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Namibia: Territorial Army Coming of Age

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An Intelligence Assessment

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An Intelligence Assessment

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This paper was prepared by  Office
of African and Latin American Analysis, and 
 Office of Imagery Analysis. It was
coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. 

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA, 
 or the Chief, Third World Forces
Division, OIA, 

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**Namibia: Territorial Army
Coming of Age**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 15 March 1985
was used in this report.*

Over the past decade, South Africa has groomed an increasingly effective territorial army, the South West African Territory Force (SWATF), to take over responsibility for Pretoria's counterinsurgency campaign in Namibia. At present rates of growth, we believe this Namibian force could take over all ground force operations against the insurgents in two to three years. While remaining dependent on South African support, the SWATF could by then rival or surpass the ground combat forces of most black African states.

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Gradually shifting the burden of the fighting to Namibian troops and several units of mercenaries has spared South African casualties, reduced costs, and defused opposition to the war at home.

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Pretoria wants these territorial troops to police the transition to independence in Namibia, rather than entrust the task to a UN force they believe would favor the insurgents. Following independence, Pretoria hopes the territorial units will become the core of a Namibian national army, thus ensuring continued South African influence with the regime.

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SWATF has approximately 11,000 troops, including about 8,000 Namibians and 3,000 South Africans. Although black volunteers fill the ranks, most officers, sergeants, and technicians are whites seconded from the South African Army. The SWATF is organized primarily as a light infantry force for counter guerrilla operations against the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). Most combat units are in northern Namibia, where they block SWAPO's path from guerrilla bases in southern Angola to targets among the white-owned settlements and property in central Namibia. Operationally, SWATF supplements and takes its lead from the South African Defense Force contingent in Namibia, which numbers about 7,000 troops. SWATF also depends upon South Africa for logistic, air, and naval support.

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In preparing SWATF for its new role, South Africa has been molding an effective fighting unit. Whereas Namibians comprised about 20 percent of all government troops in northern Namibia in 1980, they make up 61 percent today, according to senior officials in Windhoek. In 1984 alone, SWATF grew by 3,000 men, according to the commander, and Windhoek expanded the pool of available military manpower in October when it raised the age limit for compulsory military service to 54 and began to register males of all races.

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to equip SWATF with heavy equipment, and [redacted] some units now have artillery and armored vehicles. South Africa began to reorganize its own border defenses near southern Namibia and Botswana last year, probably in preparation for an eventual troop withdrawal from the territory. [redacted]

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Pretoria could bolster SWATF quickly by transferring to it most of the individually seconded South Africans and the mercenary units in Namibia. South Africa offers bonuses to those officers and technicians who agree to remain with SWATF permanently, and current plans call for most seconded officers to remain with SWATF for some time following a withdrawal from Namibia of South African units, [redacted]

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[redacted] South African officials are considering a transfer of the South African Security Police's "Koevoet" force and the South African Army's 32nd "Buffalo" Battalion, [redacted] These two units comprise about 3,000 troops, most of whom are former Angolans, Rhodesians, ex-SWAPO guerrillas, and Namibians. [redacted]

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The development and increasing capabilities of SWATF present Western negotiators with a problem that probably was not envisioned in 1978 when the UN plan for Namibian independence was drafted. That plan calls for a 7,500-man UN force to disband all territorial forces while confining to bases in Namibia up to 8,000 SWAPO guerrillas and 1,500 South African troops. The UN force appears inadequate for these tasks, and we believe Pretoria has no intention of allowing SWATF to be disbanded. [redacted]

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Incorporating SWATF into a Namibian national army would be a difficult undertaking that would require modifying the UN plan, but, if it could be arranged, it would improve prospects for postindependence stability. Such an integration of forces would avoid dispersing thousands of ex-combatants disgruntled over their lost pay and poor prospects for reemployment. The integration process would have to avoid combining units of hostile ethnic and regional backgrounds, however, to lessen the risk of factious violence. [redacted]

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In our view, SWATF's growing maturity enhances South Africa's political flexibility in Namibia. Pretoria could rely on SWATF, with South African air and logistic support, to defend a puppet regime in Windhoek, thus enabling a South African withdrawal without allowing SWAPO to take over. Alternatively, it could use the force as a proxy to continue its counterinsurgency campaign and postpone Namibian independence indefinitely. If Pretoria believed that including SWATF in a national army would guarantee leverage over any government that came to power in Windhoek, such an integration of forces might encourage South African acceptance of independence for Namibia. [redacted]

