerhardt's arrival in the United States (on 3 January), agents from the CIA, FBI and SIS entered his hotel room in New York and arrested the SA spy. A roll of film, containing information gathered by Gerhardt, was found in his possession. American intelligence services believe in polygraph tests, and subjected Gerhardt to such a test almost immediately after his arrest. Gerhardt later told SA investigators that his FBI, CIA and SIS interrogators in New York were never very polite to him, and that he hated them as much as they hated him. Gerhardt said that he has never forgiven the FBI, CIA and SIS for the way he was treated and interrogated. They believed he was an ultimate traitor, without a shred of dignity or honour and ruthless to boot – giving away anybody's and everybody's secrets and doing so for money. Gerhardt admitted to his FBI, CIA and SIS interrogators that the Russians had provided him with a list of intelligence requirements and pressurised him to provide actionable and useable intelligence. Gerhardt told the interrogators that he spent up to 45 hours per week on his spying activities, even more than his normal working hours as an SAN officer.⁴²⁸

One week after his arrest in New York, Dieter Gerhardt was escorted onto an SA-bound flight and handed over to two SA intelligence officials at Jan Smuts International Airport.⁴²⁹ Gerhardt was worried about his future and the fate awaiting him upon his return to South Africa, 'I felt like a dead man walking. It was clear to me that a death penalty awaited me in South Africa.'⁴³⁰ Colonel Hans Gloy and Major Frik Nel re-arrested Gerhardt and escorted him to Pretoria Central Prison.

On the same day of his return to South Africa on 8 January 1983, Gerhardt's wife Ruth Johr was arrested at the couples' luxury home in Simon's Town. Neighbours of the Gerhardts later told investigators that Ruth was a well-liked and friendly person, although they never saw Dieter Gerhardt in the neighbourhood. When asked about their opulent lifestyle, Johr would often remark that Dieter's parents were very well off, while Gerhardt would jokingly refer to Johr's very rich family in Switzerland.

In Gerhard's house, the SAP-SB found more than ninety items of interest to their investigation, most of which were used as pieces of evidence in the later court case. One of the SAP-SB members even thanked Gerhardt for leaving so much easy-to-find evidence in his house, thereby earning Gerhardt's undying disdain and hatred. Most of the tools of Gerhardt's spying trade found in his home had to do with the way in which he communicated with his Russian handlers.

On 26 January 1983, then SA Prime Minister PW Botha announced during a press conference that a SA naval officer and a Swiss citizen, Dieter Felix Gerhardt and his wife Ruth Johr, had been arrested on charges relating to espionage.⁴³¹ Botha said that Gerhardt, a senior officer of the SAN in Simon's Town, had been detained for questioning under Article 29 of the Internal Security Act (No. 74 of 1982), relating to espionage.⁴³² Botha gave no further information at the press conference, except to say that Gerhardt and his wife Ruth had visited the Soviet Union multiple times and that classified information had in all probability reached the Soviet Union in this manner.⁴³³

In the house, which was subjected to non-stop searches and examinations, ninety items of espionage use and interest were found by the SAP-SB, including concealment devices for clandestine communications, one-time letter pads,⁴³⁴ codes, and meeting schedules. The ease with which Gerhardt's spying apparatus and tools of the trade were found, left investigators astonished at his lack of care and due diligence and for making it easy for the state to present evidence against Gerhardt and Ruth Johr in court. One film found in the house had been adapted by the Russians to store 360 photos. Hidden in a drawer at the bottom of a desk in the lounge, the SAP-SB found a Praktina camera for copying documents and a Minox B camera, both favourites with Russian spies throughout the world. Exposed 35 mm cassettes, containing 270 classified documents and photos, were found in Gerhardt's garage.

Dieter and Ruth Gerhardt were questioned for six months by SA authorities, as well as counter-intelligence experts from the British, German, French, and Israeli intelligence services.⁴³⁵ In 1983, Israel had a secret cooperative agreement with 39 countries, including South Africa, to prevent information leaks from joint military and security projects. Under the agreement between the SADF and the Security Department of the Israeli Ministry of Defence (MALMAB), in the event of an information leak or transfer of sensitive information to a third party by a spy, both parties work together to investigate the matter. The country in which the leak occurred must compile a report containing explanations and the findings of the investigation, and present it to the second country. The country in which the leak occurred, must also allow officials from the second country to investigate. During questioning by the Israelis, Gerhardt admitted that he had passed on information about nuclear cooperation between Israel and South Africa, as well as details of other joint weapons projects. In line with the agreement, Gerhardt was also questioned by MALMAB officers to determine what 'Israeli information' or details on Israel he had sold on to the Soviets.⁴³⁶

The High Treason Court Case

On 5 September 1982, Ruth and Dieter Gerhardt were charged with high treason by the SA authorities, in terms of section 29 of the Internal Security Act (No. 44 of 1950) and the Official Secrets Act 16 of 1956.⁴³⁷

The Gerhardt couple briefly appeared in the Pretoria Magistrate's court in June 1983, on charges of espionage, and subsequently in the Cape High Court, on charges of high treason. The high treason case, which carried the death penalty if found guilty, commenced in Cape



Town on 6 September 1983.⁴³⁸ The case for the prosecution was presented by Advocate Niël Russouw, Attorney General of the Western Cape. Throughout the court proceedings, which lasted four months (43 court days), and involved 124 witnesses in camera, Dieter Gerhardt (“Felix”) took all the blame and tried to minimise the role of Ruth Johr (“Lina”) who, according to Gerhardt, was only the executor of his will.⁴³⁹

During the court case, it became clear that most of those present did not understand the language, nomenclature, semiology and word definitions of espionage and intelligence science. An out-of-court training session had to be arranged for them, conducted by the SAP-SB. During this training session, Gerhardt and Johr’s complex clandestine communication system and methods were explained to the jurists, with illustrations, examples, and a live demonstration by members of the SAP-SB.

In an effort to try and minimise the role played by Ruth Johr in the spying process, the defence decided to appoint two sets of Pro Deo advocates. Both defendants pleaded not guilty, but Gerhardt’s advocate informed the court that Gerhardt readily admitted to participation in activities that could be construed as espionage activities. Gerhardt acknowledged that he had supplied information to a Russian intermediary, known as a principal, for use as disinformation. Furthermore, that the name of this intermediary, to whom Gerhardt referred as “Donald”, was secret and he (Gerhardt) may not reveal his identity. Gerhardt also referred to a friendly “third country” which he could not name. The prosecutor, Advocate Russouw called Brigadier Herman Stadler as an expert witness who, inter alia, described Gerhardt’s defence as obfuscation, half-truths, distortions and deception. The court’s judgement stated: ‘We accept Brigadier Stadler’s evidence; we accept it as being that of an expert in the espionage and counterespionage.’⁴⁴⁰ The judgement also found that Gerhardt and Johr had tried to merge and integrate truth with lies, but that they had failed in this attempt.

In the court case, the lack of liaison and communication between the DMI and South Africa’s other intelligence services, particularly the Directorate Counterespionage of the NIS, became glaringly obvious, eliciting scathing criticism from Judge JP Munnik. After the case, the chief witness for the prosecution wrote that some kind of ideological motivation was the only defence Dieter and Ruth Gerhardt could offer as their defence, hoping that the judge would somewhat be swayed by it. The witness also remarked upon Gerhardt’s ‘imperious and arrogant attitude’.⁴⁴¹ He came across as a know-it-all who wanted to get away with everything.

The high treason court case of Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr concluded in the Cape Town High Court on 29 December 1983. The judge rendered his verdict two days later, on 31 December 1983, and found both defendants guilty of high treason.⁴⁴² Forty-eight-year-old Dieter Felix Gerhardt was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to life in prison, while Ruth Johr (41 years old at the time), received a sentence of ten years’ imprisonment. With this, Dieter Gerhardt gained the shameful distinction of being the first-ever SA military officer found guilty of espionage for the Soviet Union.⁴⁴³

Gerhardt commented on the verdict as follows:



I was positive I would get the death penalty. At the time, executions were routine in South Africa, sometimes ten a week. The judge wrote that if it had been proved that I had caused the death of even one South African soldier, he would have sentenced me to death.⁴⁴⁴

According to Judge Munnik in his verdict, Dieter Gerhardt was ‘an arrogant and ruthless spy, an egoist, and certainly no ideological idealist’. Gerhardt’s explanation to the court in his affidavit, ‘that he was actually an operative for an undisclosed principal, a country not hostile to South Africa’, was rejected by the judge.⁴⁴⁵ The considerable amounts of money paid by the GRU to Gerhardt, dutifully smuggled back to South Africa by Ruth Johr in the false bottoms of suitcases and carry-on luggage, proved greed and treason for self-enrichment as the only motive for spying for the Soviet Union. Judge President George Munnik said in his judgement of the Gerhardt couple that, if even one member of Gerhardt’s employer, the SADF, had been killed because of his spying actions, the death penalty would have been pronounced.⁴⁴⁶

Amnesty

On 15 May 1989, Dieter Gerhardt applied for “political amnesty” but his request was rejected by the Minister of Justice, Kobie Coetzee. In his written reply, Coetzee said that it was clear from the application before him, as indeed from the verdict of the Supreme Court of South Africa, ‘that financial reward was the applicant’s motive for spying. The court found that the applicant’s effort to tie his motive to an effort to change the political structure of the country, amounted to lip service.’⁴⁴⁷

Ruth Johr was released from prison in 1990, after spending eight years for her role in one of the Soviet Union’s biggest spying operations in South Africa. After years in prison, Dieter Gerhardt was released in August 1992 as part of a deal reached between presidents FW de Klerk of South Africa and Boris Yeltsin of Russia. The agreement reached between the two countries was the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, on condition that Gerhardt receives amnesty. Gerhardt was not sent to Moscow or exchanged for other Western spies. He was merely put on a plane to Switzerland. The Swiss intelligence service was informed of his pending arrival, after the plane was well on the way to Switzerland and before it landed. In Zürich and then Basel, Gerhardt was reunited with his wife and fellow spy, Ruth Johr and their son, Gregori, named after Gregori Shirobokov.⁴⁴⁸ Gerhardt received a thank you letter from Nelson Mandela and was offered a post as military advisor to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), an offer Gerhardt declined. His guilty verdict for espionage was later pardoned by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but not his prison sentence.⁴⁴⁹ Gerhardt was awarded the rank of Rear Admiral by the new SA government.

After his release from Swiss prison, Dieter and Ruth Gerhardt’s second GRU handler, Vitaly Shlikov, returned to Russia where he was appointed Deputy Minister of Defence by the Yeltsin regime in 1990. Shlikov also became a founder member of the Russian Council for Foreign and Defence Policy and died in 2011.⁴⁵⁰ From a counterespionage and investigation perspective, Vitaly Shlikov was never questioned or charged with any offence by the SA authorities.



Profiling Gerhardt from a Counterespionage Perspective

Gerhardt's questioners noted that Gerhardt paid careful attention to the questions he was asked to gain some clue to how he was caught. That is very important information for a caught spy to know, because then he can guess how much his interrogators really know, what he can safely admit, as they already probably have the answer, and about what to keep quiet because they will probably not know about something, nor ever will. One of the primary purposes of the investigators was to keep Gerhardt guessing how he was originally identified and caught. Gerhardt had no idea how long he was under investigation. Neither he nor his handler had any idea how long they were under surveillance, before he was eventually arrested in the United States.

The SAP-SB investigators held secret meetings with KENTRON, ARMSCOR and the Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC), the three organisations to which Gerhardt had access, in an effort to establish the true scope and width of Gerhardt's espionage. The development of South Africa's nuclear capabilities was (and remains) a priority intelligence target for the Russian, American and British intelligence services since the AEC had started with uranium-enrichment experiments and programmes in the 1960s. South Africa produced its first highly enriched uranium in 1978, at a time when Dieter Gerhardt was in his prime as a Russian spy, and he wangled a visit to the top secret underground nuclear test site at Vastrap.⁴⁵¹ The Vastrap test site was located 100 kilometres north of Upington, and was developed to conduct underground nuclear explosions. As a direct result of Gerhardt passing this information to GRU, the Soviets moved a spy satellite over the site in 1977. The Americans did the same and their spying activities regarding South African nuclear capabilities led directly to the expulsion for espionage of their ambassador in Pretoria.⁴⁵² Following disclosures about South Africa's nuclear development programme, the red-faced Americans demanded that South Africa immediately cease all nuclear tests, and sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This request was met with the derision it deserved, coming at the lowest point in history in the bilateral relations between South Africa and the United States.

US Ambassador William Brockway Edmondson and the Beechcraft Twin Engine C-12 used to spy on South Africa's AEC and nuclear device testing site at Vastrap. A CIA espionage camera, attached to Edmondson's private aircraft, was discovered by SA authorities, and Edmondson was expelled from South Africa on 12 April 1979.

Two support agents⁴⁵³ helped Ruth Johr during her courier trips to Switzerland and the Soviet Union. One of the persons providing her with cover had no idea that Johr was a Russian spy, with the jury remaining out on the second cover provider. In 1988, whilst serving her ten-year prison term for treason, Ruth Johr attempted to gain her freedom by renouncing violence in order to take advantage of an offer made by South African President PW Botha to political prisoners. However, Johr's request was turned down by Justice Richard Goldstone.⁴⁵⁴ Johr's application was based on an alleged offer made by the State President in Parliament to political prisoners. The president had said 'Government is willing to consider releasing prisoners on condition that they renounced violence as a political instrument.'⁴⁵⁵ Johr alleged that this offer was subsequently made to her in prison,



and she had accepted it in a letter posted to the state president and in a form signed by her accepting the offer on the conditions stated by the president. In her affidavit, Johr acknowledged that her renunciation of violence would not entitle her to immediate release, but would be taken into consideration as a factor by the Release Board.⁴⁵⁶

Tradecraft and Clandestine Communication Methodology

In the trade of spying, the methods used by an intelligence service to communicate with its spies and support agents are of critical importance, because the mere existence of such a clandestine communication system is a red flag. The physical components of a clandestine communication system, for example dead letter boxes, cut-outs, signs and signals, caches, cameras, microfilm, are confirmations of spying activity, and therefore the focus of any counterintelligence investigation. Apart from the cameras mentioned earlier, Dieter Gerhardt's favourite spying tools, found in his house, were three Olympus Pen-F 35 mm cameras, three miniature cameras, and a Fugica video camera. Gerhardt used different concealment methods, amongst them a cigarette holder, a key ring holder and a hip flask, which he kept in his office. The GRU adapted Gerhardt's 35 mm films by joining them together, sometimes as many as eight at a time, to lengthen their use and usefulness. This enabled Gerhardt to assemble and store a vast number of photos of documents on one film. Counterintelligence investigators found more than two hundred typed A5-size reports and documents on one such adapted 35 mm film roll. During the investigation, Gerhardt confessed to handing over 270 x 35 mm films to the Russians.

Unaware that her daughter had been arrested in South Africa on charges of espionage, Ruth Johr's mother opened the door to her Basel apartment to Swiss counter-intelligence investigators on a fateful day in 1983. The SAP-SB had informed the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service, the SFIS, of the arrest on charges of espionage of Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr. In the apartment, the investigators found seven 15 mm films, inadvertently left behind by Ruth Johr after a failed meeting with her GRU handler in Zürich. The film contained 3 978 copies of stolen SAN and NATO documents.⁴⁵⁷

As a result of Gerhardt's disclosures, his handler, Vitaly Shlikov, was arrested in Zürich. Several items of note were found in Shlikov's possession and later used as evidence during Gerhardt and Johr's court case in Cape Town. At the invitation of the SFIS, two senior investigators, Brigadier Herman Stadler and Lieutenant General Lothar Neethling visited Switzerland to examine items and evidence found in Shlikov's possession, as well as aspects and elements of the clandestine communications network used by Gerhardt and Johr. Neethling was an expert in secret writing methods of the kind used by Gerhardt and Johr.⁴⁵⁸ Because of Switzerland's neutrality status (a fact that the Swiss repeated to the South Africans ad nauseam), the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service initially refused to hand over pieces of evidence to Stadler and Neethling, but later relented.

A second visit to Switzerland by Brigadier Stadler and the Attorney General of the Cape Province Advocate Neil Russouw, authorised by the SA Minister of Justice, followed. During this visit, a meeting took place in Bern with a senior staff member of the Swiss Attorney General's office, Dr Gerber. Gerber was initially reluctant to help, but promised



to obtain authorisation from the Swiss Minister of Justice to hand over all the evidence the SFIS had gathered in Switzerland, to the South Africans. A week later, a letter from Gerber arrived, giving permission for the Swiss evidence against Gerhardt and Johr to be used in the court case in Cape Town.

Against the wishes of the Swiss authorities, Gerhardt was taken to Switzerland. Gerhardt complained that it was against his will, much to the frustration and disgust of the Federal Intelligence Service (FIS), who correctly surmised that Gerhardt wanted to create an international diplomatic incident. During this forced visit, Gerhardt identified dead drops and meeting places with his Russian handlers, information later used in the court case against him.

The Psychological Make-Up of a Spy

Gerhardt, by his own admission, developed a strong dislike for his SA questioners who tried to convince him that they knew about his activities for a long time, and that he had been under continual investigation and surveillance by SAP-SP, Directorate: Military Intelligence and the NIS. Gerhardt knew that the SA intelligence services had known almost nothing until the CIA informed them of his arrest and his activities.⁴⁵⁹ Gerhardt later said that he and his wife confessed rather quickly and easily to their spying activities, because they were relieved and wanted to bring an end to this chapter in their lives. This phenomenon is not unusual for spies who have operated for very long periods of time – it does come as a temporary sort of relief on the one hand and is sometimes known to lead to them revealing information they would normally refrain from doing, but this is merely short-term relief.

