

# Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia

J.K.Cilliers



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Air Force	: Rhodesian Air Force/Zimbabwe-Rhodesian Air Force
ANC	: African National Congress
Army	: Rhodesian Army/Zimbabwe-Rhodesian Army
BOSD	: Bureau of Special Duties
BSAP	: British South Africa Police, now the Zimbabwe Republic Police
CESC	: Civil Executive to the Security Council
CIO	: Central Intelligence Organisation
Corsan	: Cordon Sanitaire
COMOPS	: Combined Operations Headquarters
CV	: Consolidated Village
FPLM	: Army of Mozambique, now known as FAM
FRELIMO	: Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
Frontline States	: Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Angola, Tanzania
GTI	: Ground of Tactical Importance
insurgents	: armed, trained members of either ZANLA or ZPRA
Internal Affairs	: Department of Internal Affairs, now the Department of Home Affairs
JOC	: Joint Operational Centre
JPS	: Joint Planning Staff
JSPIS	: Joint Services Photographic Interpretation Staff
JSTC	: Joint Services Targetting Committee
MID	: Military Intelligence Directorate
mujibas	: insurgent local youth supporters
NATJOC	: National Joint Operational Centre
OCC	: Operations Co-ordinating Committee

PACC : Psychological Action Co-ordinating Committee  
 PF : Zimbabwe Patriotic Front. At present the PF refers to the former ZAPU. As used in this study it refers to the ZANU/ZAPU pact formed in 1976  
 Police : British South Africa Police  
 POU : Psychological Operation Unit  
 PROVOPS : Provincial Operation Centre  
 Psywar Committee : Psychological Warfare Committee  
 PV : Protected Village  
 RAR : Rhodesia African Rifles  
 Rhodesia : Zimbabwe. Name used for period up to 1 June 1979  
 Rhodesian Front : Rhodesian Front party. Now the Republican Front Party  
 Rh\$ : Rhodesian dollar  
 RIC : Rhodesian Intelligence Corps  
 RLI : Rhodesian Light Infantry, 1st Battalion of  
 SAANC : South African African National Congress  
 SAS : Special Air Service  
 Security Forces : Rhodesian/Zimbabwe-Rhodesian Army, Air Force, BSAP, Guard Force, Security Force Auxiliaries and para-military Internal Affairs forces  
 SFA : Security Force Auxiliaries  
 SFIC : Special Forces Intelligence Centre  
 situpa : registration card carried by adult black males  
 TPDF : Tanzania People's Defence Force  
 UANC : United African National Council  
 UDI : Unilateral Declaration of Independence  
 VAG : Vital Asset Ground  
 ZANLA : Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army  
 ZANU : Zimbabwe Africa National Union  
 ZANU(S) : Faction of ZANU headed by the Rev. N. Sithole  
 ZANU(PF) : Present name of ZANU. PF refers to the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front  
 ZAPU : Zimbabwe African Peoples Union, now known as the Patriotic Front  
 Zimbabwe-Rhodesia: Zimbabwe. Refers to the period 1 June 1979, to April 1980  
 ZIPA : Zimbabwe Peoples Army

ZNDF  
 ZPRA

: Zambian National Defence Force  
 : Zimbabwe Peoples Revolutionary Army. Also known as ZIPRA

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J K Cilliers  
Tsumeb

## INTRODUCTION

On 11 November 1965 the British colony of Southern Rhodesia unilaterally declared its independence. Prime Minister Ian Douglas Smith made this declaration fully confident that his Rhodesian Front Party could maintain power indefinitely for the white minority group it represented. Only fifteen years later on 18 April 1980, Zimbabwe emerged as an independent country under majority rule with international recognition. Mr Smith's major adversary, Robert Mbellarmine Mugabe, became the new prime minister of this fledgeling state. During the intervening years a relentless war had been waged. The two black nationalist armies, ZANLA and ZPRA gained ascendancy over the smaller but technically superior armed forces of Rhodesia. This bitter struggle can be seen as a classic model of insurgent versus counter-insurgent strategies. The final outcome permanently altered the balance of power in the sub-continent of Southern Africa.

This general study is an interpretative analysis of the counter-insurgency strategy during the eight crucial years of the war, 1972 tot 1979. Since 1981 a small number of books have been published on certain aspects of the war, notably D. Martin and P. Johnson, The Struggle for Zimbabwe (Faber and Faber, London, 1981), J. Fredrikse, None but Ourselves: Masses vs the Media in the Making of Zimbabwe (Raven Press, Johannesburg, 1982) and P. Stiff and R. Reid-Daly, Selous Scouts: Top Secret War (Galago, Alberton, 1982). Considering the scope of the conflict, comparatively little that is available to the public has been written on the war itself.

A large number of primary sources were consulted to obtain the basic historical data for this study, but the Africa Research Bulletin series was the single most important reference work used. The

information presented by the media was often distorted and based on rumours and speculation divorced from reality. Details regarding specific operations, projects, organisations and general modus operandi of the Security Forces gathered for this study were collected and cross-checked through numerous and in-depth interviews conducted both in the Republic of South Africa where many expatriate Rhodesians now reside and in Zimbabwe. The subject files at the offices of the Herald newspaper in Harare also proved valuable in this research. Numerous officially classified documents obtained from former Security Force members were used as well.