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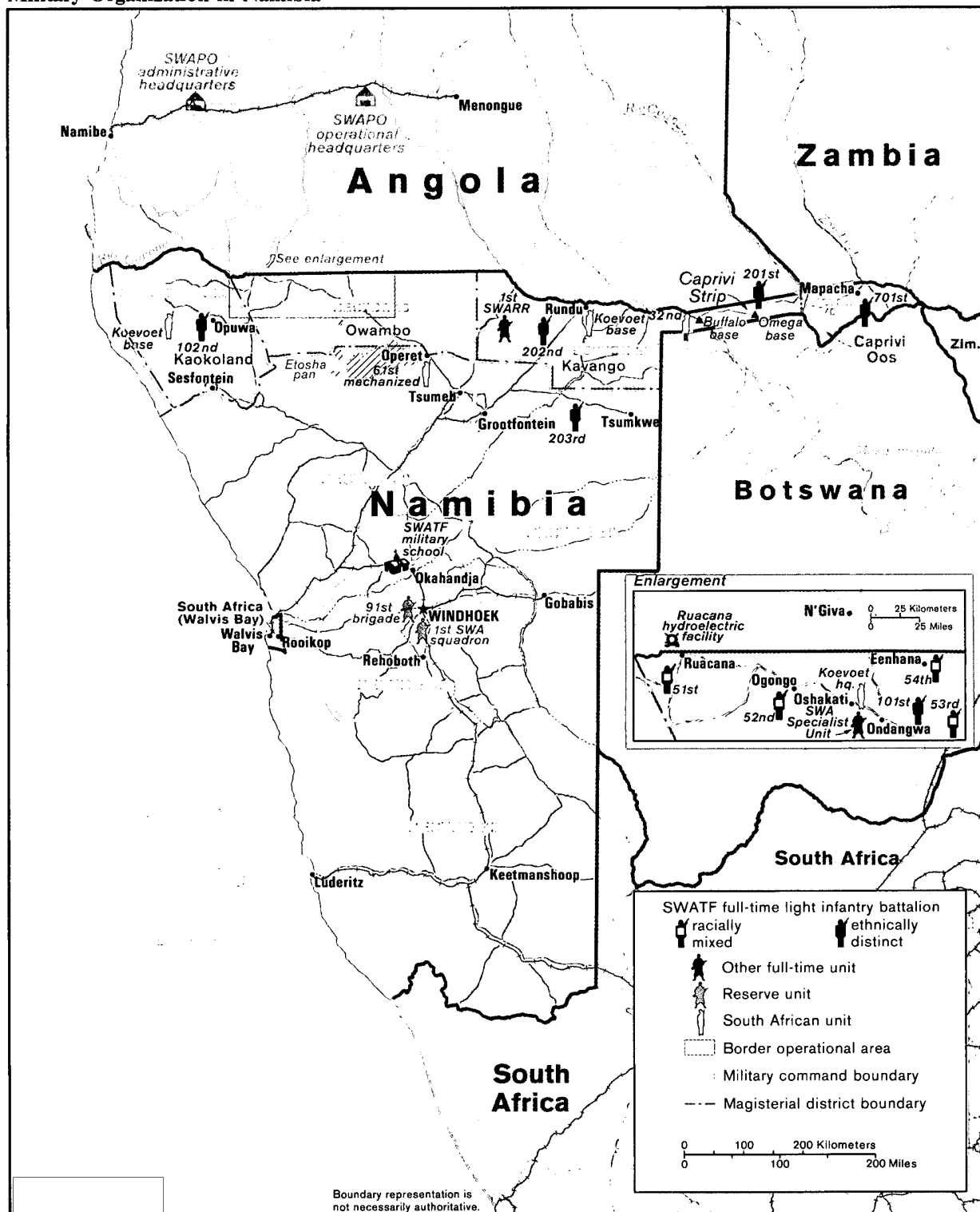
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Figure 1
Military Organization in Namibia



Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

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**Namibia: Territorial Army
Coming of Age**



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Introduction

Since about 1974, South Africa has been training and equipping a territorial army in Namibia. Gradually shifting the burden of the fighting to these territorial troops, as well as to elite units of ex-Rhodesian and Angolan mercenaries, has spared South African casualties, reduced costs, and defused antiwar sentiment at home. This paper describes and assesses that army, the South West African Territory Force (SWATF), along with the Namibian police and two mercenary units that South Africa may transfer to Windhoek's control. It discusses Pretoria's motives and progress in grooming the Namibian forces and the implications for US policymakers seeking to implement the UN independence plan.



SWATF's full-time combat force includes 10 light infantry battalions trained and equipped for counter-insurgency, according to embassy reporting. Six of the battalions are ethnically distinct, that is, each is recruited from a different black tribe, and averages 850 soldiers. The other four battalions are ethnically mixed and contain about 700 troops each. A multiracial brigade of reservists is available in Windhoek as a territorial reserve. This combined-arms brigade already has about 1,500 troops, and its structure indicates it eventually will include several thousand.

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According to US officials, all government forces in Namibia are commanded by Maj. Gen. George Meiring, a career South African Army officer.¹ As the commander of SWATF, he is required to clear military operations with Administrator General Willem van Niekerk, who reports to the president of South Africa. As the commander of the South African Army contingent in Namibia, however, Meiring takes orders directly from the head of the South African Army in Pretoria, Lieutenant General Geldenhuys.