Damage Assessment

Dr Evert Kleynhans, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Military History at the University of Stellenbosch and editor of *Scientia Militaria*, the SA Journal of Military Studies, describes the military security impact of Dieter Felix Gerhard and Ruth Johr's spying careers as follows:

Between 1963 and 1983, when Gerhardt and Johr spied for the GRU, the SADF had nearly reached its zenith in terms of force structure, design, and equipment. Having become increasingly involved in the low-intensity conflicts in Southern Africa over the period, the SADF had to contend with both conventional and unconventional threats to South Africa's sovereignty. Moreover, in support of the counterinsurgency war in northern Namibia, the SADF also conducted a number of large-scale cross-border operations into Angola where it faced a far more resolute and conventional threat from Angola and its communist allies. As such, the SADF needed to possess joint capabilities and equipment to dominate the land, air, and naval domains in Southern Africa. Despite increased sanctions and an arms boycott during this period, the SADF had relatively advanced weaponry at its disposal. This was partly brought about by earlier arms acquisitions



from abroad and a concerted effort during the 1970s to reequip the SADF through the development and expansion of the domestic arms industry under the direction of ARMSCOR. Through these efforts, the SADF was equipped with among other fast missile-carrying strike craft, submarines, fleet replenishment vessels, fighter and transport aircraft, helicopters for trooping and close air support, tanks, armoured cars, infantry fighting vehicles, and field and self-propelled artillery.⁴⁶⁰

The most serious damage that Dieter Gerhardt's spying activities had caused was the loss of South Africa's secret ORBAT (Order of Battle) information. Gerhardt had sold South African information and intelligence regarding the identity, strength, command structure and disposition of personnel, units and equipment of its military forces, to the Russians.

Gerhardt's Access to Intelligence Targets and Information

Because the combat preparedness of the SAN was closely linked and integrated with the combat capabilities and preparedness of the SADF, Gerhardt had direct access to gold dust information for the Soviet Union – South Africa's combat plan for war. On 1 May 1946, the South African Naval Forces (SANF) was constituted as part of the Union Defence Force (UDF) and changed its name to the SAN in July 1951. When Gerhardt became a Soviet spy in 1963, the combat force of the SAN consisted of two Algerine-class minesweepers, a Flower-class corvette, two W-class destroyers, a Type 15 anti-submarine frigate, and three Type 12 President-class frigates. In 1968, South Africa received three Daphné-class submarines from France, of which every construction detail and combat capability was sold by Gerhardt to the GRU. Following visits by Prime Minister Vorster and Defence Minister Botha to Israel, South Africa bought and deployed nine Reshef missile strike craft for conventional naval engagement in SA waters.⁴⁶¹ Gerhardt had access to and had visited the underground electronic labyrinth Silvermine, the most protected and most secret military facility in South Africa. Silvermine is an electronic database equipped with the most modern equipment for monitoring aircraft and ships in the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean – South Africa's eyes and ears.

At the time of his arrest, Gerhardt was Officer Commanding of the Simon's Town naval base. In his previous post at SADF headquarters in Pretoria, Gerhardt's job description was Senior Staff Officer Research in the Office of Force Development. As one of the directors of the Office of Force Development, a post he held for several years, Gerhardt had direct access to South Africa's most sensitive and secretive military information and the documents South Africa exchanged with NATO countries. The recruitment of Gerhardt as a GRU spy illustrates the importance the Russians attached to obtaining details of British, NATO and SA submarine and anti-submarine capabilities. International weapons sanctions against the SA government meant that the SADF bought weapons in secrecy on international arms markets, and Gerhardt was sent on such buying missions on a regular basis. He therefore had direct access to top secret information of the SADF pertaining to weapons procurement. Gerhardt used his position as Senior Staff Officer Research in the Office of Force Development to great effect to access information to which he did not otherwise and normally would have had access. He did not need a network of sub- and



contract agents to assist him in his information-gathering activities – the Navy, Army, Air Force and DMI were all ‘his personal network’.⁴⁶² Gerhardt even received praise from the Navy and his friend, admiral HH (Hugo) Bierman, for his work. The management of the SAN and DMI were never able to connect the dots between Gerhardt’s personal opulent lifestyle and his spying activities – they suspected nothing.

During his tenure at SADF headquarters in Pretoria, Gerhardt informed his colleagues that he had identified a weakness in the SADF’s weapons procurement programme. Gerhardt suggested that all the information in possession of the SADF regarding weapons and weapons systems, be centralised in one place, in one data bank, a central library on the combat capabilities of the defence force. The generals agreed and a central data bank was established, placing a trove of secret and sensitive military information at Gerhardt’s fingertips.

In 1977, Dieter Gerhardt visited South Africa’s top-secret Vastrap underground nuclear device testing site near Upington in the Northern Cape. Gerhardt subsequently supplied the Russians with top secret information regarding the South African nuclear development programme and nuclear explosive capability. Gerhardt was fully informed about an imminent nuclear device test at Vastrap and gave this information to Colonel Vitaly Shlikov of the GRU. In July 1979, the SA government proceeded with the development and construction of seven deliverable nuclear weapons, shifting responsibility for the programme from the AEC to ARMSCOR. Details about this independent nuclear capability were the single most damaging item of information that Dieter Gerhardt had sold to the Soviet Union.⁴⁶³ In August 1977, South Africa was ready to test its first nuclear device at the underground Vastrap testing site, an event eagerly awaited by the SA government, and its military-industrial complex, like this ‘cold’ test, was to have been a fully instrumentalised experiment, but without an enriched uranium warhead.⁴⁶⁴ On 14 August 1977, just hours before the imminent and top-secret test, an American Beechcraft Twin-engine C-12 light aircraft was noticed, flying over the remote Vastrap site. This aircraft belonged to William Brockway (Bill) Edmondson, the US ambassador to South Africa, and was fitted with a 70 mm electronic long-reach spy camera.⁴⁶⁵ The AEC and SADF headquarters in Pretoria were immediately notified and the incident investigated, finding that no flight plan for an aircraft in the Upington–Vastrap area had been submitted or approved by aviation authorities. On 17 August 1977, the American ambassador to South Africa, William Brockway Edmondson, contacted the SA Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria, demanding to know what was going on at Vastrap and insisting on a visit to the site. According to Dr Nic von Wielligh, member of the Atomic Energy Board of South Africa, an ‘inspection would undoubtedly serve to confirm that preparations had been made for a nuclear test, even if it was only a cold test’.⁴⁶⁶ South Africa’s civilian intelligence service already knew that both the United States and the Soviet Union had deployed Rhyolite, Vela-6911, and Cosmos spy satellites over its territory.⁴⁶⁷ Foreknowledge, supplied by Dieter Gerhardt, was the only reason the satellites were positioned by these two superpowers above a remote and desolate area of South Africa’s western desert area.⁴⁶⁸

As combat officer in the SADF, Gerhardt had access to the specifications of a SA-developed helmet-mounted sight system, used by its Mirage fighter pilots. This sight system was integrated with the ARMSCOR V3A Kukri short-range infra-red dogfight heat-seeking air-air missile system, enabling the pilot to make off-bore attacks, without having to manoeuvre to the optimum firing position. SA pilots used this system in 1975 during the Angolan War, after which Gerhardt handed the design plans to the Russians.

At the time of his arrest in a New York hotel room on 8 January 1983, this commodore had been a spy for the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU, for twenty years.⁴⁶⁹ During this period Gerhardt had passed 400 000 pages of classified South African, Israeli, British and NATO documents to the Russians.⁴⁷⁰

The information Gerhardt passed on to the USSR concerned NATO weaponry and battle formations, British naval weapons including missiles, the French Exocet missile system and the entire military structure of the Simon's Town naval base, where he served as commanding officer.⁴⁷¹

Dieter Felix Gerhardt sold every document on the South African nuclear weapons development programme, and every document of importance, which passed between the SAN, the SADF headquarters in Pretoria, and NATO, to the Russians. But what was the tangible and measurable impact of Dieter Felix Gerhardt spying activities and how did it affect their primary intelligence target, the SADF?

Consequences, Lessons and Legacy of the Dieter Felix Gerhardt Spy Case

Counterespionage Lessons

According to General Magnus Malan, former head of the SADF, he 'became conscious of a security leak in ARMSCOR in 1973' and requested the DMI to determine whether Gerhardt could possibly be a spy.⁴⁷² The investigation died a silent death after the DMI found nothing untoward or any indications that Gerhardt could be a spy.⁴⁷³ Despite the DMI's superficial investigation, Gerhardt managed to get the keys and combinations of the safes used by his fellow officers, and even gained access to their offices, using copies of skeleton keys in order to gather the information he wanted. Gerhardt later told counter-intelligence investigators that he was aware of an earlier investigation into his activities, in 1967, that was ultimately unsuccessful. Malan says that his confidence in the SADF liaison officers, of which Gerhardt was one, had been damaged, and that he had instructed the head of the SAN to transfer Gerhardt away from any contact with ARMSCOR. Gerhardt was transferred from Pretoria to Simon's Town as the new Officer Commanding of the Naval Dockyard – a move that initially did not suit Moscow's requirements at all. As the Commanding Officer of the naval base, Gerhardt not only became the boss of 2 700 naval personnel, but the person responsible for the combat preparedness of the SAN. During the Cold War, the Simon's Town naval base was the most important maritime installation in the South Atlantic and South Indian Ocean, of critical strategic importance to the Western alliance of states.



According to a written assessment given to this writer by the former head of South African CE/CI, the former minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, did not tell the full truth in his autobiography about the Gerhardt spy case. PW Botha told senior military officials after Gerhardt's apprehension that he 'never wanted to hear about a spy in the SA Defence Force again'.⁴⁷⁴ This remark by Botha had a paralysing effect on the Directorate: Military Intelligence, in that they became hesitant to investigate other spy cases.

Vetting Lessons

In an intelligence context, vetting is tradecraft jargon for a background investigation, conducted for security clearance purposes prior to the granting of a security clearance. Intelligence services such as the Mossad and the British SIS use different names for the same security function, for example clearance, name check, name trace, positive vetting, and security clearance.⁴⁷⁵ Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr were both penetration and not infiltration agents, and therefore the treason they committed, and of which they were found guilty, was difficult to detect. Normal vetting and security clearance procedures would not have detected or identified Gerhardt, because he made his decision to become a spy after his enlistment in the SAN.

In the period of Dieter Gerhardt's spying career (1963–1983), the SADF and the SAP were responsible for their own counterintelligence requirements, including security needs (vetting and background checks) and countering espionage in their own ranks. The SADF and SAP conducted their own vetting, applied their own security policy and procedures, and issued their own security clearances where required. There was no gold standard applied to these procedures in the SADF: 'personnel with access to classified material were vetted and security cleared intermittently, infrequently and negligently. No polygraph testing was done.'⁴⁷⁶

Republican Intelligence (RI), the Bureau for State Security, the DoNS and the NIS did not investigate Dieter Felix Gerhardt and/or Ruth Johr during the period 1963–1983.

Prevention Lessons

Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr were both penetration agents, and not infiltration agents, and therefore the treason they committed and of which were found guilty, was more difficult to detect. Normal vetting and security clearance procedures would therefore not have detected the presence of a Russian spy within the SAN and Defence Force.

Following the Gerhardt spy case and court verdict, President PW Botha said that the South African intelligence services had been investigating Gerhardt for a long time, but that they could not find sufficient evidence against him.⁴⁷⁷ Apart from former defence minister Magnus Malan's contention in his autobiography, no corroborative evidence could be found that the Directorate: Military Intelligence had conducted an investigation into the affairs of Dieter Gerhardt between 1963 and 1983.⁴⁷⁸ The court case exposed serious flaws in the security clearance and vetting procedures of the SADF Directorate: Military Intelligence (DMI), and elicited harsh criticism from Judge George Munnik in his verdict.⁴⁷⁹



According to Magnus Malan, former Minister of Defence, the greatest harm done by Gerhardt to South Africa was passing information to the Russians about the South African nuclear development programme.⁴⁸⁰ The South African nuclear weapons production programme remained top secret for many years – until Dieter Gerhardt sold information about the programme to the Russians. The information sold by Gerhardt to the GRU made a decisive contribution to Russia's development and enhancement of its intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capability, without arousing any suspicions or investigations by the West and NATO.⁴⁸¹

Conclusion

While some analysts regard Gerhardt as the most successful spy in South African history, counterintelligence officials and historians classify him as the country's biggest traitor.⁴⁸² By his activities and public utterances after his court case and imprisonment, it is clear that Dieter Gerhardt does not fully comprehend or recognise the enormity of the espionage he had committed. By way of refusing to provide full and honest disclosure of his spying activities on behalf of the Russian GRU, Gerhardt forced his interrogators and the judge in his high treason trial, to operate from a position of ignorance and half-truths, rather than a position of strength through knowledge and understanding.

In his definition and explanation of the illustrative case study research model, Dane warns hypotheses generation can be one the most common results of case studies.⁴⁸³ In the spying case of Dieter Felix Gerhardt, however, the case study research method proved useful by helping to identify Gerhardt's espionage conduct and behaviour that can be learned and deduced from the collected data:

- That Dieter Felix Gerhardt tried to coerce his family into spying (Janet Coggin), employed his wife Ruth Johr as a courier, spied on his friends, lied to his colleagues in the SAN, and betrayed his country. His only trade in the period 1963 to 1983 was treachery.
- That Dieter Gerhardt was a top-class spy is undisputed. He did enormous damage both in South Africa and in the United Kingdom, but also in France and Israel.
- That he was brilliantly handled by two veteran GRU officers is beyond dispute.
- There is no doubt that his wife Ruth Johr was an excellent courier.
- Ruth Johr's excuse for travelling to Switzerland to meet with her family was only part of the cover story. At the time of their trial, nobody in NI, SB, CIA or SIS had discovered the other part of Johr's cover story, and two support agents remain unidentified.

One of the few and only advantages and dividends that emerged from the Dieter Gerhardt espionage case study, was the realisation by South African intelligence services that it had fallen woefully behind the world standards for cryptoanalytical research, progress, and detection capabilities.⁴⁸⁴ The Directorate: Military Intelligence had failed to find a spy in its midst, and had failed to understand the threat posed to South African maritime and military security by the *Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije* (GRU). During the



period that Gerhardt was an active and productive spy, the GRU had altered and improved their cryptocode procedures for their spies and agents worldwide, removing most of single and duplicated one-time keypads (OTPs)⁴⁸⁵ from its espionage operations. South Africa was simply not prepared or equipped by way of its counterespionage techniques and methods for spies of the calibre of Dieter Gerhardt and Ruth Johr.

Intelligence and espionage is often misunderstood. Despite dealing with secrets, they are not in the secrets business. The core purpose of intelligence agencies, such as the GRU and the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB), is delivering collated intelligence and insights to Russian decision-makers, and anticipating the future better and faster than any of their adversaries. Dieter Felix Gerhardt and Ruth Johr did that, and were therefore, according to the measurement of this case study, two of the most damaging spies in South African history.



ENDNOTES

- ³⁵⁶ Henning van Aswegen is a former lecturer at the National Intelligence Academy in Pretoria, South Africa, and the author of *Spioenmeesters, Die Buro, The Daisy Spy Ring, and The Spymasters of South Africa*.
- ³⁵⁷ Definition by the researcher. See LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990).
- ³⁵⁸ National Strategic Information Center, *Intelligence Terminology* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University, 2015), 112.
- ³⁵⁹ A double agent is a witting agent in contact with two opposing intelligence services, with only one service aware of the duplicity.
- ³⁶⁰ FC Dane, *Research Methods* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990), 114.
- ³⁶¹ PR Viotti & MV Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1993), 596.
- ³⁶² T Bekker, *Enkele Staatskundige Konsepte* (Pretoria: AMB, 1991), 30.
- ³⁶³ FD Dane, *Research Methods* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990), 113.
- ³⁶⁴ SK Soy, *The Case Study as a Research Method* (San Francisco, CA: PB Publishers, 2003), 31.
- ³⁶⁵ A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011, 8.
- ³⁶⁶ General Herman Stadler to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai*, 30 September 2021. Two-page statement on the Dieter Gerhardt-Ruth Johr spying incident.
- ³⁶⁷ Statement on the Dieter Gerhardt-Ruth Johr spying incident by a former head of the CI/CE Chief Directorate of South Africa's intelligence services to the researcher.
- ³⁶⁸ Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division. Case No. SS239/83.
- ³⁶⁹ H Stadler, *The Other Side of the Story: A True Perspective* (Pretoria: Foundation for Equality before the Law, 1997), 135.
- ³⁷⁰ T Bekker, *Enkele Staatskundige Konsepte* (Pretoria: AMB, 1994), 30.
- ³⁷¹ KJ Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall International, 1983), 78.
- ³⁷² JA Camilleri & J Falk, *The End of Sovereignty: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmented World* (Vermont: Edgar Elgar Books, 1992), 161.
- ³⁷³ JA Camilleri & J Falk, *The End of Sovereignty: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmented World* (Vermont: Edgar Elgar Books, 1992), 161.
- ³⁷⁴ PR Viotti & MV Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1993), 293, 395.
- ³⁷⁵ MM Lowenthal, *From Secrets to Policy*, 8th ed. (New York, NY: CQ Press, 2022), 8. Lowenthal defines intelligence studies as follows: 'Intelligence is the study of the process by which specific types of information of importance to national security are requested, collected, produced and made available to the decision-makers, and operational agencies.'