Chapter 1 provides a resumé of events over the period 1890 to 1979 with an emphasis on the intensified confrontation from 1972 to 1979. This is a central chapter for evaluating and co-ordinating aspects of the struggle discussed in subsequent chapters. Each of the following eight chapters is concerned with specific organisations or counter-insurgency strategies which had direct bearing on the development of the conflict. The second and ninth chapters are, in particular, devoted to organisations and systems. Chapter 2 examines the command and control structures employed by the Rhodesian Security Forces, and Chapter 9 discusses the intelligence organisations and methods employed. Both aspects are vital for a complete picture of the Rhodesian Security Forces' counter actions, as the success of other counter-insurgency activities depended to a large extent on the successes and failures achieved in these fields. Chapters 3 to 8 analyse in turn a number of specific counter-insurgency strategies as employed in Zimbabwe, namely those of protected villages (strategic hamlets), border minefield obstacles, pseudo-insurgent activities, internal defence and development, external operations and the institution of a self-defence militia system. Chapter 10 briefly describes the general security situation that had developed by 1979. Only at this point is it possible to comment on the conduct of the war in general.

*dedicated to my parents*

## Chapter 1

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WAR FOR ZIMBABWE 1965-1979

#### 1.1 The Early Years

By 1890 there were already a number of white settlers inhabiting what was later known as the British colony of Southern Rhodesia. The impingement of white interests upon indigenous black customs and property, however, led to racial tension. So, in 1893 and again in 1895, the Matabele regiments rose up under their king, Lobengula, in the first freedom struggles or Chimurenga against the whites. Although the black warriors were overwhelmingly defeated this did not secure the position of the white settlers, who remained ill at ease in their isolated outposts across Mashonaland. White military preparedness was consequently directed towards securing internal security and remained so for a number of years.

Gradually, as European influence grew, racial prejudice against the blacks increased as well, became established and institutionalized. It was expressed clearly in the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 by which the country was divided into distinct areas for black and white habitation. Areas assigned for black habitation were known as Reserves until 1969 and after that as Tribal Trust Lands until independence in 1981. Generally these areas lay in the more arid reaches surrounding the more fertile white controlled region which ran from southwest to northeast (see Figure 1.1). This division of land was made possible by the white referendum of 1922 after which Britain granted self-government to Southern Rhodesia in 1923. Faint awareness of a threat other than that from the indigenous black peoples arose after 1926, and in response to this a small standing army was formed. This force was expanded during the troubled years preceding the Second World



a founder member of the Rhodesian Front party in 1962. He was a dour speaker who had won little public attention before the formation of the Front. Once elected Prime Minister, however, he gained unprecedented popularity among the white population. This support even endured beyond the war against the insurgents. Two events in particular strengthened the resolve of an increasingly isolated Southern Rhodesia to 'go it alone' in an attempt to maintain white supremacy: the massacre of whites in Kenya during the Mau Mau uprising of the early sixties and the election to power of an unsympathetic Labour government in Britain in 1964. So, on Armistice day, 11 November 1965, Rhodesia unilaterally declared its independence (UDI). Although aware of the imminent declaration, Rhodesian black nationalists were totally unprepared to offer any form of organized protest. The small number of blacks sent for training in insurgency warfare by emerging nationalist movements at the time were apparently intended for political propaganda rather than to wage a real revolutionary campaign. Arguably the major nationalist insurgent incident before UDI occurred during July 1964: a group calling itself the Crocodile Gang killed a white farmer at a roadblock in the Melsetter area.

Recruitment and training for an insurgent campaign against the Rhodesian Front government started in 1963. The formation of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in that year in competition with the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) acted as a catalyst for armed confrontation between the black nationalist forces and the white controlled Rhodesian Security Forces.

The undisputed father and leader of Rhodesian nationalist movements in the late fifties and for many years afterwards, was Joshua Nqabuko Nyangolo Nkomo. He had been elected president of the newly formed African National Congress on 12 September 1957, after the Southern Rhodesian African Nationalist Congress and the City Youth League had united. The African National Congress was subsequently banned in February 1959, but re-emerged on 1 January 1960 as the National Democratic Party. This party, in turn, was banned on 9 December 1961. It reappeared on 17 December 1961, as the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union or ZAPU.

For some months before the formation of ZAPU, Nkomo's leadership had come under increased criticism. It was alleged that he spent more time abroad, canvassing for the nationalist cause, than in

Southern Rhodesia leading it. Further dissension broke out among black nationalists after the National Democratic Party executives agreed to the proposals of the 1961 London constitutional conference whereby only 15 out of 65 parliamentary seats were allocated to blacks. African nationalists reacted angrily to this agreement and forced the National Democratic Party hastily to repudiate the agreement, but the damage to the unity of Rhodesian African nationalism had been done. When ZAPU was banned on 20 September 1962, Nkomo was again absent from Rhodesia. He was persuaded to return only after considerable pressure from his own followers as well as from President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. After his release from 3 months' restriction, Nkomo persuaded the former ZAPU executive to flee with him to Tanzania and there form a government in exile. Bitter dissension about the leadership of the Rhodesian nationalist movement now arose amongst prominent black nationalists including the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mbellarmine Mugabe. In response, ZAPU President Nkomo suspended his executive council and returned to Rhodesia to form the interim People's Caretaker Council. Outside Rhodesia the People's Caretaker Council retained the name ZAPU. Nkomo was rearrested and detained until 1974. In spite of his long detention, he was never again seriously challenged as ZAPU president. Nkomo's foremost critics formed the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) on 8 August 1963 with the Reverend Sithole as interim president and Robert Mugabe as Secretary General. Both ZANU and the People's Caretaker Council were banned in Rhodesia on 26 August 1964. Mugabe and Sithole were arrested. Although he was released during June of the following year, Mugabe was restricted to Sikombela until his rearrest in November 1965. Both Mugabe and Sithole remained in detention until December 1974.