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The South West African Territory Force

SWATF headquarters in Windhoek ordered all units in February 1985 to plan for a withdrawal of South African forces by January 1987 and for SWATF to take over the defense of Namibia at that time,

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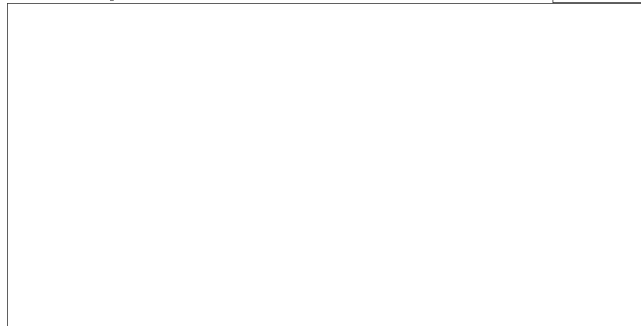
The Embassy believes Pretoria accelerated preparations last year, and that substantial progress in enlarging the force has been made. In 1980 the SWATF Commander stated publicly that Namibians constituted only 20 percent of the government troops in northern Namibia; in February 1985, the territorial Administrator General announced that they totaled 61 percent.

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Military command is centralized in Windhoek.

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Strength and Organization

SWATF has about 11,000 troops, including approximately 3,000 South Africans individually seconded as officers and technicians, or members of South African Army units attached to SWATF on a rotational basis, according to senior officers in Windhoek. A separate contingent of about 7,000 soldiers from the South African Defense Force (SADF) reinforces SWATF in Namibia, and additional forces can arrive from the Republic on short notice.



¹ In South Africa, the Air Force, Navy, and Medical Corps are separate services not under the Army's authority. Although their units in Namibia—along with those of the South African Security Police—report directly to the appropriate service headquarters in Pretoria, they also cooperate closely with the Army commander in Windhoek.

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Namibian Role in the War

Pretoria first used black territorial troops in Namibia about 1974 when it [] began to organize several ethnically distinct battalions, each in a different tribal homeland, to replace white South African units near the Angolan and Zambian borders. It hoped that the locally recruited troops would gain civilian cooperation in stemming guerrilla infiltration from the neighboring states, []

[] Infiltration soon increased, however, when Portugal withdrew from Angola in 1975, and the new regime in Luanda permitted SWAPO to set up military bases close to the Namibian frontier.

As a consequence of the stepped-up infiltration, plans for a few wholly black battalions evolved into a design for a 30,000-man, multiracial Namibian army, []

Major General Geldenhuys, who took command of all government forces in Namibia in 1977, began implementing the ambitious scheme. In the north, he strengthened the existing territorial battalions and created new multiethnic units made up of Namibians of different tribes along with white and black troops from South Africa. In central Namibia, he recruited whites, coloreds, and blacks for part-time service in a territorial reserve. Members of all ethnic groups also were enlisted into the expanding police and militia forces. []

With great fanfare, South Africa consolidated the Namibian units in August 1980 to form the South West African Territory Force (SWATF). In doing so,

67 military units were transferred from the South African Army to SWATF. These included the black battalions, the multiracial reserve, local militia units, and various headquarters and support elements, according to the government gazette. Although the force was placed under the nominal authority of the Administrator General in Namibia, a South African general exercises operational control of all Namibian troops, and SWATF remains part of the South African Defense Force until independence.

Pretoria has future roles in mind for the Namibian soldiers. Since 1977, South African officials have urged allowing them—rather than a UN force—to monitor the transition to independence. A senior military officer in Windhoek said last October that the plan to use UN troops for the purpose remains “unacceptable.” If SWATF were incorporated into a Namibian national army at independence, Pretoria might use the army to defend a client regime. Alternatively, the loyalist troops could be a counterweight to the guerrillas if SWAPO were to join in a coalition government. Rather than allow SWAPO to come under the control of a SWAPO-dominated government, however, the force would be stripped of its equipment and abandoned, []

[] since 1980 Namibia has been divided for military purposes into eight area commands—seven sectors and one separate battalion zone. Each command is a tactical headquarters that controls counterinsurgency operations by all SWATF and South African Army units within its area. The four northern commands closely approximate the administrative boundaries of tribal homelands, and together they make up the Border Operational Area (BOA). Within the BOA, each sector headquarters also coordinates the activities of

the police and usually has a South African Air Force element attached for support.² []

The SWATF Commander told US officials in December 1984 that nearly two-thirds of all government forces in Namibia, including all SWATF full-time

² US officials visited the headquarters of Sector 10 in the BOA in early 1984 and reported it included a military command post and separate air operations center in adjacent concrete bunkers. Police headquarters and army centers for interrogations and communications were nearby. []