- ³⁷⁶ M Ray, 'Russian Revolution', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Russian-Revolution>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]; G Faulconbridge, 'What is Russia's Military Intelligence Agency?', *Reuters*, 5 October 2018. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-gru-factbox-idUSKCN1MF1VK>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. See HJ van Aswegen, 'Die Taal wat Spioene Praat', *Netwerk24*, 19 November 2018. <<https://www.netwerk24.com/Stemme/Aktueel/die-taal-watspioene-praat-20171117>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ³⁷⁷ AS Bowen, *Russian Military Intelligence: Background and Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service Report, 24 November 2020. <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/R46616.pdf>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021], 2.
- ³⁷⁸ J Barron, *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents* (New York, NY: Readers Digest Press, 1993), 88.
- ³⁷⁹ WR Corson & TC Crowley, *The New KGB, Engine of Russian Power*, updated ed. (New York, NY: Quill William Morrow, 1992), 13, 70. See G Faulconbridge, 'What is Russia's Military Intelligence Agency?', *Reuters*, 5 October 2018. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-gru-factbox-idUSKCN1MF1VK>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. See L Trotsky, *On Lenin: Notes towards a Biography* (London: George G. Harrap, 1971) for further reading on the relationship between Lenin and Trotsky.
- ³⁸⁰ Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB). In the Soviet era, the KGB was responsible for clandestine intelligence operations to spread communism and the Kremlin's influence throughout the world. These operations were referred to as 'political influence operations', while GRU focused on the gathering of military information. The SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service) and the FSB (Russian Federal Security Service) grew out of the existence of the KGB and are today, together with GRU (also known as the GU), the two most important Russian intelligence and security services.
- ³⁸¹ The CHEKA was the predecessor of the KGB (see AS Bowen, *Russian Military Intelligence: Background and Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service Report, 24 November 2020. <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/R46616.pdf>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021], 2.
- ³⁸² Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye – Chief Directorate Foreign Military Intelligence of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Like the KGB, but much bigger in terms of personnel and resources with a focus on military intelligence. GRU has been confused with the acronym SMERSH, which was created during the Second World War as a specialist counter-espionage unit of the KGB to identify and search for double agents and 'enemies of the state'. SMERSH gained a reputation for brutality, often summarily, killing 'enemies of the state' without due legal process.
- ³⁸³ M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 306.
- ³⁸⁴ C Pincher, *Traitors: The Labyrinths of Treason* (London: New English Library, 1996), 211; E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me'. *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-coggin-the-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021], 330.
- ³⁸⁵ Biermann later became head of the SA Navy. See M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 306.
- ³⁸⁶ C Pincher, *Traitors: The Labyrinths of Treason* (London: New English Library, 1996), 211.
- ³⁸⁷ HJ van Aswegen, *The Spymasters of South Africa* (Baldwin, Georgia: Rabbit Trails, 2022), 67.



- ³⁸⁸ E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021], 330.
- ³⁸⁹ E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- ³⁹⁰ A walk-in is a person with access to relevant information who, voluntarily or according to plan, discreetly presents him-/herself to an intelligence service and offers his/her knowledge in exchange for whatever gain he/she is seeking, usually money.
- ³⁹¹ M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 307.
- ³⁹² *Ha'aretz Magazine*, 7 April 2000, 6, 9, 13.
- ³⁹³ HJ van Aswegen, *A Background to the South African Communist Party* (Baldwin, Georgia: Rabbit Trails, 2023), 112.
- ³⁹⁴ J Sanders, *Apartheid's Friends: The Rise and Fall of South Africa's Secret Service* (London: John Murray, 2006), 192.
- ³⁹⁵ Personal interview on 20 November 2022 by this researcher with the former head of CI/CE of one of South Africa's intelligence services.
- ³⁹⁶ LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990). The *International Dictionary of Intelligence* defines a walk-in spy as follows: (1) tradecraft jargon for an opposition agent who voluntarily surrenders himself for defection by requesting political asylum or who offers himself voluntarily for recruitment. A walk-in may also be someone who has something to offer or sell to the intelligence service he is approaching; (2) a defector who presents himself or herself for political asylum; (3) at one time, a disaffected individual seeking aid in escaping from a denied area; (4) official intelligence-community (IC) definition: 'A person who on his own initiative makes contact with a representative of a foreign country and who volunteers intelligence information and/or requests political asylum'; (5) 'An individual who voluntarily approaches a representative of a foreign government to offer his services and/or supplies information of value. Conversely, this term may be applied to an individual who approaches a representative of his own government to indicate a desire to purge himself of wrongful conduct.'
- ³⁹⁷ HUMINT signifies information received from human sources, also called 'human-source reporting' or 'human source reports'. HUMINT is the abbreviation used by intelligence services for 'human intelligence', collected from overt, covert or clandestine sources, observers, informants, informers and agents.
- ³⁹⁸ N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143–145.
- ³⁹⁹ AJ Venter, *How South Africa Built Six Nuclear Bombs and then Abandoned its Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Kyalami: Ashanti, 2008), 63.
- ⁴⁰⁰ A controller, handler or spymaster is a person who is a member of a covert collection element of an intelligence or counterintelligence organisation, or service, and who, in the course of collection and information-gathering functions, guides and controls agents, or intelligence cooperators, or collaborators.
- ⁴⁰¹ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴⁰² R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].



- ⁴⁰³ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴⁰⁴ DST – Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire. Created in 1944 out of the old ST (Surveillance du Territoire), the intelligence section of the Sûreté, the old French Special Branch. For more information on the DST, the RG and the DGSE, read D Porch, *The French Secret Services* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995).
- ⁴⁰⁵ E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- ⁴⁰⁶ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴⁰⁷ E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- ⁴⁰⁸ E Cook, 'Janet Coggin: The Spy Who Lied to Me', *Independent*, 28 March 1999. <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-janet-cogginthe-spy-who-lied-to-me-1083517.html>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021].
- ⁴⁰⁹ According to the espionage historian and writer Chapman Pincher, Johr was a spy for the German Democratic Republic. See P Dickens, 'South African Navy Commodore Turned Soviet Spy ... Codename Felix', *The Observation Post*, 26 August 2017. <<https://samilhistory.com/tag/dieter-Gerhardt/>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021]. In his book *Traitors* (p. 100), Pincher states that Johr was an East German agent before she met Dieter Gerhardt.
- ⁴¹⁰ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴¹¹ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴¹² Also see N Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1982), 317. Chomsky, a renowned Cold War analyst, states on page 422 of his book that 'the attention of the United States is generally focused on Kremlin-inspired aggression in Africa'.
- ⁴¹³ N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143.
- ⁴¹⁴ 'Plausible denial (PD) aka plausible deniability; plausibly denied; plausibly deniable. In covert action, if an operation is surfaced, the explanation to counter attribution to the true sponsoring country or agency.' See LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990). The only unclassified reference work of tradecraft, jargon, terminology, cryptonyms, abbreviations and usage, with historical and anecdotal descriptions.
- ⁴¹⁵ Discussion with author and former member of the NI.
- ⁴¹⁶ N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143, 145.
- ⁴¹⁷ *The New York Times*, 'South African Officer Arrested in Spying Case', 28 January 1983. 5.
- ⁴¹⁸ Accused No. 2, Statement to the Court. Case No. SS239/83/1369/MC2/1369SS239.



- ⁴¹⁹ A dead drop, or dead letter box (DLB), is a specific place where intelligence material is deposited by one member of a clandestine communication system or network and recovered (unloaded) by another. It includes signs used to indicate that the dead drop has been loaded and/or unloaded.
- ⁴²⁰ M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006).
- ⁴²¹ *Izvestia*, 14–16 January 1992.
- ⁴²² N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143.
- ⁴²³ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021], 198.
- ⁴²⁴ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. 48.
- ⁴²⁵ Operational Information, South African Intelligence Services.
- ⁴²⁶ A witting source or agent spies and supplies information knowingly and consciously (definition by the researcher). The CIA definition reads 'a witting agent is a person, thing, or activity from which intelligence information is obtained. (2) In clandestine activities, a person (agent), normally a foreign national, in the employ of an intelligence activity for intelligence purposes. (3) In interrogation activities, any person who furnishes intelligence information, either with or without the knowledge that the information used for intelligence purposes.' Witting is intelligence tradecraft jargon for an agent that is aware that he/she is working for a clandestine intelligence service, and, in most cases is aware of the identity of the clandestine service. An unwitting agent, source, collaborator or informant can claim that he is not aware of the ultimate identity of the recipient of his information, if he has been recruited under false flag. CIA, *Glossary of Intelligence Terms and Definitions* (Washington, DC, 1989), 345.
- ⁴²⁷ R Kessler, *The Secrets of the FBI* (New York, NY: Broadway, 2012), 128–150. See JT Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community: Counterintelligence and Covert Action* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger), 219.
- ⁴²⁸ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴²⁹ Interview, author with former member of the National Intelligence Service, 2 October 2021.
- ⁴³⁰ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴³¹ D de Villiers & J de Villiers, *PW* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1984), 275.
- ⁴³² A Mathews, *Freedom, State Security and the Rule of Law* (Johannesburg: Juta, 1986), 34, 47.
- ⁴³³ *The New York Times*, 'South African Officer Arrested in Spying Case', 28 January 1983, 5. See A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011.
- ⁴³⁴ LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990), 332. A one-time pad (OTP), also known as a 'cipher pad' in cryptography and tradecraft, is used for enciphering and deciphering clandestine intelligence communications. It can be used only one time, hence the name. OTPs are considered one of the safest possible ways an agent communicates with his handlers because of its single use application.



- ⁴³⁵ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]. 57.
- Y Melman, 'Israel Signed Secret Security Pacts with 39 Countries', *Haaretz*, 15 August 2001, 1–2.
- ⁴³⁶ Y Melman, 'Israel Signed Secret Security Pacts with 39 Countries', *Haaretz*, 15 August 2001, 1–2.
- ⁴³⁷ A Mathews, *Freedom, State Security and the Rule of Law* (Cape Town: Juta, 1986), 220.
- ⁴³⁸ Interview by the researcher with a former member of the SA State Security Council Secretariat, 4 October 2021. See R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴³⁹ General Herman Stadler to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai* magazine, 30 September 2021.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division. Court document. Conviction. Stamped MCHC21012391983, dated 31 December 1983.
- ⁴⁴¹ General Herman Stadler, to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai* Magazine, 30 September 2021.
- ⁴⁴² Supreme Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division. Court document. Conviction. Stamped MCHC21012391983, dated 31 December 1983.
- ⁴⁴³ A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011.
- ⁴⁴⁴ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]
- ⁴⁴⁵ Dieter Felix Gerhardt. Affidavit to the court. Case SS239/83, 2.
- ⁴⁴⁶ General Herman Stadler to Hennie Heymans/*Nongqai* magazine, 30 September 2021. See P Dickens, 'South African Navy Commodore Turned Soviet Spy ... Codename Felix', *The Observation Post*, 26 August 2017. <<https://samilhistory.com/tag/dieter-gerhardt/>> [Accessed on 16 March 2021],
- ⁴⁴⁷ A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011.
- ⁴⁴⁸ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021].
- ⁴⁴⁹ TRC/Amnesty Committee, *Dieter Felix Gerhardt, AM5978/97*, 1999. <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/decisions/1999/990330_Gerhardt.html> [Accessed on 24 March 2021].
- ⁴⁵⁰ N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 143. Also see AJ Venter, *How South Africa Built Six Nuclear Bombs and then Abandoned its Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Kyalami: Ashanti, 2008),
- ⁴⁵¹ M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 214–215.
- ⁴⁵² HJ van Aswegen, *Spioenmeesters* (Pretoria: Kraal, 2021), 234.
- ⁴⁵³ Support agent is tradecraft jargon for an agent who services another agent or net(work), such as a courier or safehouse keeper, or a person who loads and unloads DLBs.
- ⁴⁵⁴ P Dickens, 'Dieter Gerhardt', *The Observations Post*, 8 September 2020. <<https://samilhistory.com.tag/dieter.Gerhardt/>> [Accessed on 16 October 2021], 1.
- ⁴⁵⁵ Gerhardt vs. State President and Others, 1989(2)Sap499(T), Transvaal Provincial Division, Goldstone, J. Judgement, 7 September 1988.
- ⁴⁵⁶ Gerhardt vs. State President and Others, 1989(2)Sap499(T), Transvaal Provincial Division, Goldstone, J. Judgement, 7 September 1988.



- ⁴⁵⁷ *Izvestia*, 14–16 January 1992
- ⁴⁵⁸ ‘Secret writing’ is the tradecraft term for clandestine communications using secret inks, codes and ciphers or microphotography. Secret writing is any method that renders writing invisible to ordinary inspection. See LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990), 446.
- ⁴⁵⁹ *The New York Times*, ‘South African Officer Guilty of Spying’, 30 December 1983, 3.
- ⁴⁶⁰ E Kleynhans, Senior lecturer in Military Studies, Stellenbosch University, editor of *Scientia Militaria*. E-mail to author, 24 June 2022.
- ⁴⁶¹ Personal interview with a former permanent employee of Denel and Armscor, 12 December 2021.
- ⁴⁶² Former head of CI/CE in South Africa’s intelligence services.
- ⁴⁶³ AJ Venter, *How South Africa Built Six Nuclear Bombs and then Abandoned its Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Kyalami: Ashanti, 2008), 64.
- ⁴⁶⁴ N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa’s Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 135. The Vastrap testing site, consisting of two test shafts, is owned by the SA Defence Force.
- ⁴⁶⁵ HJ van Aswegen, *Spioenmeesters* (Pretoria: Kraal, 2021), 118.
- ⁴⁶⁶ N von Wielligh & L von Wielligh-Steyn, *The Bomb: South Africa’s Nuclear Weapons Programme* (Pretoria: Litera, 2015), 137.
- ⁴⁶⁷ WE Burrows, ‘The Coldest Warriors’, *Air & Space*, January 2000. <<https://www.airspacemag.com/military-aviation/the-coldest-warriors-850417>>. 3. [Accessed on 8 February 2021]. See J Richelson & WM Arkin, ‘Spy Satellites: “Secret”, but much is known’, *Washington Post*, 6 January 1985. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1985/01/06/spy-satellites-secret-but-much-is-known/fa494baa-0c9e4929-ae90-d441d46893af/>> [Accessed on 8 February 2021], 13. Justia US Law, *United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Andrew Daulton Lee, Defendant-appellant, 589 F.2d 980 (9th Cir. 1979), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit*, 15 February 1979. <<https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellatecourts/F2/589/980/194005/>> [Accessed on 5 February 2021].



⁴⁶⁸ According to the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), published in 2016 (S Bidgood & W Potter, 'Cold War Lessons for Contemporary U.S.-Russian Non-proliferation Cooperation: The South African Case', *NTI*, 17 October 2016. <<https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cold-war-lessons-contemporary-us-russian-nonproliferationcooperation-south-african-case/>> [Accessed on 8 February 2021]). The USA and Soviet Union uncharacteristically cooperated to end South Africa's development of nuclear weapons: 'An important, but by no means singular, case of non-proliferation cooperation between Washington and Moscow occurred in the 1970s when the two countries were military and ideological adversaries ... Some of the specifics of the South African case remain hazy, but a large body of evidence supports the conclusion that the United States and the Soviet Union collaborated in a sustained, multi-faceted, and successful fashion to prevent South Africa from undertaking a nuclear test in the Kalahari Desert in 1977. The achievement, ultimately, did not preclude South Africa's acquisition of nuclear weapons, but it did demonstrate the readiness of two Cold War adversaries to work together in pursuit of a common non-proliferation goal.' R Möser, *How the Carter Administration Pursued Non-proliferation Policies: A View from Apartheid South Africa*. Wilson Center, 7 June 2019. <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/how-the-carter-administration-pursued-non-proliferation-policies-view-apartheid-south>> [Accessed on 8 February 2021. Researcher's note: The reason why the USA and the Soviet Union collaborated on South Africa was the closure of the Russian Embassy in Hatfield, Pretoria in 1956. The Soviet Union and South Africa therefore had no diplomatic or consular relations, the US was used by the Russians as a handy intermediary. The Russians regarded South Africa as an enemy (for example, the 1975 Angolan War), while the US and Carter Administration regarded South Africa as a naughty child who had to be preached to and admonished. In 1975, the South African intelligence services had not yet developed the counter-intelligence techniques to deflect American and Russian attempts to subvert the government in the name of ideological principles. Russia's efforts to subvert South Africa was in the name of the advancement of communism. America's aim was to advance their own self-interest. South Africa was therefore not impermeable to outside political influences. In the second half of the 20th century, both countries observed the principle of non-intervention in South Africa's internal affairs, with considerable irregularity.

⁴⁶⁹ Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije (GRU), Russian military intelligence service.

⁴⁷⁰ R Bergman, 'Treasons of Conscience', *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2000. <<https://mg.co.za/article/2000-08-11-treasons-of-conscience/>> [Accessed on 15 March 2021]

⁴⁷¹ HR Pike, *A History of Communism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Christian Science Monitor of South Africa, 1985), 78.

⁴⁷² M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 315-316.

⁴⁷³ A Pretorius, 'Spioen-Spioen, 'n Ware (?) Verhaal', *Beeld*, 21 November 2011, 8-9.

⁴⁷⁴ Former head of CI, National Intelligence Service, to the researcher.

⁴⁷⁵ LD Carl, *International Dictionary of Intelligence* (McLean, VA: International Defense Consultant Services, 1990), 534.

⁴⁷⁶ Operational interview and statement by a former head of CI/CE in South Africa's intelligence services to the researcher. 3 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁷ See D. Prinsloo, *Stem uit die Wilderness* (Cape Town: Vaandel Uitgewers, 1997); M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 305.

⁴⁷⁸ Court case, Court record SS239/83.




- ⁴⁷⁹ Court case verdict, Case No. SS239/83. Superior Court of South Africa, Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division, 29 December 1983.
- ⁴⁸⁰ M Malan, *My Life in the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 305.
- ⁴⁸¹ P Wright, *Spycatcher* (Adelaide: Heinemann, 1987), 210.
- ⁴⁸² Hennie Heymans, a former brigadier in the South African Police Security Branch and an acknowledged historian, describes Dieter Gerhardt as the most damaging spy in the history of South Africa.
- ⁴⁸³ FC Dane, *Research Methods* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1990), 114.
- ⁴⁸⁴ Cryptography is the means and methods rendering plain text unintelligible and converting encrypted text into legibility. Crypto-analysis, or code breaking, is the covert and clandestine process whereby the coded communications of a spy or other intelligence service is made available in plain text (definition by the researcher). Cryptography transforms an encoded or encrypted communication into its equivalent plaintext by means of a crypto system; this term includes the meanings of decipher and decode.
- ⁴⁸⁵ One-time keypads (OTKs) are the safest way of encipherment communication used by intelligence services because only the sender and receiver have copies of the same pad. As long as every sheet and pad are used only once, the code is unbreakable. The difference between an OTP and OTK is the addition of the 'keys', enabling an agent to both code and decode secret messages.