ZANU sent its first contingent of five men led by Emmerson Mnangagwa to the People's Republic of China for military training in September 1963. They formed the nucleus of ZANU's armed wing, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, or ZANLA. Having been actively involved in operations against the Rhodesian regime since 1964 it was thus understandable that Sithole precipitated his own fall from the ZANU presidency during 1969 when he stated in the dock

I wish publicly to dissociate my name in word, thought or deed from any subversive activities, from any terrorist activities and from any form of violence. (1)

Internal dissension within the ranks of the black nationalists thus brought about the formation of ZANU. Although Nkomo's vacillation had discredited him among a large section of the Rhodesian nationalist leaders, he still appeared to command majority black nationalist support within the country at the turn of the decade. At this stage the tribal bias of both ZANU and ZAPU was not as strongly manifested as from 1972 onward.

ZANU and ZAPU, however, increasingly competed in revolutionary zeal and recruitment. The ZAPU armed forces later became known as the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZPRA or ZIPRA) (2)

The insurgents' strategy at this stage was based on two false assumptions. First, that Britain could be induced to intervene forcibly in Rhodesia should law and order seem in imminent danger of collapsing, and second that

... all that was necessary to end white domination was to train some guerrillas and send them home with guns: this would not only scare the whites but would ignite a wave of civil disobedience by blacks. (3)

By 1966, however, ZAPU, still the major black nationalist movement, had realized that the British government could not be induced to intervene actively in Rhodesia. ZAPU's armed wing, ZPRA, also recognized that it did not have the ability to force a collapse of law and order. The major task of the insurgent forces existing at this early stage was therefore to convince the Organisation of African Unity and the world at large that the forces to overthrow the regime of Ian Smith really did exist. This was vitally important if financial and political support was to be forthcoming. It was also apparent that if Rhodesia was to become Zimbabwe, Zimbabweans themselves would have to take up arms and fight for it. While leaders of ZANLA and ZPRA were convinced of this, black Rhodesians as yet were not. Rhodesian citizens resident in Zambia and Tanzania were thus forcibly recruited to swell ZANLA and ZPRA ranks until the trickle of refugees and recruits turned into a flood.

While ZPRA bore almost the full weight of the

war effort in these initial years, ZAPU remained at the same time the major exponent of the 'external manoeuvre' designed to obtain maximum international support. ZANLA, trained by China, played a very limited military role during this period. Both movements also increasingly appeared to represent a major tribal grouping in Rhodesia. ZAPU had the backing of the Matabeles, who constitute some 19% of Zimbabwe's black population, while ZANU had that of the loosely grouped Shona nations (77%). (See Figure 1.2)

Following UDI the first military engagement recognised officially by Rhodesia occurred on 28 April 1966 between Security Forces and seven ZANLA insurgents near Sinoia, 100 km northwest of Harare.

That day is now commemorated in Zimbabwe as Chimurenga Day - the start of the war. The group eliminated was in fact one of three teams that had entered Rhodesia with the aim of cutting power lines and attacking white farmsteads. A second of the groups murdered a white couple with the surname of Viljoen on their farm near Hartley on the night of 16 May 1966. The insurgents were subsequently captured by Security Forces. In total all but one of the original fourteen insurgents were either killed or captured.

Shortly afterwards a second ZANLA infiltration was detected near Sinoia. In the ensuing battle seven insurgents were killed and a number captured.

During August 1967 a combined force of 90 insurgents from ZPRA and the South African African National Congress entered Rhodesia near the Victoria Falls. They miscalculated the attitude of the local black population and the Security Forces soon knew of their presence there. In the first major operation of the war 47 insurgents were killed within three weeks and more than 20 were captured. The remainder fled to Botswana in disarray. Fourteen of the Security Force members were wounded and seven others killed.

Early in 1968 a second force of 123 insurgents from ZPRA and the South African African National Congress crossed the Zambezi River from Zambia into northern Mashonaland. The group remained undetected for three months, setting up a series of six base camps at intervals of 30 kilometers before being reported by a game ranger. On 18 March Security Forces attacked and destroyed all of the six camps. During the ensuing month 60 insurgents were killed for the loss of six members of the Security Forces.

During July 1968 a third joint incursion took place. The 91 insurgents involved formed into three groups.