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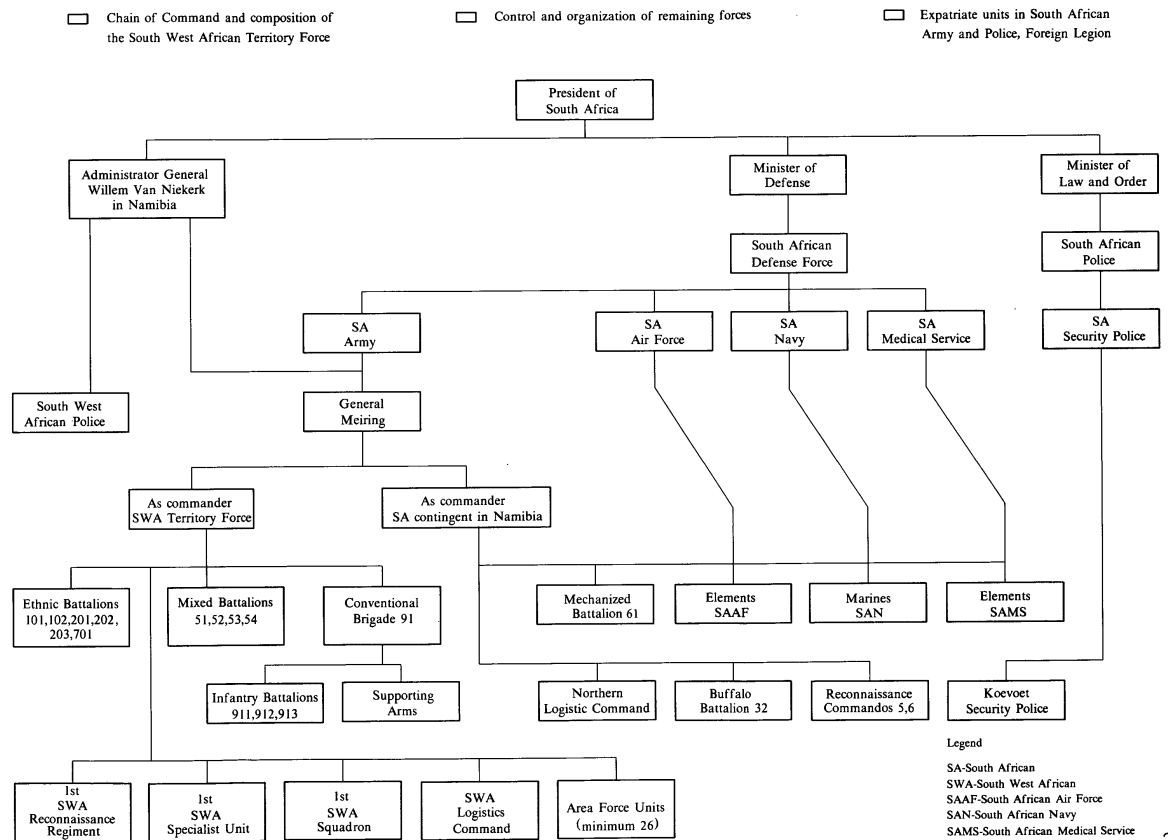
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Figure 2 Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2010/10/14 : CIA-RDP86T00589R000200150006-4
 Government Forces in Namibia



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units—that is, standing units in contrast to reserve forces—were assigned to the BOA. Most combat units are in Sectors 10 (Owambo), 20 (Kavango), and 70 (Caprivi Oos). There are relatively few government forces in sparsely populated Kaokoland because the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) historically has not been active there.

however, that South Africa is building a new base in northern Kaokoland to counter a SWAPO buildup across the border. Kaokoland was separated from Sector 10 in 1981 and designated the 102nd Battalion area, but it may now be known as Sector 80, according to attache reporting.

Most SWATF reserve and support units are located south of the BOA. Pretoria probably intends for SWATF's 91st Brigade at Windhoek in Sector 40 to become the primary reaction force in the event of a large-scale attack on Namibia. The requirement for reliable and quick response would explain why the 91st is the only SWATF unit directly subordinate to General Meiring's headquarters, rather than to a sector command. Until the brigade's recruitment, training, and equipping are completed, however, South Africa's powerful 61st Mechanized Battalion Group at Operet in Sector 30 will remain the territory's primary reserve. Most logistic facilities are in Sector 50, and SWATF forces in Sectors 30 and 60 are limited to only a few militia units.

Operations

SWATF operations are focused on preventing infiltration into Namibia by insurgents based in Angola. Sector 10, Owambo, is the most heavily defended region in Namibia, and SWATF units are deployed throughout the sector to form a defense in depth against the guerrilla threat from Angola. Owambo is the area of greatest tribal support and primary infiltration routes for SWAPO.

Forward units assigned to Sector 10 include special forces teams on extended patrols in southern Angola that gather intelligence and carry out covert operations. They include elements of SWATF's small and secretive 1st

South West Africa Reconnaissance Regiment (1st SWARR), as well as the South African Army's 32nd "Buffalo" Battalion and 5th Reconnaissance Commandos. Their tactics include "pseudo operations" in which black troops disguised as guerrillas interrogate and terrorize local residents in order to turn them against SWAPO,

Sector 10's main defenses near the border are manned by four SWATF battalions, the 51st through 54th, according to embassy reporting. These units also guard the hydroelectric facility at Ruacana and the roads, powerlines, and water pipelines that lead from there deeper into Owambo. They are SWATF's most capable battalions, composite units of ethnically mixed Namibian units and strong South African contingents.