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The Implication of Corruption to Nigeria's Internal Security: Insights from Selected Security Agencies

*Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju*⁴⁸⁶ 
Department of Political Science
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

The research on which this article reports, analysed corruption as a major threat to Nigeria's internal security. Studies have examined dimensions of corruption and their effects on security in the country, but this article sets out to analyse selected forms of abuse in the operations of two security agencies, the Army and Prison Services, in Nigeria's Ministries of Defence, and Interior respectively. The two represent military and paramilitary services in Nigeria, but they have overlapping duties and functions with other security agencies like the police, for example. Data is drawn from secondary sources for the conceptual and theoretical sections of the article. This is complemented by primary data from events analyses, especially from public hearings concerning the selected security agencies in Nigeria. A combination of the structural theory and the ecological approach is deployed for the article's analytic frame. The article finds out that the two agencies selected for study reflect the prevalence of corruption in several sectors of Nigeria's internal security architecture. It recommends a head-on combating of corruption which involves diligent closure of on-going cases of security breaches and corruption as well as the involvement of volunteers and communities.

Keywords: Threats by Corruption, Internal Security, Institutional Responsibilities, Citizens' Roles, Nigeria.

Introduction

Corruption will kill Nigeria, if the country does not kill corruption.⁴⁸⁷ This opening statement has often been made by President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, in both the run-up to the 2015 general elections, before becoming the president, and after his election and re-election in 2015 and 2019 respectively. This assertion about a phenomenon known for its destructive capacity, and which has not abated since it became a public issue of concern in 1966,⁴⁸⁸ comes with implications. For example, it implies that almost six decades after its declaration as the 'most important obstacle to development and national integration', and despite successive 'admonitory anti-corruption measures and programmes', the problem of corruption has been a feature in the private lives of citizens but, more importantly, in government circles.⁴⁸⁹ Rather than abate, corruption has affected

not only almost every facet of life, but also internal security – the primary purpose of any government.

This article therefore proceeds by analysing the question on the concept of corruption and why it is regarded so serious a problem that it warrant concerns about the possibility of causing grievous damages in the country. The article highlights the interconnections between corruption and underdevelopment, with the focus on insecurity. Then it considers forms of abuse in aspects of the operations of the Nigerian Army (NA), the Nigerian Correctional (Prison) Service, and the consequences of these on internal security in the country. The Nigerian police have the primary role of ensuring day-to-day security in Nigeria, while the Department of State Services (DSS) – the Nigerian secret police – complements their work by defending the country against domestic threats as well as upholding and enforcing criminal laws.⁴⁹⁰ Going by information gleaned from the media, these agencies have been overwhelmed particularly by criminal activities ranging from communal clashes, clashes between farmers and herders and banditry, to kidnapping and oil pipeline vandalism, among others. These and other assignments given to special task forces on election duties and other have warranted the inclusion of personnel of the NA. The Nigerian Navy (NN) and Nigerian Air Force (NAF) are components of the Nigerian Armed Forces, and both feature prominently in the surveillance of waterways and the air space respectively. Personnel of these two agencies are also involved in other security-related assignments but none is involved in aspects of everyday life internal security in Nigeria as much as the NA. The NA stands out in its role as the defender of territorial integrity of the country and in its training in ground battle.

Following the introduction, the rest of the article is structured into four main sections. The first of these comprises conceptual clarifications and a review of relevant literature and a theoretical framework, followed by selected cases for analysis and, finally recommendations and the conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications and Review of Relevant Literature

Corruption and internal security are the main concepts for which this article provides operational definitions. The concept of development comes up for clarification because development is adversely affected by the consequences of corruption and insecurity. Poverty, illiteracy, ill health, disease, malnourishment, hunger, deprivation, exclusion and frustration are other concepts and issues that are related to the main concepts, and are covered in the review of the literature.

According to its etymology, “corruption” involves any action by which a word or expression is changed from its original state to one regarded as erroneous or debased.⁴⁹¹ This implies pollution or putrefaction, and deviation from generally held standards of behaviour, especially involving a change from what is, as a rule, regarded as good or bad in any particular society. Looking at it from this perspective, means that corruption could manifest in social, economic, or political forms. From the economic point of view comes the general idea of limiting corruption to bribery and, in particular, monetary inducement. According to Mclean and McMillan,⁴⁹² corruption refers to an individual transferring a



benefit to another person who may or may not be entitled to such benefit, in exchange for an illegal payment. Such payment or bribe is often assumed to be monetary but may come as a favour in exchange for the performance of a legitimate task.⁴⁹³

There are overlaps in the economic, social, and political dimensions of corruption. The common characteristics are dishonesty and abuse of trust or privilege. In this regard, integrating three popularised definitions by the United Nations Global Programme against Corruption (UNGAP), Transparency International (TI) and the World Bank have been useful. For UNGAP,⁴⁹⁴ corruption is ‘abuse of power for private gain’. According to Transparency International,⁴⁹⁵ it is the ‘abuse of entrusted power for private gain’; while the World Bank⁴⁹⁶ defines corruption as ‘abuse of office for private gain’.

Defining corruption in Nigeria has been found not simple because of the gamut of what comes under the appellation of corrupt practices. According to Smith,⁴⁹⁷ when Nigerians talk about corruption, they refer to many things, including:

[T]he abuse of state offices for some kind of private gain ... a whole range of social behaviour in which various forms of morally questionable deception enable the achievement of wealth, power, or prestige as well as much more mundane ambitions. Nigerian notions of corruption encompass everything from government bribery and graft, rigged elections and fraudulent business deals, to diabolical abuse of occult powers, medical quackery, cheating in schools, and even deceiving a lover.

Owasanoye⁴⁹⁸ provides the official definition of corruption in Nigeria. This includes bribery, fraudulent acquisition of property, fraudulent receipt of property, the use of pecuniary advantage, gratification, influence peddling, insincerity in advice with a view to gaining an advantage, less than a full day’s work for a full day’s pay, tardiness and laziness. Failure to report any case of inducement to the appropriate authorities is also considered a punishable offence under the law. Criminalising failure to report acts or cases of inducement is not new in Nigeria, but incentivisation for reporting it – part of the whistle-blowing policy of the Buhari administration – is relatively recent, and this underlines the severity of the problem of corruption in the country.⁴⁹⁹

The fact and ubiquity of corruption in every human society have not been in doubt, but the problem is the *what*, the *how* and the *why* of corruption, according to ‘acceptable social science standards’.⁵⁰⁰ Corruption is neither exclusively part of a social system or an institution, nor is it a trait of an individual’s character but rather an illegal exchange that can be found in any society no matter the level of development. Although a global problem, corruption has diverse causes and has, therefore, attracted different types of attention. A president⁵⁰¹ of the United States of America was impeached for making a misrepresentation under oath, while another United States (US) president⁵⁰² has been investigated for several offences. A British prime minister⁵⁰³ was investigated for breaching Covid-19 lockdown rules. Top public officials have been prosecuted and penalised in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other places for various corrupt practices, breaches of trust, and abuse of privileges; yet, there are societies in these areas where same-sex



marriage is protected by law despite the moral issues it has generated.⁵⁰⁴ In Nigeria, where such issues are morally reprehensible as well as punishable by law, top public officials are hardly punished for offences that are related to breach of trust and abuse of privileges. Rather, corruption in public places has been rationalised for its ‘distributive efficiency’ or ‘marginal utility’, and as ‘the oil that lubricates the system’ or ‘the cement welding the system together’, particularly in cases relating to bureaucratic red tape.⁵⁰⁵

Corruption can be found in both the private and public life, but the dominant view of the phenomenon in the literature focuses on public life. This is not unconnected to the bigger size of the public and its salience in matters concerning every resident of society and the generality of citizens in a country. Johnson⁵⁰⁶ and Nye⁵⁰⁷ articulate the probability of more corruption in government circles – particularly in less developed countries (LDCs) where many socio-economic activities that draw citizens to the government are due to its monopoly over mineral wealth and natural resources (in Nigeria, as in other LDCs, citizens generally gravitate towards the government for opportunities, which hardly exist elsewhere). Although corruption in private activities of citizens and in private businesses has consequences on Nigeria’s internal security, this is insignificant when compared to the effects of corruption by public officials. The latter crystallises in the insights from selected agencies, as reflected later in this article.

Corruption can be categorised into three main types: incidental (individual), institutional (for example, from the selected agencies discussed in this article), and systemic (societal). The taxonomy by Page⁵⁰⁸ is apt. Page explains, ‘20 overarching contexts (sectors) that are especially vulnerable to corruption’, as well as ‘28 corruption tactics in 8 behavioural categories’,⁵⁰⁹ which have been highlighted in the political economy of Nigeria. Some forms of corruption are confined to instances of abuse on the part of individual public officials, and are episodic rather than systemic. In other cases, corruption is found in particular institutions or sectors of activities, whereas the practice is much less pervasive in others.⁵¹⁰

The 1987 report of the Nigerian Political Bureau gives a vivid description of the dimensions of corruption in the country. According to it,⁵¹¹ the manifestations of corruption in Nigeria include:

The inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; frauds and falsification of accounts in the public service; examination malpractice in our educational institutions including universities; taking of bribes and perversion of justice among the police, the judiciary and organs for administering justice; and various heinous crimes against the state in the business and industrial sectors of our economy, in collusion with multi-national companies, such as over-invoicing goods, foreign exchange swindling, hoarding and smuggling.

In fundamental terms, these manifestations and dimensions have not changed significantly over the years. However, the patterns and trends of corruption and corrupt practices have been affected by globalisation as well as the increasing complexity within and outside Nigeria. For example, there are effects of digital transformation on corruption,



in view of changes that have been brought about by information and communications technology (ICT), in particular. These dimensions include internet fraud, identity theft, cyber harassment, stalking and e-mail phishing. Today, the chances for corruption are more, the types have increased, and the potential loss is significant.⁵¹²

No matter the angle from which corruption is viewed, the consequences associated with the phenomenon can hardly be overestimated. Corruption distorts systems by changing morally or legally approved courses of action. It reduces the confidence of the people in relationships, and the confidence of citizens in their government, especially in instances of massive corruption without consequences for offenders. It also undermines the capacity of institutions to formulate and implement public policies for effective governance. This implies that crimes and criminalities would hardly abate – especially when institutions in the judicial and security sectors have been compromised. Corruption causes misappropriation and misapplication of resources, meaning that security and other sectors would suffer from insufficient resources. With little left to cater for the large less-privileged population, especially in terms of what they need in functional public infrastructure, there is evidence for Nigeria ranking as one of the world's poorest countries,⁵¹³ despite the country's material endowment. Nigeria has been dubbed one of the most corrupt countries in the world and one of the world's 'most complex corruption environments'.⁵¹⁴ This poses an image problem for the country and, at the same time, it could erode the confidence of development partners and others in the international system. Page⁵¹⁵ succinctly summarises these consequences as follows:

Corruption is the single greatest obstacle preventing Nigeria from achieving its enormous potential. It drains billions of dollars a year from the country's economy. It stymies development, and weakens the social contract between the government and its people. Nigerians ... struggle daily to cope with its effects.

In the summary above, as in other studies,^{516,517,518,519,520} development failure in LDCs, including Nigeria, has been linked to uncontrolled corruption. The concept of development has been employed in this study to include improvement and advancement, as well as becoming more mature, more complete, more organised and more transformed. In this light, development involves improvement in income and output, 'and radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as popular attitudes, customs and beliefs'.⁵²¹ To the Society for International Development (SID), these changes that constitute development are in the form of an addition to physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic components of society.⁵²² The Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations (UN), the Annual Prosperity Index (API) of the Legatum Institute, and the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) share similar views on what development entails.⁵²³ Following a review of their criteria, certain indexes have been isolated as constituents for development. These are economy, entrepreneurship and opportunity, governance, education, health, safety and security, personal freedom, and social capital. Every item in this list is connected to personal or group security, implying threats to security once they are unattainable.



Internal security, the second major concept in this article, is an aspect of national security; the latter which can be described as the ability of a country to cater for the protection and defence of its citizens. According to Adesina,⁵²⁴ national security entails the requirement to maintain the ‘survival of the state through the use of economic power, diplomacy, power projection and political power’. For Odekunle, internal security is broadly conceptualised as ‘protection or defence against all kinds of victimisation’, including ‘protection/defence against economic want, poverty, illiteracy, disease/ill health, social exploitation, psychological trauma, oppression and criminal victimisation’.⁵²⁵ This is perceived in terms of the economic, political, and social security of the average citizen. Internal security therefore encapsulates human security, which emphasises the individual in understanding global vulnerabilities. This implies protecting people from critical (severe) pervasive (widespread) threats and situations, including freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity. The position of the UN on the importance of human security has been succinctly stated,⁵²⁶ as it requires that the major indices of internal security in any country are for the majority of the population to be economically well and for the system to be politically stable.

In light of the above, security and development are mutually reinforcing. Security accelerates development just as development enhances security. It is common sense that an average citizen of a country that is characterised by justice, fairness and opportunities for self-actualisation would regard him- or herself as a stakeholder in the sustenance of peace, stability and progress in his or her home country. This disposes citizens toward law-abidingness and against unlawful or criminal conduct that are antithetical to human and material development. Conversely, citizens who feel unjustly and unfairly treated are more than likely to be socially discontented and do not want the progress of a system that is less concerned about their wellbeing. However, a crime-free society hardly exists, making the fact of crime in every human society “normal”.

Security is considered a matter of paramount importance in Nigeria. Section 14(1) of the country’s 1999 Constitution (amended) states, ‘the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government’.⁵²⁷ A simple explanation of the statement above is that the main business of the Nigerian government is to protect the citizens and to provide an enabling environment for their wellbeing. Stretched further, it can be deduced that security of the citizens is paramount because without it, every other thing is meaningless. The multi-dimensional sectors of security in Nigeria can be broadly categorised as external or territorial and internal. The Armed Forces (Army, Air Force, and Navy) and the external arms of the intelligence agencies have been assigned the duty of external and territorial security. However, evidence from counter-insurgency operations, surveillance of oil pipe lines and other national installations, as well as in other national assignments, including election matters and emergencies⁵²⁸ are sufficient indicators that the Nigerian Armed Forces also have roles in matters of internal security. Among the paramilitary agencies in the country, are:

- The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), prominent in playing supporting roles for the Nigeria Navy in surveillance of oil installations, and for the Army, in election monitoring assignments;



- The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC);
- The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA);
- The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS); and
- The Nigeria Correctional Service, which stands out in terms of its punitive and rehabilitation duties in turning offenders into law-abiding citizens.⁵²⁹

Theoretical Framework

The importance of inter-agency collaborations in performing these functions cannot be overemphasised. Insight for this article was therefore drawn from the NA and the Nigeria Correctional Service as well as other agencies involved in matters of internal security in Nigeria. These agencies perform their assigned roles independently but they connect mostly to attaining the goal of internal security for Nigeria. Radcliffe Brown and Parsons, as well as Easton discuss the logic behind inter-agency dependency and collaborations in the structural-functional approach⁵³⁰ and the systems theory⁵³¹ respectively. Major dysfunctions in any of these agencies or in any other of the sub-systems constitute threats to the functionality of the entire Nigerian system. Crime prevention and crime control are effectively attained in functional systems, examples of which are Switzerland, Finland, Norway, and Germany that have been ranked consistently high in notable international development assessments.⁵³²

The analyses of the performance of the NA and the Nigeria Correctional Service in terms of realisation of the goals in internal security in the country are situated within the framework of the structural theory and ecological approach. It is appropriate, therefore, to provide some preliminary statements on the two perspectives and on their relevance to the matter of internal security in Nigeria. The structural theory focuses on the nature of the state and the character of the ruling class. It is deployed in this article based on postulations about the effects of the rentier character of the state in Nigeria and the predatory nature of the ruling class on the performance of security agencies and other public institutions.⁵³³ Based on pioneering efforts in the deployment of the ecological approach to political and administrative sciences,⁵³⁴ the perspective utilised in the study on which this article reports, had to underscore the position that no organisation exists or operates *in vacuo*. The NA and Nigeria Correctional Service operate within the Nigerian environmental milieu, consisting of technological, economic, political, cultural, and demographic factors, among others. These factors affect the operations of the security agencies as the latter operates to moderate happenings in the environment.⁵³⁵ This implies that the selected security agencies can be effective in their operations to the extent permitted by the members of the ruling class and their acolytes in their official capacities. Furthermore, historical, technological, and cultural factors – among others – in the Nigerian environment affect the performance of such agencies. The level of corruption in Nigeria reflects the character and capacity of the state and, therefore, it is part of the environment and impedes the operations of the NA and the Nigeria Correctional Service. The state is largely personalised in Nigeria, in that it lacks autonomy, making its officials strong and its institutions weak. Rules and procedures are hardly effective because of the dysfunctionality of the state.⁵³⁶



Selected Cases for Analysis

Instances of corruption that have been linked to officers and men of the NA and Nigerian Correctional Service are multi-dimensional. These range from abuse of privileges as senior officials of military regimes⁵³⁷ to unprofessional conduct in recruitment and planning, transfer and posting, delayed or unpaid allowances, logistics and procurement, and inappropriate implementation of rehabilitation policies, in the case of prison inmates. Owasanoye⁵³⁸ is apt in his opinion on the connection between ‘corruption in the military’ as well as in certain para-military agencies, and the ‘worsening insecurity in Nigeria’.

The Nigerian Army

Of the many cases of corruption and corruptive tendencies by military officers and men, which can be linked to the worsening of insecurity in Nigeria, two have been selected for analysis. These are issues of unpaid allowances on the one hand, and arms procurement scams and issues of poor equipment on the other.

Issues of unpaid allowances

Prompt payment of salaries is a matter of welfare and motivation.⁵³⁹ Not only does the principle of wage and salary administration require that salaries are fair and equitable; it asserts that non-payment leads to workers feeling rather alienated from their work, and the ultimate decline in productivity.⁵⁴⁰ As shown in this analysis concerning unpaid allowances to certain personnel of NA, corruption and corruptive tendencies, which expose the internal Nigerian security to threats, are also involved.

The matter in question involved a group of Nigerian soldiers who participated in a UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia. The practice is that peacekeepers are paid by their own governments, to be reimbursed by the UN at a standard rate determined by the UN Assembly.⁵⁴¹ Usually, this does not take long to pay. Having waited for weeks after their return to Nigeria, the group of 28 soldiers (out of which one was exonerated) from Owena Barracks in Akure, Ondo State, alleged diversion of their allowances and, therefore, staged a protest that involved blocking of major highways and disruption of vehicular movement in parts of Akure.