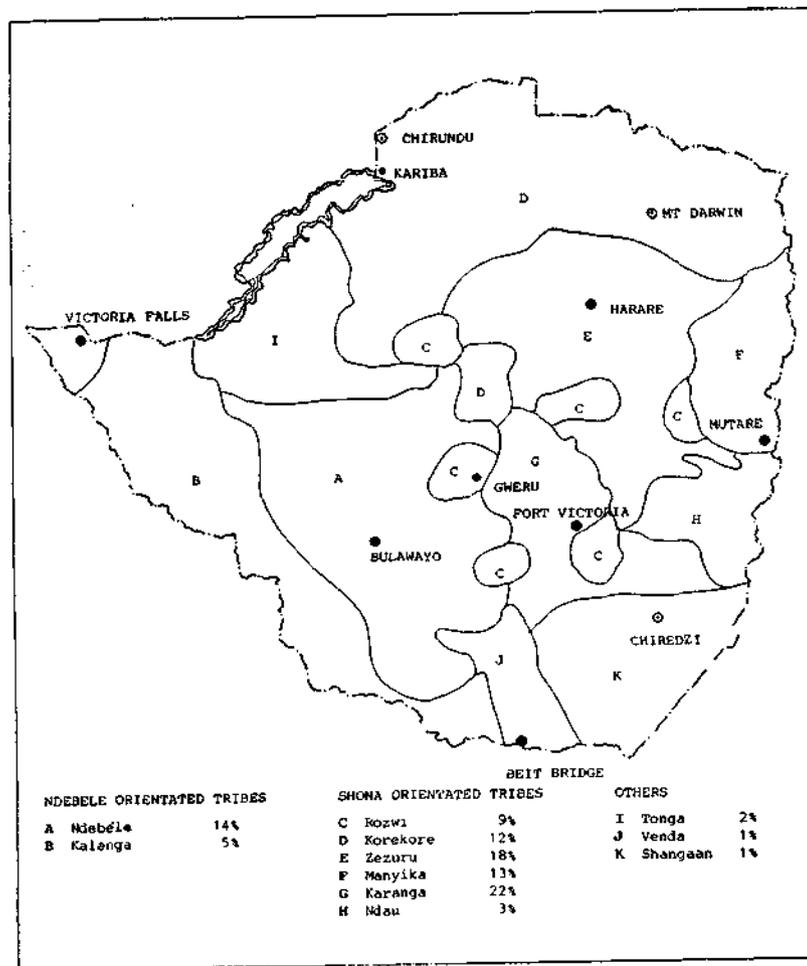


Figure 1.2 Major Tribal Groupings in Zimbabwe

About 80 insurgents were either killed or captured at that time and significantly, the first member of the South African Police deployed in Rhodesia also died then. Following the entrance of the South African African National Congress into Rhodesia, members of South African Police counter-insurgency units were detached to the Rhodesian Security Forces. In the ensuing years the Republic of South Africa involved itself increasingly with the security situation on the borders of its northern neighbour.

These first insurgent incursions into Rhodesia all originated from Zambia across the floor of the Zambezi River valley. This sparsely populated area was deemed the natural infiltration route as mobilisation of the masses did not yet constitute an important principle in insurgent strategy. Security Force counter-measures were thus largely track and kill type operations. Furthermore infiltrations took place in relatively large groups, which Security Forces located more easily.

After a peak during 1968, almost no incursions took place the following year. By the end of 1969 both ZANU and ZAPU had realized that their military strategy had serious shortcomings. These problems proved to have less impact on ZANLA than on ZPRA, for since the latter had borne the brunt of the insurgency effort up to that stage, the defeats suffered in the field resulted in a collapse of morale and the withdrawal of ZPRA from the conflict for a number of years. On the other hand, Rhodesian authorities were satisfied with the performance of their small Security Forces. This later had the effect of lulling Rhodesia into a false sense of security, as reflected in the figures for defence expenditure which remained relatively constant over this period. It also tended to strengthen the impression amongst Rhodesians that military action, to the exclusion of political and other non-military action, would be sufficient to destroy the insurgency threat, for, at this stage, the insurgent groups had not yet resorted to internal subversion as a major element in their strategy. This sense of complacency was further increased by the apparent economic success of UDI. The economic upswing led to an influx of white immigrants and increased optimism. This was in stark contrast to the defeatism and low morale among insurgent forces.

By 1970 ZANU, under the external leadership of Herbert Chitepo, emerged as leader of what was regarded as a liberation struggle. Although the ZANU president, Reverend Sithole, was

still imprisoned in Rhodesia, this did not have the divisive and eventual disruptive effect on ZANU that the concurrent imprisonment of ZAPU leader, Nkomo, had on his organisation. Within ZAPU a struggle had been waged between James Chikerema and Jason Moyo for external leadership. The infighting soon led to a split between ZAPU as a political wing and ZPRA as a military wing. In a document entitled 'Observations on our Struggle' Moyo summarized the situation as follows:

Since 1969 there has been a steady decline of serious (sic) nature in our Military Administration and Army. Military rules have been cast overboard. Relations between some members of the War Council and the Military Administration are strained. Accusations of a serious nature have been made. Military Administration and War Council meetings are no longer being held. Planning of strategy is seriously lacking. There is no co-ordination in the deployment of cadres in Zimbabwe. (4)

The clash between Moyo and Chikerema reached a climax in April 1970. From the total number of approximately four hundred ZPRA insurgents some decided to side with one of the two faction leaders while others either stayed in a small neutral group, or deserted altogether. Chikerema subsequently formed FROLIZI (Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe) in October 1971 with a splinter ZANU group led by Nathan Shamuyarira. The original objective behind the creation of FROLIZI was to reunite ZANU and ZAPU into a single nationalist movement but neither party was prepared to do so. In 1973 FROLIZI itself split and consequently played an insignificant part in the insurgency campaign.

