

Zimbabwe: A Military Assessment

Interagency Intelligence Memorandum

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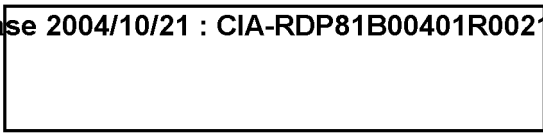

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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM
ZIMBABWE: A MILITARY ASSESSMENT

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NOTE

This paper focuses primarily on the capabilities of the Zimbabwe guerrillas and the Rhodesian security forces to exert military power in the current conflict. We have defined capabilities, however, in a broad sense and sought to take into account some of the major political and economic factors that affect the fighting elements on both sides.

This memorandum is the product of an informal interagency working group, chaired by CIA, under the auspices of the Assistant National Intelligence Officer for Africa. The memorandum has been coordinated at the working level.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- There is no immediate prospect for a change in the military balance between the Rhodesian and guerrilla forces that would have a critical impact on the current political situation.
 - However, over a longer term, say six months, the Patriotic Front and the Frontline States may feel compelled to find a way to break the military stalemate—particularly if the internal settlement appears to be holding.
 - Among the measures they would consider would be to ask for more Soviet military supplies and direct Cuban assistance to defend their staging facilities and border camps inside Mozambique and Zambia.
 - An effective air and ground defensive umbrella around these guerrilla camps would inhibit Rhodesian offensive capabilities and make cross-border raids into Mozambique and Zambia more costly for Salisbury. Further, improved security around the border camps would enable the guerrillas better to organize and execute their infiltration effort into Rhodesia.
 - Such a Cuban and Soviet defensive role in support of the guerrillas and the Frontline States would certainly signal an escalation in the conflict and would likely prompt South Africa to consider increasing, in some similar measure, the level of its support to Rhodesia.
- The two major black nationalist groups struggling for control of Rhodesia continue to exhibit serious internal as well as military weaknesses that limit their overall effectiveness. Despite this, the guerrillas have been able to maintain pressure on the Salisbury government. Thus far, the government has been at least able to cope with the insurgency in a military sense, but the high costs of the war—and the virtual certainty that they will continue to grow—mean that a solution to the conflict is becoming more and more pressing for the government.
- Serious tribal and ideological divisions have surfaced within both the political and the military wing of the Zimbabwe African People's

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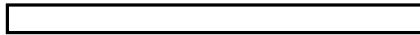
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Union (ZAPU). These frictions will continue to fester and will likely serve as a steady drain on ZAPU's morale and military capability.

- ZIPRA, the military arm of ZAPU, has grown rapidly in the last year and, with Soviet arms and Cuban assistance, is attempting to form a conventional as well as a guerrilla army. ZIPRA guerrilla infiltration will continue and can possibly be expected to increase over the near term, but it will be quite some time before ZIPRA is able to carry out conventional operations effectively and to sustain them.
- ZIPRA has scored no significant military gains in Rhodesia and, in fact, has fielded far fewer guerrillas than the ZANU organization. Nevertheless, the continued presence of its large Cuban/Soviet-supported force on the Zambian side of the border remains a credible and psychological threat to Rhodesia.
- The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) also continues to suffer from factional problems, with the real locus of power apparently in the hands of the military commanders.
 - ZANLA, the military arm of ZANU, is far more active than ZIPRA and continues to bear the brunt of guerrilla operations. ZANLA's recruitment successes have not kept pace with ZIPRA over the past year, nor is ZANLA receiving the same quantity of foreign equipment.
 - ZANLA does not have the capability of mounting and sustaining a major, coordinated military effort against Rhodesia in the near term. Ethnic and personal frictions, equipment and food shortages, and a continuing inability to defend the camps in Mozambique have adversely affected morale as well as ZANLA's overall military effectiveness.
- The Rhodesian security forces are trained and equipped primarily for counterinsurgency and have been generally effective in countering the guerrillas within Rhodesia, as well as in the Mozambique and Zambian border areas. However, they are still finding it increasingly difficult to contain the spread of guerrilla operations.
 - Salisbury's military effort is a major cause of the current economic recession in Rhodesia, along with the slump in international demand for exports and an increased adherence to UN sanctions. The dim prospect of immediate recovery not only has dampened white morale, but also has increased pressure on Smith to seek an end to the fighting and obtain an internal settlement.

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—The Salisbury agreement has produced some change in the context within which military operations are conducted. Military operations henceforth will presumably take some account of the wishes as well as political needs of Salisbury's black leaders, but there is danger that, if this involves a relaxation in the counterinsurgency effort, it will produce a more favorable operational environment for the guerrillas.

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