Going by military tradition and laws guiding the profession, which abhor group actions against the authority of commanders, the protesting soldiers were rounded up, and had charges of mutiny pressed against them. There was public outrage, which, in part, accounted for the summoning of Yayale Ahmed and Patrick Aziza, then Minister of Defence and Chief of Defence Staff respectively, by the Nigerian House of Representatives’ Committee on Defence. Ahmed and Aziza convinced the Committee of the wrongness of the conduct of the protesting soldiers and, based on the report of a panel set up earlier by the NA, the 28 soldiers – except one, Private Bala Aliyu – were convicted, and given life sentences.⁵⁴²

Human rights activist and senior lawyer, Femi Falana, and Peters Ike Adonu, another lawyer, represented the soldiers at different levels of appeal in law courts against the punishment meted out to them. Despite the issue of discipline, which the military



emphasised in its decision on the matter, there was a moral dimension in the delayed allowances, which was the main reason for the protest and act of disobedience by the group of soldiers. Following persistent calls for clemency, particularly from Falana and civil society organisations, who emphasised the difference between an action that was traceable to frustration and anger, and other forms of disobedience, including disloyalty and desertion, the 27 soldiers were granted presidential amnesty and were released⁵⁴³ in 2010.

Although the selected case of 28 protesting soldiers has been settled, with the pardoning and release of the 27 who had been convicted, certain consequences in the aftermath of this outcome must be put in perspective. First, having been discharged without retirement benefits – to which most of the soldiers were not yet entitled in view of age and length of service – they were considered threats for the internal security in Nigeria. Second, friends and sympathisers of these soldiers, or those aggrieved by a system that may be regarded as unfair and unjust, constitute threats to both their profession, in terms of low morale and low productivity, and to national security. For example, there have been reports of soldiers and ex-soldiers linked to abduction and kidnapping in the country.⁵⁴⁴ Finding a solution to insecurity problems becomes quite difficult when security agents are involved in crimes and criminal acts.

Arms Procurement Scams And The Issue Of Poor Equipment

The strength of the NA⁵⁴⁵ and its operational requirements make it attractive to suppliers. Apart from everyday items (such as uniforms, belts, shoes and hats), the need for arms and weapons cannot be overemphasised. Weapons are part of the conventional war requirements of the Armed Forces but in Nigeria the criminal activities of armed robbers, insurrectionists, insurgents and kidnapers among others make the need for weapons compelling even in the absence of conventional wars. The Nigerian defence budget had consequently risen significantly, particularly since 2009, when the activities of the Boko Haram group became a serious security issue of national importance. According to Malaquias,⁵⁴⁶ Nigeria spent ‘not less than \$6 billion on defence in 2015 alone’. The country’s military spending between 2015 and 2022 stood at an average of \$2.0 billion annually,⁵⁴⁷ while ₦2.41 trillion or 15% of the ₦20.51 trillion (\$47.3 billion) proposed in the 2023 budget has been allocated to defence.⁵⁴⁸ Arms purchases for the country have been criticised for misapplication of funds and for procuring inappropriate weapons,⁵⁴⁹ particularly as seen in the deployment of weapons better suited for conventional warfare in its counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram in the country. This is despite the hugeness of its budget allocations, some of the largest in Africa.⁵⁵⁰ Defence budget spending came under the searchlight when, in September 2014, a sum of \$9.3 million found in a Nigerian private aircraft in South Africa was linked to arms procurement.⁵⁵¹ Based on the explanation offered in official quarters, it is curious that arms of this magnitude were procured through personal channels, despite well-known rules for arms purchases.⁵⁵² The then President Jonathan and the National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, put up efforts in explaining but this was hardly convincing. The deal looked every bit like a money laundering case.

Dasuki, as National Security Adviser (ONSA), was directly responsible for the South African cash-for-arms transfer, and several arms transactions have been under prosecution. The investigation of Dasuki, which started in November 2015, has been about various arms deals totalling \$2.9 billion. Former service chiefs (Army, Air Force and Navy), cabinet ministers, top civil servants, and chieftains of the then ruling party (among others) connected to the release of funds for arms transactions have been interrogated. Many of them have refunded money as part of plea-bargaining arrangements, while others had personal properties – acquired with proceeds of arms purchase scams – confiscated.^{553,554,555} This implies a misapplication of funds allocated to security, leaving the sector underfunded. It is no surprise that Boko Haram became so bold⁵⁵⁶ and, that in view of operational and strategic inefficiencies that have taken root, internal security has been massively threatened in Nigeria. The two selected cases aside, as part of the everyday internal security arrangements in Nigeria, personnel of the NA have been linked to collection of bribes during election duties as well as harassment of citizens during other engagements with the rest of the society.

The Nigerian Correctional Service

The two selected sources of threats to Nigeria's internal security, which are linked to abuse by certain personnel of the Nigerian Correctional Service are the problem of reoffenders and prison attacks and/or jailbreaks.

Problem of Reoffenders

The issue of reoffending convicted criminals have been found to be a source of threat to Nigeria's internal security. The country's prison and correctional centres are promoted and utilised as both punitive and rehabilitation instruments for turning offenders into law-abiding citizens with possible contributions to development. This is done by adopting different methods⁵⁵⁷ with a view to reintegrating felons successfully into society. However, this has not been particularly so in Nigeria.⁵⁵⁸ It has been proved that, since independence in 1960, dimensions of corruption – including inappropriate and inadequate recruitment and posting of prison officials, extortion of inmates and their visitors, and unapproved rationing of foods and medications by vendors in connivance with prison officials – have adversely affected the welfare of inmates and the lessons they ought to take away from the correctional centres and, in particular the rehabilitation programmes. This has become increasingly evident since the country's encounter with prolonged military rule between 1983 and 1999.

Faulty recruitment,⁵⁵⁹ in which trainees and newly appointed officers hardly have the right educational backgrounds, implies entry point problems and, therefore, nepotism and incompetence over time. While effective on-the-job training could be useful, where available, it is by far more appropriate to have individuals with background knowledge and training in the fields of psychology and sociology, among other humanities, than to employ those from the mathematical sciences, for example. Inadequate and insufficient equipment and implements also contribute to the poor outcome of rehabilitation programmes. For example, equipment for vocational and skill acquisition programmes in carpentry, shoe



making, electronic repairs, sewing and dress making, in the Ibadan and Oyo centres, and farming implements for the Ogbomosho Centre were not only insufficient by the time of this study, but also did not match up with the announced budgetary allocations.⁵⁶⁰ This could be due to budgetary allocations without cash backing or misapplication of funds. Sports as well as health facilities are hardly functional, with only the Ibadan centre having a functional ambulance for the need of inmates at the time of writing.

It is apt to argue that exposing inmates to the abuse of privileges and other acts of corruption by prison officials constitutes a psychological problem that has hardened many criminals.⁵⁶¹ According to Oyewo,⁵⁶² ‘inadequate social and physical infrastructure’, which has been in part traced to acts of corruption, constitutes a major ‘disincentive to learning and participation in inmate rehabilitation programmes’ in Nigerian prisons and correctional centres. This defeats the idea of rehabilitation instead of punishment and the goal of returning offenders to society as law-abiding members of the community. Add this to the challenge of stigmatisation of the less privileged ex-convicts in Nigerian society, then it should not be difficult to explain why and how this category of ex-convicts are threats to the internal security of the country and why they are therefore caught due to reoffending.

Prison Attacks and/or Jailbreaks

The problem of jailbreaks is not strange to Nigeria, but its frequency – 20 attacks between 2015 and 2022 – has generated concern in view of the implications and consequences for the security in the country.⁵⁶³ Between 2007, when the revolt in Agodi, Ibadan prison or correctional centre led to the ‘death of 40 inmates’, and 2022, most reports on jailbreaks and attacks on prisons in Nigeria have emphasised the conditions of the facilities as key factors.⁵⁶⁴ In 2021 alone, over 5 000 inmates escaped in incidences of jailbreaks and attacks, causing the deaths of dozens of inmates as well as the loss of lives on the part of prison officials. Many of the escapees were dangerous inmates, waiting for trial or being convicted of offences related to acts of terrorism, insurrection, abduction and kidnapping among other security-threatening crimes.⁵⁶⁵ Pointing to a system that is out of step with reality, it is not uncommon to find certain recurring factors in studies and reports on jailbreaks and prison attacks in Nigeria. These include the infrastructural deficit, overcrowding of cells, the prolonged trial of suspects, underfunding, poor remuneration and equipping of staff, inadequate technology, ineffective participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and bribery and corruption as well as other institutional challenges bedevilling the Nigerian prison system.^{566,567,568} The prison population, for example, rose from 44 450 in 2000 to 73 248 by May 2020,⁵⁶⁹ without corresponding enhancement of infrastructure and human capital. The logic of inadequacy can therefore not be overemphasised.

Budgetary allocations and claims about reinforcing prison facilities by way of constructing more and rehabilitating existing ones, are not evident going by what is happening on the ground. A review of the 2022 budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Interior,⁵⁷⁰ and a report by Oyedeji⁵⁷¹ reveal the importance and considerable budgets of the Ministry, a unit of which is the Nigerian Correctional Service, in carrying out the duty of internal security. The increase in budgetary allocations to the Ministry of the Interior and, in



particular, the NCS – all of which were higher than the allocations to other agencies – indicated some level of importance. However, none of the projects listed in the budget presentations were completed successfully between 2018 and 2022. These are issues that concern the head and other senior officials of the ministry, and can be connected to the internal security threats caused by the several prison attacks and jailbreaks around the country at the time.⁵⁷² It must also be noted that conditions for inmates, especially those awaiting trial and living in environments that are not ideal, amount to violation of their human rights, which threatens internal security in a way.

The Koton Karfe (Kogi State), where there were three cases of jailbreak between 2014 and 2016, and another in 2019, was selected for analysis. It is a medium-security prison and, by Nigerian standards, it therefore houses criminals who need to be locked away from society because they are dangerous.⁵⁷³ The distinguishing factors between such a prison and the maximum-security prison, in which other types of dangerous criminals are kept, include the stages of investigation and trial, as the latter houses dangerous criminals whose cases have been finally determined. Nonetheless, the movement of certain inmates in the medium-security prisons has to be restricted with a pair of lockable linked metal rings around their wrists or ankles. In this category, there are inmates held in connection with acts of terrorism, insurrection, banditry and high-profile armed robbery or other crimes that constitute threats to life and property as well as to the peace and stability of national sovereignty.

In the attacks and jailbreaks in Koton Karfe, in 2012, 2016 and 2019, a total number of 119, 13 and 200 inmates escaped respectively.⁵⁷⁴ Reports⁵⁷⁵ show that these and other attacks on the prison were invasions, implying contestation of sovereignty by the Boko Haram terrorist group whose members were among the forcefully released inmates. This also raises questions on the fortification of the prison for which budgetary allocations have been made.⁵⁷⁶ Corruption manifests in other ways, and this can be linked to connivance or negligence on the part of certain prison officials.⁵⁷⁷ This implies, overtly or covertly, the presence of spies or saboteurs who deliberately allow dangerous criminals to have access to gangs outside the prison walls via unauthorised devices or negligence. Indulging certain categories of inmates, which has fetched collaborators among prison officials' undue rewards, by way of bribes, has in part fuelled other types of unethical and unprofessional conduct in the prison.⁵⁷⁸ It is disturbing to note that, at the time of writing, hardly anyone of note has been punished for the several high-profile jailbreaks analysed above.

Recommendations

Insights have been drawn from the Nigerian Army and Nigerian Correctional Service, representing the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior, respectively, in analysing aspects of corruption and the effects on internal security in the country. However, head-on combating of corruption is required in every facet of Nigeria in view of the widespread manifestations of the problem of corruption, including its weakening effects on the social contract between the people and the state as well as on the societal fabric. This requires that on-going investigations and prosecutions are completed diligently to forestall re-occurrence. Leadership at political level is pivotal, but communities, especially through



volunteers, need to take ownership, first through prevention, but also through sanctions, if the need arises.

Restoration of the autonomy of structures for optimal performance of functions requires directional and transformational leaders. The role of the ecology of these structures, institutions and agencies in being autonomous and functional cannot be overemphasised. In this light, volunteer groups, community-based organisations and other types of civil society organisations have roles to play in finding leaders in a bottom-up approach to issues of internal security and public affairs in general.

Volunteerism and whistle blowing should be incentivised, particularly since the official definition of corruption in Nigeria criminalises concealment and refusal to disclose information about corrupt acts. Strengthening of political will at every decision-making level, including ministries, departments and agencies saddled with responsibilities concerning internal security and others making up the Nigerian socio-economic and political system.

Conclusion

Nigeria's internal security is threatened by corruption and corruptive tendencies in the activities of certain officials in the Nigerian Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior, represented in this article by examples drawn from Nigerian Army and the Nigerian Correctional Services. These are instances of misapplication of funds, exploitation of personnel, indecent treatment of prison inmates, poor work ethics leading to dangerous exposure of government agencies, and poor staff treatment with attendant consequences, including protest, desertion, and human rights abuse. There have been instances of abuse when personnel of the Nigerian Army were deployed for election duties and during certain rescue operations. Every system, consisting of structures and their functions, has a mutual relationship with its environment. Corruption as a feature in the Nigerian political environment has affected the Nigerian Army and the Nigerian Correctional Service in the performance of their internal security functions.



ENDNOTES

- ⁴⁸⁶ Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju obtained a PhD in Political Science from the University of Ibadan (UI), Nigeria's premier university. He is a professor in the Department of Political Science at UI. His areas of research interests are public sector reforms, political institutions, policy and strategic studies. His recent publications include a co-edited book, *Democratic Practice and Governance in Nigeria* (Routledge, 2021) and a chapter contribution in *The Encyclopedia of Informality* (UCL, 2018). His works have also been published in the *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, *African Journal of Public Administration and Management*, *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, *African Studies Quarterly*, and *Journal of African Elections*, among others.
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- ⁴⁸⁸ Although there had been concerns about the problem of corruption in public places under the colonial government, this became a public issue of national concern in Nigeria in 1966 when the brains behind the country's first military coup stated that corruption was the main reason for their action.
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- ⁴⁹⁴ [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Corruption in Nigeria: Bribery, Public Experience and Response* \(Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017\), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6jjulMocLrOXFpMDh1Q111bm8/view> \[Accessed on 6 October 2022\]](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6jjulMocLrOXFpMDh1Q111bm8/view)
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- ⁴⁹⁷ DJ Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).



- ⁴⁹⁸ B Owasanoye, chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and allied Offences Commission (ICPC), at the 4th National Summit on Diminishing Corruption in the Public Sector, 2022, in collaboration with the office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).
- ⁴⁹⁹ Although there have been punishable offences concerning complicity and accessory to crimes, the law incentivising a whistle-blower was passed in 2018. See also AM Jega, 'Assessment of the Implementation of the Whistle-blower Policy in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward', Presentation at the Zonal on Whistle-blower Conference, 14 December 2021.
- ⁵⁰⁰ This has been at the centre of discourse in terms of the peculiarities in conceptualising and defining corruption and corrupt practices. See F Odekunle, 'Corruption in Development: Definitional, Methodological and Theoretical Issues', in F Odekunle (ed.), *Nigeria Corruption in Development* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1986), 24–36.
- ⁵⁰¹ President Bill Clinton of the USA (1993–2001) was impeached by the US House of Representatives in connection to the Monica Lewinsky sexual allegations - President Clinton Impeached, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history> [Accessed on 6th October 2023].
- ⁵⁰² President Donald Trump (2017–2021) has been accused of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment, including non-consensual kissing or groping, by at least 25 women. In September 2022, Trump was investigated for various offences, including tax evasion, illegal possession of classified information, interference with the 2020 election in the State of Georgia and the 6 January 2021 attack on The Capitol. (See, Ian Millhiser, "The 4 major criminal probes into Donald Trump, explained" - <https://www.vox.com/platform/amp/policy-a-ary-6-election-georgia-new-york>. 16 February 2023. (Accessed on 13 June 2023).
- ⁵⁰³ Prime Minister Boris Johnson was investigated for breaching Covid-19 lockdown rules. See C. Okafor, "Prime Minister Boris Johnson under fire for breaching Covid-19 rules". Premium Times, 10 July 2022. <https://www.premiumtimes.com/news/prime-minister-Boris-Johnson-under-fire-for-breaching-covid-19-rules/>. [Accessed on 6th October 2022].
- ⁵⁰⁴ Same-sex marriage is the marriage of two people of the same legal sex. It is a criminal offence in Nigeria, but 34 countries, including the USA, Spain, the Netherlands and certain countries in the West have recognised it as at 2022. See, Pew Research Center, "The Global Divide on Homosexuality: Greater Acceptance in More Secular and Affluent Countries". Pew Research Center, 4 June 2013. www.pewresearch.org/global/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality/.
- ⁵⁰⁵ A school of thought is of the opinion that corruption has its own advantages, in that beneficiaries of corruption in bureaucracies tend to work for the 'good' of the system. See M Beenstock, 'Corruption and Development', *World Development*, 7, 1 (1979), 15–24.
- ⁵⁰⁶ M Johnson, 'Historical Conflict and the Rise of Standards', in L Diamond & MF Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1993), 193–205.
- ⁵⁰⁷ J Nye, 'Corruption and Political Development: A Cost Benefit Analysis', *American Political Science Review*, 56, 1 (1967), 417–427.