Even at this early stage the basic differences in strategic concept between ZANLA and ZPRA were readily discernable.

By 1971, ZANU's emphasis was on the political education of the Zimbabwe workers and peasants. The purpose of this was to elicit support from the masses and to recruit more people for guerrilla warfare training. Another significant factor for this change in strategy was to widen the areas of combat. (5)

As regards ZPRA, the general strategy adopted relied principally on military action. As expressed by W.W. Nyangoni:

Since 1970 we have analysed the basis of the enemy strength and revised our strategy and tactics so as to be able to strike where it hurts most. (6)

and further

The strategy pursued by the liberation forces of ZAPU was that of engaging the enemy largely with series of landmines accompanied by limited and calculated armed attacks. (7)

From 1970 onwards ZANLA placed a higher premium on politicizing the population than ZPRA. Rhodesian intelligence reports indicated that it was only as from 1978 that ZPRA turned to the politicization of the local population to the same degree that ZANLA had been doing. Probably with Russian backing and instruction ZPRA forces also tended to be more conventionally orientated and trained than those of ZANLA. The latter took its doctrine from China that the main object of such a protracted war is to gain the support of the local population.

Regarding the politicization of the Rhodesian black population in general, the single most significant event was the formation of the African National Council on 16 October 1971, led by Bishop Abel Muzurewa. In December of the following year the African National Council succeeded in helping to persuade the Pearce Commission to report adversely on the acceptability of the Anglo-Rhodesian proposals for a settlement. Possibly for the first time, the rural and urban black population of Rhodesia had been made politically aware *en masse*. In its report, the Pearce Commission *inter alia* noted:

Mistrust of the intentions and motives of the Government transcended all other considerations. Apprehension for the future stemmed from resentment of what they felt to be the humiliations of the past and at the limitations on policies on land, education, and personal advancement. One summed it up in saying, 'We do not reject the Proposals, we reject the Government'. (8)

#### 1.2 The Establishment of a Strategic Base Area in the North-East

ZANLA chose the Tete province in Mozambique

as approach route to Rhodesia more by force of circumstance than by conscious analysis. Both ZANLA and ZPRA were still based in Zambia, and were forced to operate from that country as Mozambique was a Portuguese colony at the time. Yet the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, FRELIMO, who had been fighting against the Portuguese for a number of years, had been gaining ground steadily in the Tete province and initially offered ZPRA the use of this front as an alternative entry route into Rhodesia. Not least as a result of the continual small scale Rhodesian operations in support of the Portuguese forces, FRELIMO had become convinced of the necessity to 'liberate' Rhodesia as well, if the liberation of Mozambique was to be effected. Low morale and internal strife caused ZPRA to show little interest in this route. Furthermore it would take ZPRA, a movement under Matabele control into an area of the country under Shona control. The use of the route was thus offered to ZANLA, who eagerly grasped this opportunity. (9)

A number of demographic, historic and geographical factors favoured the North-eastern border of Rhodesia for insurgency. The rugged Mavuradonha mountains presented numerous obstacles to Security Forces in locating and eliminating known insurgent groups, while dense vegetation hindered observation, especially during the summer rainy season (November to March). Owing to its vast expanse and relatively low economic value, the area had furthermore suffered decades of administrative neglect. The traditional tribal way of life had been allowed to continue, with little active interference from Harare. The Shona tribe in the area, the Korekore, also spilt across the border into the Tete province of Mozambique, thus easing the infiltration of insurgents from that country into the North-east. A final factor was the lack of a physical impediment comparable to the Zambezi river on the common national border. With active FRELIMO cooperation ZANLA was presented with an excellent opportunity. (10)

As indicated above, ZANLA strategy had shifted its emphasis markedly since the sixties. In accordance with the teaching of Mao Zedong greater attention was now given to the politicization and mobilization of the local population before mounting any attacks on Rhodesian Security Forces or white farms. Yet at this early stage ZANLA had, in total, only about 300 trained insurgents. Of these, 60 men mounted the infiltrations in the north-east.

Noel Mukona, the head of ZANLA from 1969 to 1973 could later claim with little hyperbole:

In 1969 it was decided to operate silently ... We worked underground, training, stocking equipment and regrouping inside the country. Special Branch could not find out what was going on and that we were preparing for a continuation of the struggle. Much contact was maintained with the local population to review the terrain ... In July 1972 ZANU called together all its forces and met in the bush in Mozambique and reviewed the situation. We were satisfied that the preparations were enough and that enough arms and food had been stashed in the bush and that we could restart the onslaught. (11)

In the early hours of 21 December 1972, ZANLA insurgents attacked the white homestead of Marc de Borchgrave in the Centenary district, marking the resurgence of the insurgent onslaught, indeed of a new campaign. Most Rhodesians, however, accepted the news philosophically. Official concern over the deteriorating situation in the area had been expressed some weeks earlier by Prime Minister Ian Smith when he stated on the radio that the security situation was

... far more serious than it appears on the surface, and if the man in the street could have access to the security information which I and my colleagues in government have, then I think he would be a lot more worried than he is today. (12)

Yet the information available to the government at this stage was somewhat incomplete. All of the four traditional intelligence sources, Army, uniformed Police, Special Branch and the Department of Internal Affairs (subsequently renamed Home Affairs) had limited representation in the area, and in the case of the Army had maintained little more than a token presence.