Other light infantry units saturate Sector 10 with patrols for area and route protection. They are the ethnically distinct 101st (Owambo) Battalion, most of the 201st (Bushman) and 202nd (Kavango) Battalions, and special tracker units with horses, motorcycles, and dogs, according to US officials. Aiding them are SWATF's part-time commandos and the Namibian police.

The increasingly capable SWATF played a major role in Operation Askari, the last major South African incursion into Angola, which took place from December 1983 to January 1984 and was intended to disrupt SWAPO's then imminent annual rainy season infiltration. Prior to Askari, SWATF rarely was committed outside Namibia,

Troops from SWATF's 101st and 201st Battalions, and possibly other Namibian units, joined nearly 2,000 South African soldiers in the Askari operation and together penetrated more than 100 kilometers north of the border,

At the same time, SWATF's ethnically mixed battalions at the border probably conducted numerous sweeps a short distance into Angola.

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Recruitment and Training

In our judgment, the stepped-up pace of SWATF recruitment and training since last year gives credence to the view that South Africa is hastening the transition to full Namibian responsibility for counter-insurgency operations. Windhoek's claim that SWATF expanded last year by about 3,000 troops is probably close to the mark. According to the government announcement, SWATF accepted 3,000 recruits—from the 9,000 who volunteered—and 1,500 conscripts. In the same period, some 1,500 troops completed their active-duty obligation, and 26 security force members were killed, according to government announcements. Until last year, South African officials indicated that SWATF accepted fewer volunteers and probably grew by only about 1,500 soldiers annually. [redacted]

Namibian males of all racial groups 16 to 25 years old have been liable for the draft since 1981, but conscription has always been implemented selectively, according to embassy reporting. Virtually all white males enter the armed forces or police for two years upon completing high school or university, according to embassy reporting. Exemptions are available on medical and narrowly drawn religious grounds. A small percentage of nonwhite males living outside the BOA are drafted by use of a random draw, according to the US defense attache. Nonwhites living in the BOA have never been conscripted, apparently because Windhoek wants to avoid stimulating an exodus of black Namibian draft dodgers that might swell SWAPO's guerrilla ranks. [redacted]

The South African authorities paved the way for expanding conscription in October 1984. They enlarged the pool of available military manpower by raising the age limit to 54 for compulsory service, and they began to register males 17 and over regardless of race, political sympathies, or prior service. An Army announcement in mid-November claimed that over 17,000 whites, blacks, and mixed-race Coloreds had registered at centers set up in Sector 30. When the first of these registrants are inducted, they probably will become reservists in conventional reserve and local militia units. The SWATF Commander favors increasing such part-time forces because they are less expensive to maintain than are a large police force and professional standing army. [redacted]

Many Namibian blacks volunteer for military service because of the attractive pay. Pay scales in SWATF are on a par with those in the South African Army and are far higher than civilian wages.⁴ Eight years ago, when the first black battalions were established and conditions of service were unknown, the authorities were forced to assign recruitment quotas to the village headmen. [redacted]

[redacted] Again, when conscription of nonwhites was introduced south of the BOA in 1981, and the first intake of draftees fell short of expectations, press-gangs were used to fill the ranks, according to visiting US officials. Today, however, coercion is unnecessary. The commander of Sector 10 told US officials last year that he routinely gets 10 times as many volunteers as he is authorized to accept. [redacted]

Government recruiters appear to be making headway in Owambo, a traditionally difficult area for recruitment. According to journalists and South African officials, the 101st Battalion was chronically under strength for years due to the reluctance of Owambos to fight their fellow tribesmen in SWAPO. With nearly 2,000 soldiers today, however, the 101st appears to be SWATF's largest battalion. South African officers claim the civilians will support whichever side has control of the local area. If so, that would help to explain the government's success in recruiting troops for the 101st Battalion. It has been difficult for SWAPO to infiltrate Owambo ever since South Africa occupied southern Angola in 1981, and, in our judgment, matters got worse for the guerrillas when Luanda agreed in February 1984 to restrain SWAPO in exchange for Pretoria's promise to withdraw its troops from Angola. [redacted]

Until recently, SWATF's recruits received their training from South Africans. Trainees were sent to the South African center at Walvis Bay for four months of basic training followed by six months of instruction in a speciality, according to embassy reporting. Specialized instruction not available in the territory has

⁴ A US military officer visiting the BOA in July 1984 was told that SWATF recruits earn over \$180 per month, a private over \$360, and a company sergeant over \$600. Moreover, civilian unemployment in Namibia has risen over recent years due to contraction of the economy and uncertainty about prospects for independence. [redacted]