- ⁵⁰⁸ M Page, *A New Taxonomy for Corruption in Nigeria* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018).
- ⁵⁰⁹ M Page, *A New Taxonomy for Corruption in Nigeria* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018), 3.
- ⁵¹⁰ In Nigeria, institutions and agencies such as the police, vehicle inspection unit and the Department of Customs and Excise have been notorious for corrupt practices. However, JAMB and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (monitoring units) have been among agencies that could be regarded as ‘oases in the desert’ in the country. These two categories reflect varying levels of opportunities and controls.
- ⁵¹¹ Federal Government of Nigeria, *Report of Political Bureau* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1987).
- ⁵¹² There have been reports of huge serious cybercrimes and huge losses in Nigeria. For example, it has been reported that the country loses about ₦127 billion (US\$ 298 823 507) yearly to internet fraud. See S. Aragba-Akpore, “Digital Literacy and Rising Cyber Crimes” <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/06/01/digital-literacy-and-rising-cyber-crimes/>. (Accessed on 6th October 2022).
- ⁵¹³ Nigeria has, despite its huge mineral resources and arable land for agriculture, been ranked among the world’s poorest in a decade, 2010-2020. See, Y. Kazeem, “Nigeria Has become the Poverty Capital of the World”, *Quartz Africa*, 25 June 2018. <https://qz.com/africa/1313380/nigeria-has-the-highest-rate-of-extreme-poverty-globally/>. [Accessed on 7 October 2022].
- ⁵¹⁴ In the 2021 Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, Nigeria was ranked in the 154th position out of 180 countries, with a score of 24 out of 100 (*transparency.org*).
- ⁵¹⁵ M Page, *A New Taxonomy for Corruption in Nigeria* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018), 2.
- ⁵¹⁶ P Mauro, ‘Corruption and Growth’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 110, 3 (1995), 681–712.
- ⁵¹⁷ P Collier & JW Gunning, *Explaining Economic Performance*, Working Paper No. WPS/97-2 (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1997).
- ⁵¹⁸ A Ades & R DiTella, ‘The Causes and Consequences of Corruption: A Review of Recent Empirical Contributions’, *IDS Bulletin*, 27, 2 (1996), 6–11.
- ⁵¹⁹ MH Khan, ‘A Typology of Corrupt Transactions in Developing Countries’, *IDS Bulletin*, 27, 2 (1996), 12–21.
- ⁵²⁰ RA Olopoenia, ‘A Political Economy of Corruption and Underdevelopment’. Lecture Series No. 10, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, 7 October 1998.
- ⁵²¹ S Usman, ‘Planning and National Development’, in SO Akande & AJ Kumuyi (eds.), *Nigeria at 50: Accomplishments, Challenges and Prospects* (Ibadan: NISER, 2010), 844.
- ⁵²² Society for International Development, ‘What is Development?’. – Sid Israel – <https://sid-israel.org.what-is-development?/>. [Accessed on 10 October 2022].
- ⁵²³ In ranking countries, in terms of good governance, public sector performance and attainment of sustainable development goals, the HDI, API and IAG have adopted similar indexes.
- ⁵²⁴ OC Adesina, ‘Small Things that Matter: The Imperatives of National Security and Development in Nigeria’, Keynote address at the 36th anniversary celebrations of Ede Unique Club, Osun State, Nigeria. 13 December 2019.



- ⁵²⁵ F Odekunle, 'Internal Security: A Priority for the Nation', Inaugural lecture, National Think Tank, SM Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja. 23 May 2007.
- ⁵²⁶ The United Nations, "What is Human Security?" – the United Nations, <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security?/>. 10 April 2018 [Accessed on 11 October 2022]
- ⁵²⁷ The emphasis on security in Section 14 (1) of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution (amended) is instructive. See *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (Abuja: Federal Government Press), 1999.
- ⁵²⁸ Nigeria's Armed Forces are involved in many aspects of internal security in the country, including counter-insurgency in the matter of Boko Haram; checkmating the activities of armed robbers/bandits (in cattle rustling); abduction and kidnapping; special election duties; and protecting Nigerian's oil installations (especially oil pipe lines). For example, see C. Kinsey & A Krieg, "Assembling a Force to Defeat Boko Haram: How Nigeria Integrated the Market into its Counterinsurgency Strategy", *Defence & Security Analysis*, 37, 2 (2021), 232-249; G Ofurum, "Navy, NNPC launch special operation against oil theft", *Businessday NG*, 3 April 2022. [https://businessday.ng/news/article/navy-nnpc-launch-special-operation-against-oil.theft/](https://businessday.ng/news/article/navy-nnpc-launch-special-operation-against-oil-theft/). [Accessed on 12 October 2022].
- ⁵²⁹ There have been works on the prison and correctional aspects of the policing for internal security functions of the state. See M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1995); DA Yagboyaju, 'Peace and Security', in DA Yagboyaju (ed.), *Reflections on Politics, Governance and Economy in Contemporary Nigeria* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2016), 35–68. The role and functions of the Nigeria Correctional Service (formerly the Nigeria Prison Service) are spelt out by Decree 9 of 1972, as well as in CAP 366 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990.
- ⁵³⁰ Alfred R Radcliffe Brown (1881–1955) and Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) were early proponents of structural functionalism, in which certain structures perform specific functions for the overall good of the citizens in any particular country. See T Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Glencoe, 1951).
- ⁵³¹ David Easton (1917–2014) popularised the systems theory, an idea borrowed from biology and the general systems theory, for political analysis. See D. Easton, *A System Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965).
- ⁵³² These and certain other countries known for high life expectancy, economic prosperity, political stability, equitable opportunities and freedom have been ranked consistently high in UN HDI and the API by the Legatum Institute.
- ⁵³³ Structural theory has been linked to the pioneering efforts of Karl Marx (1818–1883), German philosopher, and Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), French sociologist. The character of the state in Nigeria and the nature of the ruling class have been linked to the weakness of rules and procedures in Nigeria, making it easy for public officials to take advantage of their positions. See C Ake, 'The Nigerian State: Antinomies of a Periphery Formation', in C Ake (ed.), *Political Economy of Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1985), 9–32; EE Osaghae, 'The Character of the State, Legitimacy Crisis and Social Mobilisation in Africa: An Explanation of Form and Character', *Africa Development*, xxiv, 2 (1988), 27–47; LA Jinadu, 'Elections, Democracy and the State in Africa: The 2019 Nigerian General Elections in Perspective', in VA Isumonah & EE Osaghae (eds.), *The 2019 General Elections in Nigeria* (Ibadan: John Archers, 2020), 7–34.



- ⁵³⁴ Fred W Riggs (1917–2008) popularised the ecological approach in political analysis. See FW Riggs, *The Ecology of Public Administration* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1961).
- ⁵³⁵ There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the environment and the performance of its institutions. It is hardly conceivable that Nigeria’s security agencies will perform effectively in view of the nature of the political class and the character of the state, both of which are exploitative. See DA Yagboyaju, ‘Cultural Impact on Public Administration and Governance in Africa: The Nigerian Case’, *African Journal of Public Administration and Management*, xxvi (2019), 109–123.
- ⁵³⁶ DA Yagboyaju, ‘The State and Political Corruption in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of S Shagari Civilian Administration (1979 - 1983) and IB Babangida Military Regime (1985-1993). Doctoral Thesis. Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. 2004’.
- ⁵³⁷ Large sums of money believed to be stolen have been traced to many senior officials of successive military regimes in Nigeria. For example, 24 years after the death of General S Abacha, in 1998, monies traced to foreign accounts of the late head of state have been repatriated in tranches. See A Ejekwonyilo, ‘US to repatriate fresh \$23m Abacha loot to Nigeria’, *Premium Times Nigeria*. 23 August 2022. [https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/US-to-repatriate-fresh-\\$23m-Abacha-loot-to-Nigeria](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/US-to-repatriate-fresh-$23m-Abacha-loot-to-Nigeria) [Accessed on 14 October 2022]; The World Bank, ‘World Bank Monitoring of Repatriated Abacha Funds’, *The World Bank*. 4 December 2017. <https://www.worldbank.org/news/world-bank-monitoring-of-repatriated-abacha-funds/>. [Accessed on 14 October 2022]; For the story of another army general who played active roles in military regimes in the 1980s to 1990s, see *Jersey Evening Post* ‘Ex-General fails in bid to recover £2m from seized Island accounts’, *Jersey Evening Post*. 5 June 2022. <https://jerseyeveningpost/news/2022/06/05/ex-general-fails-in-bid-to-recover-£2m-from-seized-island-accounts/>. [Accessed on 14 October 2022]
- ⁵³⁸ The chairman of the ICPC, a leading anti-corruption agency in Nigeria, Professor B Owasanoye, identified corruption by senior military officers as prominent among factors that have been responsible for the worsening insecurity in the country. See *THISDAYLIVE*, ‘ICPC: Corruption by Military responsible for worsening insecurity’.
13 September 2022. <https://thisdaylive.com/index.php/ICPC-corruption-by-military-responsible-for-worsening-insecurity/>. [Accessed on 14 October 2022]
- ⁵³⁹ PI Iweoba, ‘Non-payment of Salaries: The Implication on the Legal, Economic and Social Rights of Workers in Nigeria’, *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 7, 1 (2017), 1–9.
- ⁵⁴⁰ PI Iweoba, ‘Non-payment of Salaries: The Implication on the Legal, Economic and Social Rights of Workers in Nigeria’, *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 7, 1 (2017), 1–9.
- ⁵⁴¹ This was approximately US\$1 428 per soldier in 2022, and was at the time of the matter in question, in 2008, approximately US\$1 100. Whichever it is, this pay is handsome for average Nigerian soldiers who earn far less as monthly salary if they are not part of such a foreign mission.
- ⁵⁴² Juliana Taiwo, ‘Nigeria: Mutiny- Army Confirms 27 Soldiers’ Conviction’- *allAfrica*. 30 August 2009. <https://allafrica.com/stories/20090832009/nigeria-mutiny-army-confirms-27-soldiers-conviction/>. [Accessed on 27 June 2022].
- ⁵⁴³ Nairaland Forum, ‘Finally! Army Grants 27 Convicted Soldiers Pardon’, *Politics-Nairaland*. 4 December 2010. <https://www.nairaland.com/56206/finally-army-grants-27-convicted-soldiers-pardon/>. [Accessed on 27 June 2022]



- ⁵⁴⁴ Of the several cases of the involvement of military personnel in criminal activities, the kidnapping of Margaret, wife of G Emefiele, governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, by men in military uniform, has been reported widely. See T Ojoye, “Criminal involvement of soldiers in Kidnapping” – *The Punch*. 31 October 2016. <https://punchng.com/criminal-involvement-of-soldiers-in-kidnapping/>. [Accessed on 15 October 2022]; Sola Shittu, “Police arrest soldiers, civilian for kidnapping, robbery” – *The Punch*. 4 November, 2019. <https://punchng.com/police-arrest-soldiers-civilian-for-kidnapping-robbery/>. [Accessed on 15 October 2022].
- ⁵⁴⁵ T David, “Nigeria Military Ranked 36th Globally, 4th in Africa”, *Leadership*. March 2023. <http://leadership.ng/nigerian-military-ranked-36th-globally-4th-in-Africa>. [Accessed on 14 June 2023.]
- ⁵⁴⁶ A Malaquias, *Corruption: A Major Threat to Military Effectiveness* (Washington DC: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), 2.
- ⁵⁴⁷ Trading Economics, “Nigeria Military Expenditure – 2022 Data – 2023 Forecas-1960-2021 Historical”, Trading Economics. <https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/military/expenditure/2022/data/2023/forcase/> [Accessed on 15 October 2023].
- ⁵⁴⁸ This was part of the proposed ₦20.5 trillion 2023 budget presented to the National Assembly by President Buhari on 7 October 2022.
- ⁵⁴⁹ A Malaquias, *Corruption: A Major Threat to Military Effectiveness* (Washington DC: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), 2.
- ⁵⁵⁰ A Malaquias, *Corruption: A Major Threat to Military Effectiveness* (Washington DC: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), 2.
- ⁵⁵¹ The news of a Nigerian private aircraft impounded by South African authorities in 2014 generated much controversy before the government of Nigeria claimed ownership. *Premium Times Nigeria*, “Nigeria government admits ownership of \$9.3 million arms money seized by South Africa”, *Premium Times Nigeria*. 16 September 2014. [https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/nigerian-govt-admits-ownership-of-\\$9.3million-arms-money-seized-by-south-Africa/](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/nigerian-govt-admits-ownership-of-$9.3million-arms-money-seized-by-south-Africa/). [Accessed on 28 June 2022]
- ⁵⁵² The seized cash for arms was transported by two Nigerians and one Israeli. At the time, South Africa said the transaction violated its laws on movement of cash. See *Premium Times Nigeria*, “Nigeria talks tough, warns South Africa over seized \$5.7Million arms money”, *Premium Times Nigeria*. 6 October 2014. [https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/nigeria-talkstough-warns-South-Africa-over-seized-\\$5.7million-arms-money/](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/nigeria-talkstough-warns-South-Africa-over-seized-$5.7million-arms-money/). The conflicting figures quoted by the South African authorities and the Nigerian government fuelled suspicion too. [Accessed on 16 October 2022].”
- ⁵⁵³ Leading Nigerian newspapers have mentioned several senior military officers and other categories of top-level public officials who have been investigated for their roles in the embezzlement of funds allocated to security. See *THISDAYLIVE*, “ICPC: Corruption by Military responsible for worsening insecurity”. 13 September 2022. <https://thisdaylive.com/index.php/ICPC-corruption-by-military-responsible-for-worsening-insecurity/>. [Accessed on 14 October 2022].
- ⁵⁵⁴ E Akinkuotu, “Arms scam: Ex-NAF boss, Amosu, returns N2.3bn to FG”, *The Punch*. 20 April 2016. <https://punchng.com/arms-scam-ex-NAF-boss-Amosu-returns-N2.3bn-to-FG/>. [Accessed on 16 October 2022].
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- ⁵⁵⁷ The methods entail all activities aimed at treating and training convicts through the provision for adult/remedial education as well as preparing them for gainful employment after release. See O Oyewo, *Prison Management, Vocational Training Infrastructure and Inmate Rehabilitation Policy in the Nigerian Correctional Service*, *Oyo State Command* (PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2021).
- ⁵⁵⁸ Evidences gathered from prison (change of name to correctional centres in 2019) Ikoyi (Lagos State) as well as interactions with officials of two faith-based NGOs involved in correctional programmes indicate that four out of ten, or 40%, of the inmates are at least second-time offenders.
- ⁵⁵⁹ Instances of faulty recruitment, usually involving favouritism, nepotism and incompetence, abound in Nigeria. See B Saheed, A Owonikoko & K Ashindorbe, 'Nigeria Prisons Service and Internal Security Management in Nigeria', in OO Oshita, IM. Alumona & FC. Onuoha (eds.), *Internal Security Management in Nigeria* (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 501–511.
- ⁵⁶⁰ Nigeria's Ministry of Interior, which oversees the Prisons and Correctional Services, Nigeria Immigration Service and Nigeria Customs Service, among other paramilitary agencies involved in internal security matters, has been known for its special attention in terms of budgetary allocations. For example, see THISDAYLIVE, "Senate Committee Seeks Increased Budgetary Allocation for Interior Ministry", ThisDayLive. 29 October 2021. <https://www.thisdaylive.increased-budgetary-allocation-for-interior-ministry/>. [Accessed on 22 October 2022].
- ⁵⁶¹ O Oyewo, *Prison Management, Vocational Training Infrastructure and Inmate Rehabilitation Policy in the Nigerian Correctional Service*, *Oyo State Command* (PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2021).
- ⁵⁶² O Oyewo, *Prison Management, Vocational Training Infrastructure and Inmate Rehabilitation Policy in the Nigerian Correctional Service*, *Oyo State Command* (PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2021).
- ⁵⁶³ Twenty attacks and jailbreaks have been recorded from 2015 to 2022, occurring in Bauchi, Ogun, Plateau, Ondo, Oyo, Lagos, Ekiti, Niger, Kogi, Edo and Imo States, and in Abuja, the country's capital city and seat of power. See, N Aytogo, "Analysis: Why jailbreaks have become commonplace in Nigeria", *Premium Times Nigeria*. 6 December 2021. <https://www.premiumpost.com/new/analysis-why-jailbreaks-have-become-commonplace-in-Nigeria/>. [Accessed on 22 October 2022].
- ⁵⁶⁴ D Ogunyemi, "Nigeria: Agodi Prisons Conditions Bad-Rights Group", *Daily Champion*. 18 September 2007. <https://allafrica.com/stories/Nigeria-agodi-prisons-condition-bad/>. [Accessed on 22 October, 2022]
- ⁵⁶⁵ It is worrying that over 5 000 inmates escaped from prisons around Nigeria in 2021 alone. The consequences are obvious, as many of them were either waiting for trial or convicted for serious security threatening crimes, including acts of terrorism, insurrection, abduction and kidnapping. See Premium Times, "Timeline: Over 5000 inmates escape from Nigerian prisons in one year", *Premium Times*, 1 December 2021. <https://www.premiumpost.com/news/headlines/498227-timeline-over-5000-inmates-escapes-from-Nigerian-jails-in-one-year.html/>. [Accessed on 22 October 2022].