At a later stage Prime Minister Smith explained how the insurgents were able to remain undetected for such a period of time:

... they were able to move backwards and forwards across the border from their so-called base camps and were thereby able to avoid detection for long enough to enable them to subvert pockets of local tribesmen. Thereafter their task was made easy through shelter, food

and assistance they received from the locals. This situation has complicated the position as far as our security forces are concerned. (13)

Not only had ZANLA succeeded in establishing a relatively secure base area inside Rhodesia, but had also succeeded in obtaining the full co-operation and support of the black rural population within the area. This proved a crucial factor in their later success and in the way the Rhodesian government attempted to eradicate the threat.

### 1.3 Operation Hurricane

Before the formation of the operational area in the North-east that was to become known as Operation Hurricane, Rhodesian Security Force authorities had become increasingly anxious about the security situation in the neighbouring province of Tete in Mozambique. Although the Security Forces was largely unaware of the extent of insurgent activities inside Rhodesia itself, they had, since early 1972, considerably stepped up co-operation with the Portuguese forces who were then still in control of Mozambique. The two elite Rhodesian Army units, C Squadron of the Special Air Service and the 1st Battalion of the Rhodesian Light Infantry, were operating in Tete itself on an almost continuous basis. Yet when insurgent operations inside Rhodesia resumed in late 1972, Army presence in an area of more than 1 000 square kilometers was only at company strength.

The extent of the insurgent penetration at the turn of 1972 was widespread, ranging from Sipolilo, west of Centenary, across to Mutoko in the east, and southwards to the Chiweshe and Madziwa Tribal Trust Lands. In contrast to the Security Force operations of the sixties, the war for Rhodesia had now entered a new phase. Previously members of the local population had willingly come forward to supply information on the presence and activities of insurgents, but within a matter of weeks all intelligence sources in the North-east dried up. Security Force morale plummeted as they failed to meet the enemy face to face. After the war Lieutenant-Colonel Reid-Daly wrote

For the first time the Rhodesian Security Forces were faced with a seemingly insoluble problem ... after carrying out their attacks the terrorists had not gone to ground in bush-camps in uninhabited areas where they could

eventually be tracked down ... neither had they gone to ground in inhabited areas where information from the local population to the Police or Special Branch had indicated their whereabouts. This time there was nothing. No tracks ... no information. (14)

A Joint Operation Centre (JOC), code-named Hurricane, (see Figure 1.3) was formed at Army brigade level of command to counter the internal threat that had developed. JOC Hurricane was initially situated at Centenary, was then moved to Bindura and eventually to Harare as its area of responsibility increased. It constituted the formalization of a committee system approach that had already been used to counter the insurgency threats of the sixties.

With the limited scope of active operations during 1973-74, JOC Hurricane benefitted from almost all the available forces of the Army, Air Force and British South Africa Police. The latter alone could contribute some 16 companies to the counter-insurgency effort. This enabled the Army, nominally in control of Hurricane, to formulate a strategy based on two fundamental requirements; first, the necessity of stemming the flow of insurgents from Mozambique and second, that of population control. The vital elements of JOC Hurricane strategy as developed by 1974 were succinctly summarized by the then brigade major as follows:

Large external operations to turn off the tap; a cordon sanitaire with warning devices, patrolled and backed by a 20 km wide no-go area; population control consisting of Protected Villages, food control, curfews and (eventually) martial law, and massive psychological action. (15)

The object was to channel insurgents into designated areas from which the local population had been removed. Here the Security Forces could easily track and eliminate the insurgents before they reached populated areas. In areas adjoining these depopulated or 'no-go' areas, movement of the local population was to be restricted by placing them in Protected and Consolidated Villages. Strict curfews were to be enforced within these areas with the aim of cutting the link between the local population and the insurgents. Largely due to the limited availability of manpower and other resources, and the increasing demands made upon them, the strategy described

was not employed in full.

In an attempt to reassert control over rural areas, four new districts were proclaimed in the north-eastern and eastern highlands, at Centenary, Rushinga, Mudzi and Mutasa. In an attempt to persuade Zambia to desist from aiding both ZANLA and ZPRA, Rhodesia closed its border at Chirundu, Kariba, and Victoria Falls to all Zambian traffic on 9 January 1973. Although Zambian copper exports were exempted from this embargo shortly afterwards, President Kaunda refused to use any of these routes. Officially the border remained closed until 1978, when Rhodesian external raids into Zambia forced President Kaunda to reopen his southern export routes.