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been given in South Africa. The airborne training center at Bloemfontein, for example, probably has turned out at least a few Namibian paratroopers each year since 1979. [redacted]

This year, SWATF will take over virtually all of its own training. [redacted] Walvis Bay phased out most basic training for SWATF sometime ago, and [redacted] has steadily declined after peaking in early 1982. [redacted]

they would accept no more Namibian infantry recruits and only one more cycle of trainees for mechanized and armored units. [redacted]

In virtually all phases of its activities—training, operations, and administration—SWATF is handicapped by a shortage of Namibian commissioned and non-commissioned officers. South Africans blame their failure to qualify more Namibian blacks as leaders on the trainees' generally low educational levels. The SWATF Commander last December cited insufficient leaders and funds as factors that would prevent a rapid expansion of the force, according to embassy reporting. [redacted]

The shortfall has been reduced at least a little since 1980, however, when a military school was established at Okahandja to train lieutenants and sergeants for SWATF. The press reported that only 14 of the first 75 trainees successfully completed the course, and three years later [redacted] the officer corps remained almost entirely white and mostly seconded from the South African Army. However, the SWATF Deputy Commander recently said he now has black lieutenants, a few captains, and a major. Moreover, the [redacted] many seconded white South Africans plan to take advantage of attractive bonuses and transfer to the Namibian forces at independence. [redacted]

[redacted] SWATF headquarters has advised SADF officers with the force that they are to remain with SWATF for an undetermined period following the withdrawal of South African units, but that eventually they may reclaim their status and seniority with the South African Army. [redacted]

Support

SWATF is organized and equipped like the South African Army but has little heavy equipment, according to [redacted] Most infantry units are partially motorized with trucks and mine-resistant troop carriers, but they have no tanks and few infantry fighting vehicles. They generally rely on mortars rather than artillery for fire support. The force has a unit of 20 light aircraft flown by their private owners who are army reservists, but it has no combat aircraft or navy. [redacted]

[redacted] now are acquiring vehicles and artillery. South African forces appear to be passing along used Buffel armored personnel carriers and 140-mm guns, perhaps as they receive new Ratel infantry fighting vehicles and G-5 155-mm artillery. The first Namibian units being equipped are the ethnically mixed battalions on the Angolan border and the conventional brigade in Windhoek. In mid-1984, the Walvis Bay training center was preparing Namibian armored and artillery specialists primarily for the 51st Battalion, [redacted]

[redacted] the unit's main base has 20 or more Buffels, a few Ratel vehicles, and a four-gun artillery battery. [redacted] at least 40 Buffels and eight 140-mm guns. Fifteen Eland armored cars were parked a short distance away and might belong to the brigade. [redacted]

SWATF's logistics support is centralized at Grootfontein, south of the BOA. SWATF officers say that a Namibian support brigade is collocated there with the South African Northern Logistical Command, and they expect it to take over the facility when the South Africans depart. [redacted]

[redacted] but the base includes a rail-to-road transfer point, which is essential because 80 percent of all military supplies from South Africa arrive at Grootfontein by rail and are trucked on to operational units. It also has a vehicle [redacted]

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depot, workshop, ammunition bunkers, petroleum tanks, and engineer unit. SWATF plans to build a \$1.5 million vehicle depot at the 91st Brigade's base at Luiperdsvillei south of Windhoek, according to the press. [redacted]

The administration of support for SWATF is separate from that for the South African forces in Namibia, which might simplify a South African disengagement. General Meiring's otherwise integrated SWATF and South African staff in Windhoek has separate sections for personnel, finance, and logistics because of the different sources of manpower and funding. Among the differences, for example, is that logistics records for the South African contingent are computerized, but those for the Namibian units are handled manually [redacted]

Mercenaries and Police

In our view, Pretoria is minimizing the risks of the transfer of security responsibility to Namibia by maintaining the readiness of mercenary and police forces. South Africa could bolster the territorial forces quickly by transferring to Namibian control some of its units in northern Namibia that are composed mostly of non-South Africans; this could involve as many as 3,000 troops of the South African Security Police's "Koevoet" force and the South African Army's 32nd "Buffalo" Battalion. These units, along with SWATF, are responsible for most of the day-to-day fighting. The Namibian police also