- ⁵⁶⁶ M Abba, *Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates through Vocational Skills Acquisition Programmes in North-West States* (PhD Thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2016).
- ⁵⁶⁷ A R Rotimi, 'Prison Administration in Modern Nigeria', *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 6, 1 (1982), 73–83.
- ⁵⁶⁸ EE Obioha, 'Challenges and Reforms in the Nigerian Prisons System', *Journal of Social Sciences*, 27, 2 (2011), 95–109.; W Azeez, "2022 Budget: Works, finance, defence ministried to get highest capital allocations", *The Cable*. 25 August 2021. <https://www.thecable.ng/2022-budget-works-finance-defence-ministries-to-get-highest-capital-allocations/>. [Accessed on 27 October 2022].
- ⁵⁶⁹ O E Joseph, 'Prison Overcrowding Trend in Nigeria and Policy Implications on Health', *Law, Criminology and Justice*, 7, 1 (2021), 124-139; O Oyedeji, "As Nigeria Experiences its 20th Jailbreak in 7 years, Here are Four Issues of Concern", *Dataphyte*. 11 July 2022. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-report/as-Nigeria-experiences-its-20th-jailbreak-in-7years-here-ar-four-issues-of-concern/>. (Accessed on 27 October 2022). Among the four issues addressed, a review of the budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Interior is important from 2018 to 2022, the sum of N27.858 billion was allocated for the construction of 3000-capacity model prison in Kano, FCT, Bori and Damaturu, and for additional cells in Maiduguri new prisons, among others, Also, a sum of N16.654 billion was budgeted for prisons/barracks rehabilitation from 2018 to 2021. In 2022, a sum of N5.585 billion was budgeted for the construction of prisons without any description of location. Prison overcrowding is still a serious issue in Nigeria despite these budgetary allocations.
- ⁵⁷⁰ *The Cable NG*, "2022 Budget: Works, finance, defence ministries get highest", <https://thecable.ng-2022-budget-works-finance-defence-ministries-get-highest/>. (Posted on 25 August 2021. Accessed on 27 October 2022 @09.11hrs).
- ⁵⁷¹ O Oyedeji, "As Nigeria Experiences its 20th Jail break in 7 years, Here are Four Issues of Concern". *Development*. Among the four issues addressed, a review of the budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Interior is important. From 2018 to 2022, the sum of N27.858 billion was budgeted for the construction of 3 000-capacity model prisons in Kano, FCT, Bori and Damaturu, and additional cells in Maiduguri's new prisons, among others. Another sum of N16.654 billion was budgeted for prisons/barracks rehabilitation from 2018 to 2021. Also in 2022, a sum of N5.585 billion was budgeted for construction of prisons without any description of location. See *dataphyte.com* (Posted on 11 July 2022. Accessed on 27 October 2022 @09.13hrs).
- ⁵⁷² Some of the consequences of prison attacks and jailbreaks that can be traced to facility inadequacy can be found below. In July 2022, the Kuje prison in Abuja was attacked, leading to the escape of 879 inmates, 64 of whom are linked to the Boko Haram terrorist group; December 2021, Jos (Plateau State), nine inmates dead, 252 at large; April 2021, Owerri (Imo State), gunmen invaded the prison and released 1 844 inmates; October 2019, July 2016 and February 2012, Koton Karfe (Kogi State), jailbreaks led to the escape of dozens of inmates. See C Asadu, "Nigeria jailbreak raises more questions over insecurity". *AP News*. 11 July 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/africa-prisons/nigeria-jailbreak-raises-more-questions-over-insecurity/>; A Oluwafemi, "Jos jailbreak: Nine inmates dead, 252 at large, says prisons spokesman", *The Cable*. 29 November 2021. <https://www.thecable.ng/amp/jos-jailbreak-nine-inmates-dead-252-at-large/>; J Ojo, "Owerri jailbreak and attacks on police", *The Punch*. 7 April 2021. <https://punch.com/overri-jailbreak-and-attacks-on-police/>. [All accessed on 27 October 2022].



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- ⁵⁷⁴ See G Odogun, "Updated: 200 prisoners escape, 100 rearrested as flood sacks Kogi correctional centre", *The Punch*. 28 October, 2019 <https://punchng.com/breaking-200-prisoners-escape-100-rearrested-as-flood-sacks-kogi-correctional-centre/>. News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), "Jailbreak: 13 Prisoners Escape Koton Karfe Prison in Kogi", NAN. 30 July 2016. <https://www.bellanaija.com/2016/07/jailbreak-13-prisoners-escape-Koton-Karfe-prison-in-kogi/>; Daily Post "119 inmates escapes from Koto-Karfe prisons", *Daily Post*. 16 February 2012. <https://dailypost.ng/2012/02/16/119-inmates-escape-from-Koton-Karfe-prisons/> [All accessed on 26 October 2022]
- ⁵⁷⁵ See, UA Bello, "Nigeria: Gunmen set 144 inmates free from Koton Karfe Prison", *Daily Trust*. 3 November 2014. <https://allafrica.com/stories/20141104022/-nigeria-gunmen-set-144-inmates-free-from-Koton-Karfe-prison/>. [Accessed on 27 October 2022]
- ⁵⁷⁶ See O Oyedeji, "As Nigeria Experience its 20th Jailbreak in 7 years, Here are four Issues of Concern", *Dataphyte*. 11 July 2022. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-report/as-Nigeria-experiences-its-20th-jailbrak-in7years-here-are-four-issues-of-concern/> [Accessed on 27 October 2022]
- ⁵⁷⁷ The author, as a participant observer in a visit by a prisoners' rights advocacy NGO, noticed a section of the facility labelled informally as the VIPs apartment. Inmates in the 'VIPs' apartment looked physically well off and privileged. During interactions, a less-privileged inmate revealed in confidence that there are inmates who, with a fee to prison officials, have access to personal cell phones, laptops and other information technology communication devices. In addition, there is a report that even in maximum-security prisons, there are such privileged inmates, based on illicit relationships with prison officials. See T Ojoye, "Nigerian prison cells where inmates live like Kings, use co-prisoners as servants", *The Punch*. 3 March 2018. <https://punchng.com/nigerian-prison-cells-where-inmates-live-like-Kings-use-co-prisoner-as-servants/>. [Accessed on 26 October 2022].
- ⁵⁷⁸ Prison officials have been found to prefer duty posts where they interact directly with privileged inmates or their families as well as other categories of visitors, while they seek to influence, by blocking, their posting as guards or sentry. See GE Emerho, *Factors Affecting the Correctional Functions of Prisons in Nigeria: A Study of Aguata and Onitsha Prisons* (MSc Dissertation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2016).

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Book Review

The Worst Military Leaders in History

Edited by John M Jennings & Chuck Steele

London: Reaktion Books

2022, 336 pages

ISBN 978-1-789-145830

Cruelty, callousness, poor judgement, political ambition, impulsiveness, fear of failure – these and several other characteristics are identified and highlighted in the 15 military leaders discussed in *The Worst Military Leaders in History*.

The question pertaining to what it is that makes a good military leader has been discussed by academics and serving officers (as well as a few armchair warriors) for aeons. The answer is often as confusing and as complex as the difference between the terms “military leadership” and “military command”. However, the answer to the question is often less important than the discussion and awareness that it provokes. Military biography studies military leaders within a military-historical context in order to understand how and why leaders made decisions, how their characters and personalities, their backgrounds and training, and their socio-political contexts interacted on the battlefield to achieve specific results – sometimes successful, sometimes not. Traditionally, the focus of these studies is on successful military leaders in order to teach future military officers valuable lessons based on the successes of these historic figures. As valuable as this time-honoured approach is, it is also limited, as it only provides a one-sided view of military leadership and does not necessarily develop the critical evaluation skills of future officers.

Any nation needs military officers who are willing, empowered, and able to lead and command the security forces of their country. This necessity becomes more pressing as future battlespaces become increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, requiring military officers to display strength of character, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills to deal with the demands of the modern battlespace. The dilemma faced by military academies and officer training institutions is often not only finding the right personnel but, more importantly, also ways to develop the right combination of skill sets effectively. One of the methodologies often used is to study the lives and careers of previous military commanders and leaders.

John M Jennings and Chuck Steele, two military instructors at the United States (US) Air Force Academy, decided that they needed a tool that would not only assist in the study of military leadership but which would also elicit critical discussions and develop critical thinking within their students. The authors were given the task to study and describe the

lives, careers, and impact of one military leader who, in the author's opinion, deserves the title of "worst military leader". The result was a book reporting on the lives and careers of 15 military leaders who could be classified as the "worst military leaders". The 15 leaders were grouped into five categories: criminals, frauds, the clueless, politicians, and bunglers – ranging from Roman Fedorovich von Urgern-Sternberg and Lewis Brereton to George A Custer and Lord Wolseley.

Although most military biographies focus on well-known military leaders, I found the discussions in this book fascinating and refreshing, mixing some of the lesser-known military leaders with more famous ones. Although some of the leaders discussed in the book seem – in my opinion – somewhat undeserving of the title "worst military leader" or rather that there are several military leaders more deserving of this title, it is certainly a thought-provoking book.⁵⁷⁹ When one keeps in mind that this book was primarily written as a developmental and educational tool that may be used to enhance critical thinking and develop future military officers, it certainly achieved its intended purpose. Every military leader discussed in this book would be a wonderful case study that could be used to elicit class discussions and foster awareness of the qualities that are unwanted in military leaders. The topic in general represents a refreshing approach and, if used effectively, would certainly contribute to the development of critical thinking and awareness amongst future military officers.

As a military psychologist, I tended to read the book from an applied psychology perspective and not from the historical perspective as it was intended. However, even from this perspective, the book emphasised not only the need for the selection and development of certain qualities in future officers but also what to avoid. As highlighted by the review of Robbins in the "Army Magazine" of September 2022, the book focuses on the characters of the individual leaders – something that is always of interest to psychologists.⁵⁸⁰ All the case studies emphasise the importance of personality, judgement, and ability at tactical, operational, and strategic levels for military commanders, and the fact that an individual might be exceedingly successful at tactical level as a military commander but he or she might not necessarily perform well at operational or strategic level where different skill sets are needed for successful leadership. In addition, the chaotic and ambiguous nature of war is emphasised, highlighting the need to prepare and empower future military leaders with the abilities, qualities, and attitudes required to deal with warfare. All in all, I would recommend this book to military historians but, more specifically, also to practitioners who can use it as a tool to illustrate the requirements for military leaders, and to develop critical thinking amongst students of military leadership.

Johnny O'Neil 

SA Army Assessment Centre, Military Psychological Institute



ENDNOTES

⁵⁷⁹ M Robbins, *Important Case Studies in Lousy Leadership*, Association of the United States Army, September Book Reviews. 2022. <<https://www.ausa.org/articles/september-2022-book-reviews>> [Accessed on 4 January 2023].

⁵⁸⁰ M Robbins, *Important Case Studies in Lousy Leadership*, Association of the United States Army, September Book Reviews. 2022. <<https://www.ausa.org/articles/september-2022-book-reviews>> [Accessed on 4 January 2023].

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SCIENTIA MILITARIA

South African Journal of Military Studies



Book Review

To Rule the Skies: General Thomas S. Power and the Rise of Strategic Air Command in the Cold War

Brent D Ziarnick

Annapolis: Naval Institute Press

2021, 228 pages

ISBN 978-1-6824-7587-4

This book is one in a series designed to explore previously ignored facets of the history of airpower in the United States. It is a biography of an outstanding United States Air Force (USAF) aviator, General Thomas Sarsfield Power, who – after having gone through a difficult childhood – left high school and joined the Air Corps Flying School as a student pilot. After obtaining his wings, Power was commissioned into the Air Flying Corps, without having a college degree. His early career included assignments at most of the famed air corps bases of the day, including that of flying instructor, attending the Air Tactical School as well as completing a well-rounded early career as an engineering and armament officer. As one of the first Air Postal Services pilots, he gained many flying hours and navigational experiences, which saw his abilities being rewarded by promotion and postings into operational positions. These through-the-rank experiences took him to bases as far afield as Singapore, where he honed his bombing, weaponry, and rocket skills in the early years before the Second World War. In later years, this would account for his interest in and development of rocket technologies in the Strategic Air Command (SAC). During all these years, his lack of a college degree was frowned upon by most of his senior officers. However, many of his commanding officers rated his flying abilities and skills very highly, and supported this in their merit assessments. The latter, together with his management skills gained as a flying and weapons instructor, saw him gain deserved promotion by the time America entered the Second World War.

Power served with distinction in both the European and Pacific theatres during the Second World War, and led the first large-scale firebomb raid on Tokyo in March 1945. After this, Power was appointed deputy chief of operations of the Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific, and served in this position during the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. A brilliant and successful officer at all levels of command, he accomplished his missions facing considerable personal and professional obstacles but overcame them to become the operational and strategic leader needed during the Cold War (1945 to 1991) and the Cuban missile crisis (October 1962).

In 1948, Power was appointed vice commander of the SAC and served under General Curtis E LeMay, then commander-in-chief of the Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC) of the USAF. Although he served in the shadow of LeMay, Power was ‘a stern but compassionate man of faith, devotion and character, deeply respected by the men who knew him well’.⁵⁸¹ Rather than being a carbon copy of LeMay – as he was often seen by the senior officer corps, administrators and politicians – Power was an innovative and daring commander, largely responsible for integrating the SAC as an aerospace force, especially while serving as CINCSAC from 1957 until his retirement in 1964. The intent of the SAC was to deter military attacks on the United States, its territories, and its allies with conventional weapons and, if the deterrent failed, to counter the attack with nuclear weapons. The mission was to develop and provide combat-ready air forces for nuclear deterrence and global strike operations as well as safe and effective cover and support to the United States President and combat commanders – in effect “to rule the skies”. The SAC was the greatest deterrent force in the world at the time – and still is today. The author decries the fact that Power did not receive recognition for being, arguably, the father of the SAC and a major contributor to the development of the strategic B-52 bomber and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) deterrent weapons during the Cold War era.

In the late 1960s, the strategic bomber seemed to be following the battleship and the cavalry horse into obsolescence. However, due to the aerospace experience, knowledge, and dogged persistence of men such as Power, the SAC and the B-52 bombers were born. With an always aloft nuclear first-strike capability strategy, and a supply chain cleverly and deliberately cast across many US political and congressional obstacles, Power achieved his goals for a sustainable and viable SAC. Even today, 60 years later, the B-52 is retained as a conventional bomber, fully operational. Power’s innovativeness as well as his technical and aerospace management skills and expertise deserves full credit for his personal contribution to all of the above.

As a stickler for discipline, rules, and procedures, Power was personally involved in writing new doctrine for the SAC, inclusive of training methods and procedures, conventional and nuclear strike capabilities, time-to-deployment requirements, radar bombing scoring assessments, and integrated management systems using various configurations of air assets on a 24/7 operational basis. He had first-hand knowledge and experience of flying bomber aircraft, as well as weaponry expertise, innovation, and vision to assess a situation, and was able to evaluate the risks a commander needs to take in times of crisis. His innovations helped to prevent nuclear war through airpower deterrence.

The book relates the career of Power, and especially his forgotten contributions to the early space programme and early doctrine for military space activity. It explains the role of Power in establishing General Bernard Schriever’s Western Development Division as a true space organisation rather than as a ballistic missile organisation, and it catalogues Power’s efforts to transform the SAC into a Strategic Aerospace Command including a manned strategic space force. *Ziarnick’s book* covers the span of both Power’s personal and professional life, and challenges most of the myths of conventional knowledge about Power. The work has been thoroughly researched, and is based on archival data obtained from the US Air University library. *Ziarnick’s* study is further supported by important



contributions made by military colleagues and academics associated with military aviation at the Air University. In fact, after reading Ziarnick's excellent account, one wonders why it took so long for a biography of this calibre on Power to be published. It is hard to think of another figure whose military service spanned the Second World War (1939–1945), the Korean War (1950–1953), the Cuban missile crisis (1962), the nuclear age and beginnings of the space age, all in the space of 37 years.

The book comprises eight chapters of a well-written narrative reflecting a logical layout, numerous pictures clearly reproduced, supportive notes, and a comprehensive bibliography. References to further recommended readings, articles and literature are included.

In reading and considering Ziarnick's book, the question that needs to be asked is towards which readership this book is targeted. The author targets, in the reviewer's opinion, past and present critics of Power in the US military aviation history domain, as well as future students to the USAF and Air University, with the intent of giving them a balanced perspective on the Cold War and the aviation challenges Power faced during his tenure. Amongst these were the anti-nuclear lobbyists in the US Senate, the interference by the Secretary of State and other senators in budget constraints, and the air asset requirements, showing preference to missiles rather than strategic bombers.

South Africa has never in its history been exposed to strategic bombing of any sorts. While the contemporary military community in South Africa might not be attracted to the book for various reasons, it is, however, a good read and reference for military strategists and students at tertiary military educational institutions. There exists an invisible conflict between the military operational cadres and the geopolitical and military bureaucracy. In that context, African air forces could relate to the book and the challenges faced by Power to build the SAC and the *reasons d'être* for it. During his 37 years of military service and seven-year tenure as CINCSAC, Power was willing to take on political bureaucrats, government officials, US military command structures, and civilian personnel in acquisition and financial structures, as well as the likes of the US Secretary of Defense. His unwavering persistence to ensure that the United States of America had an effective and capable airborne deterrent against any potential aggressor, is arguably lacking in African air command structures today. The latter would find much food for thought by reading this book.

To Rule the Skies has been reviewed by many high-ranking USAF officers close to the proverbial operational rock face of the SAC; any additional material would be superfluous. To this end, it sufficed to tabulate recommended areas of note and of possible interest in the African context. This was achieved by an excellent, well-written introduction to the work, arguably one of the best the reviewer has had the pleasure of reading. It provides highlights of each chapter of the book in a manner clearly and easily understandable – from Power's early childhood, to his entry into the Flying Cadet programme, and the role that he played in constructing the USAF and, in particular, the SAC. Ziarnick discusses the role of Power as CINCSAC during the difficult years of the Cold War, through the various contributions he made to the post-Second World War construction of the US



Aerospace Force (previously known as the US Air Force). The book also covers General Power's role as a member of the Air Research and Development Council (1961–1976), and the challenges he faced during that period. A *per aspera ad astra* role model ("through hardships to the stars") indeed.

In summary, *To Rule the Skies* is a well-constructed and concisely written book incorporating a balanced combination of textual explanations and well-presented arguments in support of placing General Power and the SAC in the correct historical context of both the USAF and the National Space Program. While the book is targeted at a USAF and US aerospace audience, it is recommended to African defence organisations, air force decision-makers and their air commanders as further reading as they consider their strategic planning for using modern technologies in aeronautical and space science as a future operational imperative.

Dr (Col.) Alan J Nelson (ret.) 

Independent researcher



ENDNOTES

⁵⁸¹ BD Ziarnick, *To Rule the Skies: General Thomas S. Power and the Rise of Strategic Air Command in the Cold War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2021), 5.

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Book Review

Russia: Revolution and Civil War 1917–1921

Anthony Beevor

London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson

2022, 576 pages

ISBN 978-1-4746-1014-8

One of the most important historical moments in modern history, the Russian Revolution and the subsequent civil war from 1917 to 1921, had a profound effect on how the twentieth century developed. Anthony Beevor, an acclaimed British military historian, gives a thorough and in-depth overview of this turbulent time in Russian history in his book *Russia: Revolution and Civil War 1917–1921*. Beevor looks at the fall of the Tsarist state, the formation of several political groups, the ascent of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the participation of foreign powers, and the ensuing war that led to the founding of the Soviet Union. In this review, we discuss Beevor's analysis of these important occasions, people, and elements.