When the campaign began in 1973 it seemed that the Rhodesian government was not yet convinced of the political character of the threat facing it. Heedless of the possible consequences of such action, government then empowered Provincial Commissioners on 19 January 1973 to impose collective punishment on tribal communities assisting the insurgent forces in accordance with the Emergency Powers (Collective Fines) Regulations. The most extreme case of collective punishment documented was the resettlement of nearly 200 members of the local population from Madziwa Tribal Trust land in the Beit bridge area in 1974 "... as punishment for assisting terrorists"<sup>(16)</sup> The extent to which collective punishment was to be enforced is apparent from the following extraction from a poster distributed in Marante Tribal Trust Land and Mukumi African Purchase Area during January 1978:

as from dawn on the 20th January 1978 the following restrictions will be posed upon all of you and your TTL (Tribal Trust Land) and Purchase Land

1. Human curfew from last light to 12 o'clock daily
2. Cattle, yoked oxen, goats and sheep curfew from last light to 12 o'clock daily
3. No vehicles, including bicycles and buses to run either (in) the TTL or the APL (African Purchase Land)
4. No person will either go on or near any high ground or they will be shot
5. All dogs to be tied up 24 hours each day or they will be shot
6. Cattle, sheep and goats, after 12 o'clock, are only to be herded by adults
7. No juveniles (to the age of 16 years) will

be allowed out of the kraal area at any time either day or night, or they will be shot

8. No schools will be open
9. All stores and grinding mills will be closed. (17)

Specifically during the period up to 1976 collective punishment measures such as those quoted above could only have had serious negative effects on the attitude of the black rural masses for at this stage the majority of the local population were not necessarily supporters of either ZANU or ZAPU.

In execution of the strategy devised for Operation Hurricane, the first 'no-go' area was proclaimed along the Mozambique border on 17 May 1973. In one way or another 'no-go' areas were extended along vast stretches of Rhodesian border in an attempt to establish depopulated 'free-fire' zones for Security Force operations. Government attitude to the infringement of curfews and 'no-go' areas was well summarised by P.K. van der Byl, Rhodesian Minister of Information on 31 July 1975 in Parliament when he stated that "... as far as I am concerned the more curfew breakers that are shot the better".<sup>(18)</sup> On 21 June the Deputy Minister of Law and Order, Mr Wickus de Kock, told Parliament that there were indications that the removal of tribesmen from parts of the north-eastern border to form a cordons sanitaires was beginning to have the desired effect. The use of the name cordons sanitaires was however misleading and should not be confused with attempts to establish a proper cordons sanitaires some months later (see Chapter 4).

In July 1973 the first major abduction of schoolchildren by insurgents occurred. St Albert's Mission, on the Zambezi Valley escarpment, was entered by a group which abducted 292 pupils and members of staff, who were then forced to march into the Zambezi Valley and north towards Mozambique. Security Forces intercepted the column and rescued all but eight of the abductees. Similar abductions were repeated in years to come and Security Forces were increasingly unable to prevent these actions.

At the start of the summer rainy season towards the close of 1973, the insurgent forces intensified their efforts. In an attempt to cut all links with the insurgents in subverted areas, Deputy Minister de Kock announced the initiation of the Protected Village programme. Four villages were in various stages of completion as part of a pilot scheme, It was estimated that more than 8 000 blacks would be resettled

in the Zambezi Valley by the end of December. Thus started one of the essential elements of Rhodesian military strategy which eventually led to the formation of an independent arm of the Security Forces, the Guard Force, to man and protect these villages. It placed a heavy strain on the limited resources available to the war effort, but some 750 000 rural blacks were eventually resettled in over 200 Protected Villages. Geographically, the distribution of these villages gave a very clear impression of the spread of insurgency, but even when the scheme had reached its most extended phase, the vast majority of Protected Villages were still found in the North-east where ZANLA had set up its original base area. In general the strategy was not consistently executed and, as a result, success varied. Eventually the Security Force punitive approach to the scheme, limited manpower and finance and bad execution was to lead to the failure of Protected Villages in general. (This strategy is evaluated in Chapter 3.)

But by the close of 1973 the number of insurgents in Hurricane was estimated at a mere 145 men. Insurgent casualties for the year stood at 179 while 44 members of the Security Forces and 12 white civilians had lost their lives. All in all the Rhodesian Security Forces had barely succeeded in holding their own. As a result Government announced during December that the period of national service would be extended from that of nine months instituted in 1966 to one year. Prior to 1966 national service had consisted of a short 4½ months.

#### 1.4 1974: Security Force Reaction

During 1974 the Rhodesian authorities made a concerted effort to restore law and order. The Minister of Defence announced in February:

The Government is embarking on a call-up programme in which the first phase will be to double the national service intake. A second battalion of the Rhodesian African Rifles will be raised to augment the Army ... These arrangements by the Ministry of Defence, together with other actions are designed to eliminate the terrorists in the shortest possible time. (19)

Measures introduced included extending the powers of protecting authorities in the north-eastern area.

These authorities had previously consisted of commissioned police officers, but legislation was extended to include certain District Commissioners from the Department of Internal Affairs. Protecting authorities could now order residents to do specified public security work, which included the building or maintenance of bridges, roads, fences, and dams. Detention without trial was extended to sixty days. A government statement during April set out a scale of fixed rewards ranging from Rh\$ 300 to Rh\$ 5 000 for information. This included information leading to the death or capture of a senior insurgent leader or to the recovery of insurgent weaponry.