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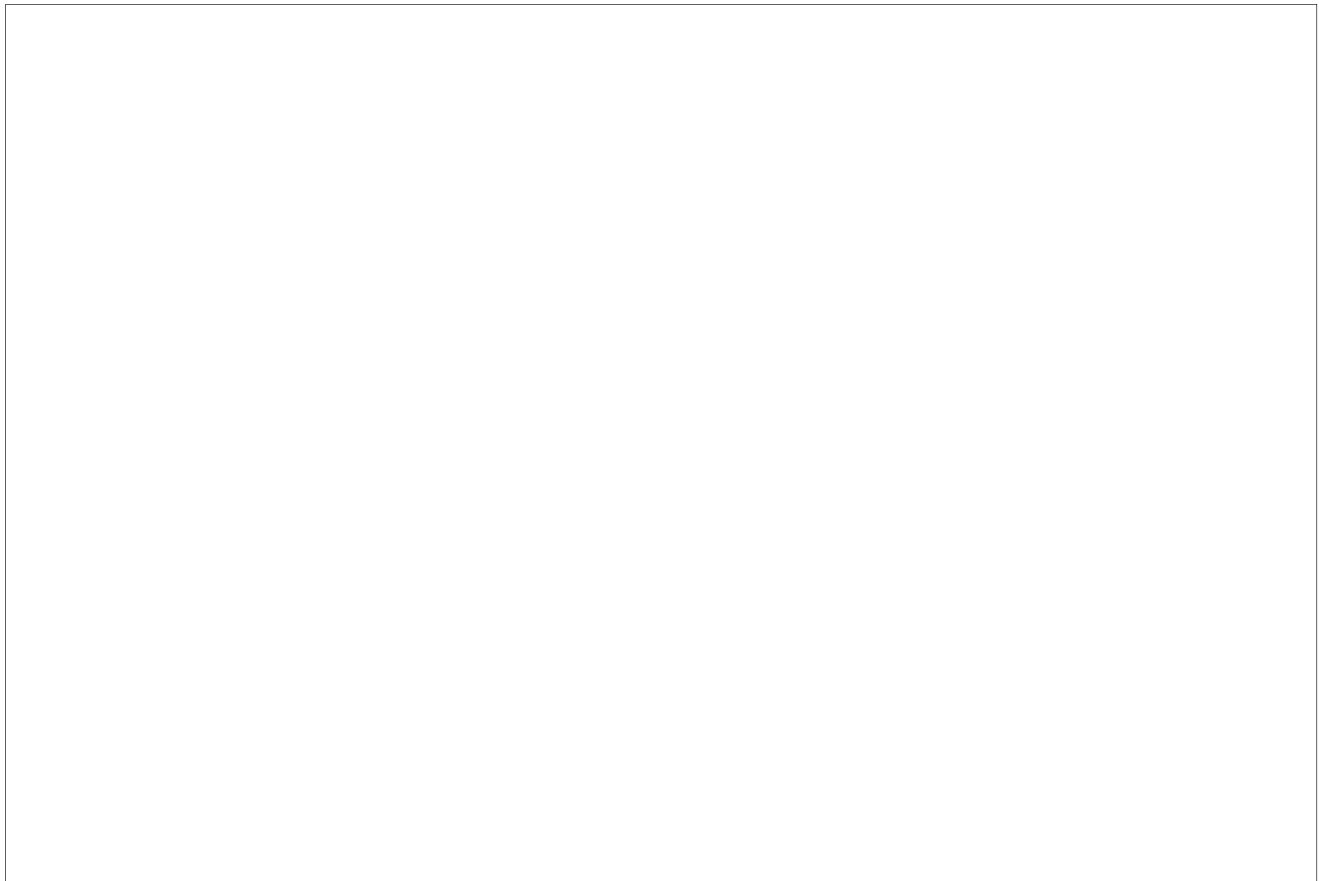
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participate in counter guerrilla operations. They support SWATF in the BOA and are in charge of counterinsurgency efforts elsewhere in Namibia. [redacted]



Pretoria's "Foreign Legion"

South Africa has organized a virtual "foreign legion" of veterans of earlier wars in Africa to fight as mercenaries in northern Namibia. The notorious Koevoet police are mostly black Namibians and former SWAPO guerrillas led by white South African officers. The Buffalo Battalion is made up mainly of Portuguese-speaking Angolans, many of whom once belonged to the South African-backed FNLA guerrilla movement in Angola. [redacted]

[redacted] Although elements of the 5th and 6th Reconnaissance Commandos and South African Marines, which also include many ex-Rhodesians, are also in northern Namibia, we believe that they are not likely to be transferred to Namibian control. [redacted]

South African officers in these all-volunteer units—the 32nd Battalion, Koevoet Police, and Reconnaissance Commandos—complain that they remain almost permanently in the war zone and involved in almost all the fighting. [redacted]

[redacted] Conscripted troops, on the other hand, serve only four months in the zone and tend to avoid combat. Several Angolans deserted from the 32nd Battalion several years ago complaining of being compelled to fight as mercenaries for South Africa. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that dissension has ever disrupted combat operations or threatened the loyalty of any Namibian or South African unit. [redacted]

Koevoet. Formed in 1979 by a South African police officer experienced with police counterinsurgency units in Rhodesia, Koevoet is considered by the South Africans to be the most effective counter guerrilla unit in Namibia. South African officers credit it with

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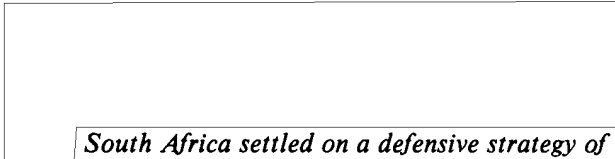
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Pretoria's Effective Counterinsurgency Strategy

South Africa's militarily effective strategy in Namibia is designed to counter SWAPO, which we believe has about 8,000 armed insurgents, mostly at bases in Angola. A review of SWAPO's operations over recent years, however, shows that only about 10 percent of the guerrillas attempt to infiltrate Namibia each year. Incapable of a military victory over far stronger



South Africa settled on a defensive strategy of exclusion and containment, executed with aggressive tactics and an economical level of effort that we believe can be sustained indefinitely.