Beevor begins by providing valuable insights into the historical context and events that led to the Russian Revolution. He examines the complex interplay of economic, political, and social factors, which created a volatile environment in Russia during this time. For example, he notes that the failure of the First World War had a profound influence on Russia, and exacerbated pre-existing issues, such as severe poverty, food shortages, and political unrest. As a result, peasants and the working class became increasingly dissatisfied with the Tsarist regime, giving rise to unrest and social movements. Beevor also analyses the various political and social groups that emerged during this time, such as the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, and the Socialist Revolutionaries. He explores the ideologies and beliefs that drove these groups, as well as the influential members of these parties, namely Lenin, Trotsky, and Kerensky.

The book then moves on to a detailed account of the events and policies implemented by the Bolshevik government after the October Revolution. Initially, the Bolsheviks faced numerous obstacles as they tried to seize control and consolidate power. They implemented several policies to solve these obstacles, such as the forcible requisition of food and other supplies from the peasantry, the formation of the Red Army to combat the counter-revolutionaries, and the introduction of a new economic policy known as War Communism. However, these policies had unintended consequences. For example, millions of people died of severe starvation and illness as a result of the forcible requisition of food, and the Red Army struggled to maintain control of the country, facing fierce resistance from anti-Bolshevik forces and suffering from desertion and low morale among

its troops. Despite these internal struggles, the Bolsheviks also faced external challenges from foreign powers, such as Britain, France, and the United States, who supported the White Army. The rising civil war and the continuous fight for control in Russia are covered in the chapters that follow.

The adversaries of the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, increased when they took control in October 1917. They comprised nationalist movements in the former empire that aimed for further autonomy or independence, in addition to the White Army, which were made up of anti-Bolshevik troops. The Bolsheviks established the Cheka, a new secret police organisation that engaged in ruthless repression and violence against alleged state enemies, in order to bolster their power and crush resistance.

Throughout 1919, both sides gained and lost ground during a series of key military offensives and counteroffensives. In the east, Admiral Kolchak's White Army launched an offensive in Siberia, capturing important cities and regions. However, this initial success was short-lived, and the Red Army, under the leadership of Mikhail Tukhachevsky, launched a counteroffensive that pushed the Whites back and recaptured lost ground. However, the Red Army, bolstered by reinforcements and improved organisation, was able to halt the advance, and push the Whites back in a series of battles along the Volga River.

Ultimately, Beevor explores the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war, which left the country in a state of disarray. The economy was in ruins, with hyperinflation and food shortages plaguing the population. Beevor explains the government's response to the crisis, which included setting up a system for distributing food and taking grain from peasants. In addition, Beevor's examination of the Bolsheviks' international strategy sheds light on their larger goals and ambitions. He describes the government's attempts to spread the revolution to other countries, including the establishment of the Communist International. He also discusses the various conflicts that arose between the Soviet Union and its neighbours, namely Poland and the newly formed Baltic states.

In conclusion, Anthony Beevor's *Russia, Revolution and Civil War 1917–1921* is a masterful work that offers a thorough and insightful overview of one of the most significant eras in Russian history. His analysis of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Civil War provides important insights into the key events, actors, and factors that shaped the creation of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the book has relevance not only for historians and scholars but also for anyone interested in the role of political revolutions in shaping the modern world. This book is therefore a must-read for anybody interested in Russian history, political revolutions, or international relations.

Marno Swart 
Stellenbosch University

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Book Review

Spear: Mandela and the Revolutionaries

Paul S Landau

Johannesburg: Jacana Media

2022, 292 pages

ISBN 978-1-4314-3235-6

Spear: Mandela and the Revolutionaries by Paul S Landau is an insightful and detailed account of Nelson Mandela's journey as a revolutionary and his involvement with the African National Congress (ANC), spanning the years just before Mandela's arrest in 1960 until his passing in December 2013. Landau is a professor of history at the University of Maryland at College Park, as well as a fellow of the History Centre of the University of Johannesburg. Landau delves into the complex relationships between Mandela and his contemporaries, such as Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and other key figures in the anti-apartheid movement. This book offers the *sui generis* perspective on Mandela's political ideology, his strategies for achieving freedom, and his evolution as a leader. Landau's in-depth research and interviews with people who intimately knew Mandela provide a deep understanding of Mandela's character, his beliefs, and his motivations.

Spear chronicles, in hindsight, our comprehension of Mandela with emphasis on this intense, yet comparatively overlooked period of escalation in the fight against apartheid. Although neither a biography, nor a history of a militia, Landau's work is a gripping narration about ordinary civilians arguing and acting in unison, yet *in extremis*. By placing in context, the activities of both Mandela and Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) amidst anticolonial shifts and black Marxism in the early 1960s, *Spear* also addresses contemporary transnational antiracism protests, as well as global struggles against oppression.

While the book can be dense at times, it offers a compelling account that sheds new light on the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The title *Spear* refers to the symbol of the spear, which has been used as a political symbol throughout African history, representing strength, courage, and unity. The book delves into the complex political and social dynamics that shaped the anti-apartheid movement and the role played by key figures, such as Mandela. The book explores the complex dynamics of the movement, including the various factions and ideologies that shaped it, as well as the internal and external forces that influenced its trajectory.

In *Spear: Mandela and the Revolutionaries*, Landau approaches the structure and themes of the book by focusing on the intersection of Nelson Mandela's leadership and the

broader struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The book is divided into three parts, each focusing on a different phase of Mandela's life and the struggle for racial justice in South Africa.

The first part of the book focuses on the early years of Mandela's activism, including his involvement in the ANC and his opposition to the apartheid regime. This section provides a detailed account of the political and social conditions that shaped Mandela's worldview and helped him become one of the key leaders of the anti-apartheid movement.

The second part of the book focuses on Mandela's imprisonment and the effect this had on the movement. This section highlights the role that Mandela's imprisonment played in inspiring activists both within South Africa and around the world and explores the various ways in which the struggle against apartheid continued to evolve and adapt during this period.

The final part of the book focuses on Mandela's release from prison and his leadership role in the post-apartheid era. This section explores the challenges and opportunities that Mandela faced as he sought to reconcile the various factions within South African society and build a new, more just society. Throughout the book, Landau touches on key historical themes and landmark developments, such as the Sharpeville massacre, the Soweto uprising, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He also explores the various strategies and tactics used by the anti-apartheid movement, including boycotts, strikes, and armed resistance.

After the 1960 Sharpeville police shootings of civilian protesters, Mandela, and his comrades in the mass-resistance order of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) pioneered the use of force, and formed MK, or Spear of the Nation. As a civilian-based militia, MK stockpiled weapons and waged a war of sabotage against the state with pipe bombs, Molotov cocktails, as well as dynamite. In retort, the state passed draconian laws, militarised its police, and incarcerated its opponents short of trial. In what appears a rear-view mirror glimpse into history, Landau also provides a chart of two parallel processes in the 1940s and 1950s, marking the foundations of the formation of MK. These processes, the elevation of the Youth League's vision, the promotion of Mandela's closest patron, Walter Sisulu, as well as the radicalisation of support in Natal, reset the trajectory of the ANC.

With the declaration of the state of emergency in March 1960 by Hendrik Verwoerd, both Mandela and the leadership of the ANC called for the fast-paced reassessment and reorganisation of the ANC and the SACP – since the nature of the effort against apartheid had just morphed. These transformations revolved around revisiting non-violence as a strategy in the fight against the oppressive regime, and perhaps replacing it with a call to arms. During these shifts, activists split the ANC into two: the pan-Africanist anti-communist faction broke away and became the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), as the founding Youth League.

Following the creation of MK, the persuasive efforts by Mandela shifted towards mobilisation and sending men abroad for military training, as well as the role of personal



morasses, trial, and error, as well as sheer luck. In grounding his revolutionary endeavours on theory, Mandela sought to prepare MK by immersing himself in class, alliance-tolerant, relativistic, urban-generated, but action-oriented Chinese Communist thought imbued with a pan-Africanist anti-government revolutionism of Anton Lembede. Yet, the enigma of MK remained its pertinence to a South African model of a small, strict hierarchy of guerrillas whose membership was steeped in secrecy. MK would thus remain a mystery until demystified by its activities. In this instance, Indres Naidoo was ridiculed for his timidity in not working for MK, whereas he was already a trainee who just could not admit to such – thus marking the genesis of “going underground”.

While MK executed its first attempt at what appeared like guerrilla attacks, with both expected and unexpected consequences, Mandela had excursions to the north, following African independence. Although Mandela’s solicitous visit to Africa matched with his personal incapacitation on the home front, his interactions with heads of state transmuted his attitude. His demeanour changed and oozing with confidence, he led the resolution by the Action Council of National Executive Committee (NEC) to shift from the Party towards an African national liberation with the ANC as its vanguard.

In what appeared a significant setback for the struggle for liberation in South Africa, the ANC was banned by the apartheid government in 1962, and many of its leaders were arrested, including Nelson Mandela, who was sentenced to life imprisonment. In response, MK carried out several sabotage operations against government targets, including power stations and government buildings. Overall, in 1962, the struggle for liberation in South Africa was marked by a significant increase in government repression against anti-apartheid groups, but also by the emergence of armed resistance and a determination to continue the fight for freedom.

The period between mid-1963 and mid-1964 was a critical time in the South African liberation struggle, marked by significant political and social developments. The Rivonia Trial, which took place in that period, was a landmark event in South African history. The trial centred on the charges of sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the apartheid government brought against ten leaders of the ANC, including Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Ahmed Kathrada. The accused were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act (No. 44 of 1950) and the newly enacted Sabotage Act (No. 76 of 1962).

In *Spear: Mandela and the Revolutionaries*, Landau argues that Mandela was a central figure in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and his leadership played a critical role in bringing about the end of apartheid and the establishment of a more just society. Landau also argues that Mandela’s vision of a non-racial and democratic South Africa was not only a response to the injustices of apartheid, but also an attempt to draw on broader traditions of African humanism and democratic governance.

In terms of his conclusions, Landau suggests that while Mandela’s leadership was instrumental in ending apartheid, the work of building a more just society is a continuous process that requires ongoing effort and commitment. He also emphasises the importance of truth and reconciliation in the aftermath of apartheid, arguing that these processes



could help to foster healing and a sense of shared responsibility among South Africans.

In terms of its strengths, *Spear* can be lauded for providing a comprehensive and detailed account of Nelson Mandela's life and the broad struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The author provides valuable insights into Mandela's leadership and his role in bringing about the end of apartheid. Landau's analysis of the broad historical context and the various strategies and tactics used by the anti-apartheid movement helps readers understand the complexity of the struggle against apartheid. The book is well researched and drew on a range of primary and secondary sources.

In general, the weaknesses of the publication stem from the fact that some readers have criticised the book for being too focused on Mandela, and not providing enough analysis of other key figures and movements within the anti-apartheid struggle. At the same time the book is quite dense and may be difficult for some readers to follow, particularly those who are less familiar with the history of apartheid in South Africa. The author's writing style can be somewhat academic, which may make the book less accessible to general readers than perhaps scholars interested in the history of the liberation struggle.

Overall, *Spear* is a comprehensive and engaging account of Mandela's life and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Landau's research and insights offer a valuable perspective on one of the most important political figures of the twentieth century. The audience for *Spear: Mandela and the Revolutionaries* is likely to be a wide range of individuals interested in the history of apartheid in South Africa and the struggle for racial justice. These include scholars and researchers in the fields of history, political science, and African studies, as well as general readers who are interested in learning more about this pivotal period in South African history.

M. Godfrey Ramuhala 
Stellenbosch University

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Book Review

External Missions: The ANC in Exile

Stephen Ellis

Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball

2022, 380 pages

ISBN 978-1-77619-219-9

External Mission: The ANC in Exile highlights information about the history of the African National Congress (ANC) during the struggle against apartheid that is not immediately accessible to the public but makes sense when reviewing the near future of South Africa. In other words, this book about the ANC explains the culmination of past events that have a direct and almost repetitive influence and representation of the present and the possible future of South Africa. In this book, Ellis aims to provide insider information on the ANC during a time in history when the party was banned and frowned upon by the government of the day. Moreover, this book gives an account of how the various and ongoing operations of the ANC took place, and how this political party became the strongest political party and eventually formed the government of the day in South Africa. The meticulous and precise presentation of facts is what makes this book interesting and powerful for the current generation of South Africans. Understanding the formation and upcoming of the ANC and what its initial intentions as a political party were essential in understanding why its leaders are at loggerheads with and to a certain extent struggling to lead South Africans today. For example, the ANC was a political party that was created for black Africans in South Africa. It only opened to all ethnic groups much later, after apartheid.⁵⁸² Furthermore, although other ethnic groups did join and form part of the ANC, they were only allowed to join certain departments and operations of the ANC and not the highest command of the political party. If one looks at the leadership of the ANC since its coming to power in 1994, one will find that there has never been a leader or president of the political party who was not a black African.

The linear presentation of chapters starting with Call to Arms (Chapter 1) through to Perspectives (Chapter 8) showcases the various levels of mistrust, the lack of comradeship, members not being loyal to the cause, and a considerable amount of misinformation. For example, there were differences about what should be done as a form of retaliation and political expression against the oppressive apartheid government,⁵⁸³ and on several occasions, armed response was delayed due to some party members not being 100 per cent supportive of the call.⁵⁸⁴ These examples reflect what is currently taking place regarding the internal political disputes in South Africa.

With reference to the separation of people in the same party into their cultural and traditional tribes according to language, is another pivoting factor with loud divisive undertones yet unaddressed in South Africa.⁵⁸⁵ This is even trickling down to society where people separate themselves from each other and are very aware of the different languages and cultural backgrounds of others. This is now growing into something that has the potential to shape and label people adversely according to negative stereotypes in terms of their culture, for example, the Zulu people who are associated with being aggressive and violent.

External Mission speaks of corruption, which in its natural form cannot be fully measured scientifically, but the consequences of corruption are visible and continue to grow. Corruption started many years ago in apartheid South Africa long before the country became a democracy, and this is critically articulated in *External Mission*. Many events were interconnected. The rise in school boycotts and the war waged on the minority government at the time, were for instance all adding to what eventually led to the end of apartheid. Several internal and external factors, such as the Soweto uprising and the end of the Cold War,⁵⁸⁶ were integral ingredients that came to pass, leading to the very first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994.

Ellis' main conclusions are that the methodological underpinnings that led to the demise of the National Party are what is currently crushing the ruling ANC and their failure to view, review and address reality for what it actually is – the reality of the state of South Africa. External forces will forever influence how the country progresses because South Africa is not an island; it works with and is dependent on the success and operation of many other countries in the world with regard to economics and the price of food, fuel and trade.

Once the ANC leaders address the reality of the poorest inhabitants of South Africa instead of covering it up with bureaucratic assumptions and policing, only then will the reality of this country change and make progress for the better. In other words, the ANC may have played an important role in leading South Africa to democracy, but it is failing dismally to maintain the functionality and growth of this democratic country. I believe the main audience for this book is the current youth in South Africa.

In Chapter 8, titled Perspectives, Ellis speaks to the unforeseen future that can change the status quo overnight, and nobody would have control over it or can predict it – much like the effect that the Cold War had on trade, or the aftermath of the Cold War. More recently, an unpredicted event came in the form of COVID-19, which affected the world and killed thousands of people. The world changed, and even before it could recover from the fallout of the pandemic, the Ukraine and Russia went to war. This has a highly negative socio-political and economic effect on South Africa.

The strength of this book is that it gives a detailed step-by-step explanation with evidence of the political developments in South Africa leading to the unbanning of the ANC and the success of the liberation struggle. It includes personal accounts from members of the ANC, and mentions documents that are accessible. The weakness of this book is that some of the documents that are mentioned here are no longer publicly available for download,



or they are no longer available to the public. One therefore has to do a thorough search in order to find and confirm that the information provided in this book is indeed true.

In conclusion, Stephen Ellis descriptively shows how the current South African society came under the leadership of the ANC and with careful observation, one can easily anticipate a future that sees the ANC losing power as the government of the day in South Africa, unless some major changes are made and implemented so that the current generation can benefit when it comes to addressing issues of unemployment, poverty, opportunities to study, and the growth of this beautiful country.

Phumza Precious Mbobo 

University of the Free State

ENDNOTES

- ⁵⁸² Another option was simply to open the ANC to people of every ethnic group. S Ellis, *External Missions: The ANC in Exile* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2022), 47.
- ⁵⁸³ Ellis states that the decision of the national executive of the ANC to turn a blind eye to the formation of a new militant organisation paved the way for a discussion to be held by the joint executive of the entire Congress Alliance, which met just a day later, in Durban. S Ellis, *External Missions: The ANC in Exile* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2022), 105.
- ⁵⁸⁴ Ellis shares that in many cases where ANC party members were also members of another organisation, such as the Congress of Democrats, internal party discipline required that “at all times, the first loyalty of the Party members is to their Party [the ANC]”, the very rule that Kotane flouted when he argued in the ANC meetings against adopting a policy of armed struggle. S Ellis, *External Missions: The ANC in Exile* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2022), 27.
- ⁵⁸⁵ Within the context of being in exile in Tanzania, a disillusioned Zulu cadre wrote: “Everyone with experience of Kongwa agreed on the existence of tribalism in the camp: There was less pressure and more hesitation in taking disciplinary action when Xhosa-speaking people are involved than in the case with the Zulu-speaking people”. S Ellis, *External Missions: The ANC in Exile* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2022), 54.
- ⁵⁸⁶ The uprisings, however, also had consequences. Ellis argues that “The cold reality was that school boycotts condemned a generation of mostly poor South Africans to almost no education at all, which did not aid their material chances of earning a decent living in the future, nor improve their sense of self-worth”. S Ellis, *External Missions: The ANC in Exile* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball, 2022), 214.

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South African Journal of Military Studies





NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

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Editorial addresses

Scientia Militaria
Private Bag X2
Saldanha 7395
South Africa

Dr E.P. Kleynhans
kleynhans@sun.ac.za
Tel: +27-22-702-3102
Fax: +27-22-702-3060



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