Already, at this early stage of the conflict, logistics played a major role in the insurgents' strategy. All weaponry had to be carried in from either Mozambique or Zambia. While food was readily obtainable from the local population, the insurgent forces were not able to capture and thereby arm and resupply themselves with weaponry from the Security Forces. In the case of ZANLA, which was supplied by the People's Republic of China, this problem was further complicated by the erratic and limited supply of arms. ZPRA, in contrast, tended to be better and more heavily armed by the USSR. Awareness of the ZANLA problems influenced Army and Air Force planning for external operations in the years to come.

Operations were almost exclusively confined to the North-east at this stage. During March 1974, however, it was becoming clear that the ZPRA reopening of the Zambian front in the North-west was imminent. This was officially confirmed on 6 October in a government statement which lodged a formal complaint with Zambia over the use of its territory by insurgents.

On 25 April 1974, the armed forces of Portugal staged a successful coup d'état and overthrew President Ceatano. General Antonio de Spínola became the new President. On 27 July he recognised the right of Portugal's overseas provinces of Mozambique, Angola and Portuguese Guinea to independence. June 1975, was set as date for the transfer of power in Mozambique to FRELIMO. A month after the coup the revolutionary junta in Lisbon asked Harare to halt all cross-border operations into Mozambique. Rhodesia did not immediately feel the military impact, for it was some months before FRELIMO leader, Samora Machel, moved south to Maputo then still known as Lourenço Marques, and assumed the presidency. Once in power, however, his commitment to the 'liberation' of Rhodesia was clear. As a result

construction of the Rutenga-Beit bridge rail link to South Africa was hastily begun: during the years to follow it developed into a Rhodesian life-line and important insurgent target. The collapse of Portuguese colonial control in Mozambique also had a distinct effect on politically conscious black Rhodesians.

In 1974, particularly following the collapse of Portuguese colonialism, and the impending independence of neighbouring Mozambique, sent (sic) an euphoric wave of high revolutionary hopes among the masses who now voluntarily sought and followed the ZANU-ZANLA 'freedom trail' into the training camps. (20)

A team of Security Force pseudo insurgents, when posing as members of ZANLA were '... shocked and disillusioned at the wild sometimes ecstatic, receptions that ZANLA was getting (amongst the local population)' (21)

Not only did the independence of Mozambique have a profound effect on the war in Rhodesia, but also on the independence of Angola, which was prepared to play a large role in the training of ZPRA forces.

During May 1974, construction began on the first border minefield obstacle. Known as the Cordon Sanitaire it was completed in April 1976 and stretched from the Musengedzi to the Mazoe river. As the name implies, it was planned to establish an impassable obstacle to prevent all cross-border movement in the areas in which it was erected. Despite the fact that this soon proved impractical, however, by 1978 border obstacles of various descriptions had been constructed along virtually the entire eastern border with Mozambique, as was the section of Rhodesian border with Zambia from Victoria Falls eastward to Milibezi. While all the initial efforts entailed the use of an electronic alarm system and a reaction force, these were phased out. Eventually the Cordon Sanitaire merely became a border minefield obstacle. Owing to restrictions in manpower and finance, Security Forces were unable to cover it by observation or fire, patrol or even maintain it. In planning and execution these border minefield obstacles bore clearest witness to a lack of a coherent national strategy to counter the insurgency, as discussed in Chapter 5.

The pressures of the war were now increasingly exerted upon white farmers in the affected areas.

During June a scheme was announced which included grants of up to Rh\$ 3 000 for establishing protected compounds for labourers. The compounds were to have floodlighting and wire fences. It was envisaged that the Department of Internal Affairs would provide armed guards at a later stage, yet manpower limitations precluded any such plans.

In the latter half of 1974 the first two major operations to move the total black population of a Tribal Trust Land into Protected Villages took place. On 25 July Operation Overload was announced by Army Headquarters and consisted of moving the 46 960 people of Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land simultaneously within 6 weeks into 21 Protected Villages. Although this objective was achieved, it totally failed to provide the local population with improved living conditions. Operation Overload Two followed in Madziwa Tribal Trust Land in August/September/October and proved to be a substantial improvement. Both Chiweshe and Madziwa Tribal Trust Lands were seen as key areas in halting the insurgent advance on Harare. Contrary to established principles it was decided to relocate the most subverted areas first, instead of consolidating government controlled areas as a secure base. As documented in Chapter 4 the Army viewed the Protected and Consolidated villages purely as population control measures. Where members of the local population were concentrated in a restricted area, the Security Forces could move freely in the vast depopulated areas. This approach negated any advantages achieved by the whole scheme in the long run, although both Operations Overload One and Two temporarily broke contact between local population and insurgent forces in the areas concerned. This break enabled Security Forces to regain the initiative in these heavily infiltrated areas.

Government estimates of defence expenditure tabled in Parliament on 24 August for the financial year 1974/75, provided for greatly increased spending in all the related ministries for the period ending 30 June 1975. The defence vote was increased by Rh\$ 6,7 mil to a total of Rh\$ 46,176 mil.

Intelligence estimates released towards the end of 1974 put the number of insurgents inside Rhodesia at between three and four hundred. Nevertheless, despite the opening of the Zambian Front, Security Force morale was high and prospects seemed better than a mere twelve months previously. Since December 1972, 468 insurgents had been killed and only 48 members of the Security Forces lost - a ratio of nearly 10 to 1. This high kill ratio was also the