SWATF counters SWAPO first by attempting to prevent insurgent infiltration into Namibia. SWAPO has no military bases in the territory, and, in our judgment, it cannot conduct large-scale infiltration from Zambia or Botswana because of vast distances, inhospitable terrain, and the unwillingness of those governments to risk South African retaliation for aiding the insurgents. Because SWAPO has no choice but to operate from bases in Angola, SWATF is concentrated near the Angolan border behind fences, cleared strips, watchtowers, and minefields. The force is lightly equipped and well suited to patrol on foot, on horseback, or in mine-resistant vehicles to locate and destroy the infiltrators and their arms caches.



With few exceptions, those guerrillas who manage to cross the border are contained in the northern Border Operational Area, where South African sources claim most of the insurgents are eliminated by incessant government patrolling. Military containment succeeds in Namibia in part because it reinforces social, political, and geographic barriers that isolate SWAPO from the general populace. Owambo dominance of the insurgent group, for example, hinders SWAPO's efforts to gain wide support among Namibia's tribally fragmented people. Great distances and

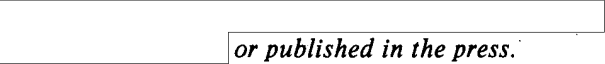
difficult terrain within Namibia also obstruct efforts to reach many groups. Although SWAPO correctly claims that it operates among the majority of black Namibians—concentrated as they are in the remote Border Operational Area—the guerrillas actually are confined to less than 15 percent of Namibia's territory. The BOA is important to South Africa only as a labor reserve and a buffer zone between SWAPO's Angolan sanctuaries and the guerrillas' targets among the white settlements and the modern sector of the economy located farther south.

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Neither side can defeat the other, but SWATF and South African forces hold the initiative on the battlefield. Most firefights between the insurgents and territorial forces are initiated by the government side,

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or published in the press.

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SWATF participates in cross-border raids into SWAPO's sanctuaries to disrupt plans and destroy bases, retaliate for guerrilla attacks, and intimidate the insurgents' Angolan hosts. In Namibia, the government's aggressive patrolling denies the guerrillas rest, spoils their attacks, causes high attrition, and prevents the establishment of insurgent bases or areas of durable control.

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SWATF is efficiently structured and employed. Non-South Africans are doing most of the fighting, and the use of Namibian troops saves transportation funds and reduces demands on scarce white manpower needed to run the South African economy.

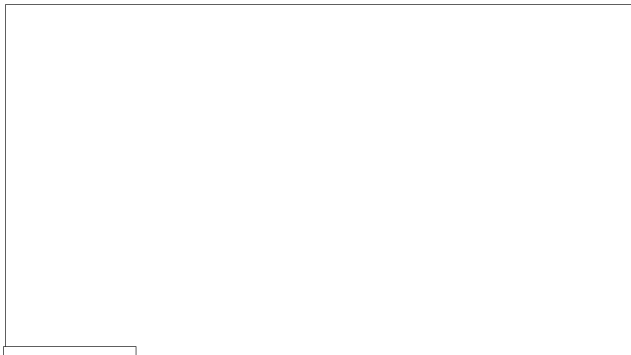
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SWATF and the South African Army use reservists to increase force levels quickly in time of need, and to reduce payrolls and economic disruptions at other times. Because most guerrilla infiltration takes place during the November to March rainy season when clouds and foliage enhance concealment and drinking water is available in the arid countryside, SWAPO's attacks take on a seasonal rhythm. The predictable pattern of infiltration, and good South African intelligence, enable Pretoria to avoid being caught unprepared.

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causing 80 to 90 percent of the SWAPO casualties in Namibia, [redacted] The South African Minister of Law and Order told Parliament in early 1984 that the force had by then killed 1,624 guerrillas while suffering only 43 dead and 370 wounded. [redacted]



[redacted] Although SWATF's Deputy Commander told a US official in September that Koevoet will be disbanded when hostilities cease, he added that select personnel will be incorporated into the Namibian police. [redacted]

[redacted] Koevoet has between 1,000 and 2,000 men, of whom less than 200 are South Africans. The unit's headquarters is at Oshakati in Sector 10, with major bases at Rundu in Sector 20 and Opuwa in the 102nd Battalion area. Ex-SWAPO members probably comprise about one-third of the force, although South Africans claim they total an improbable 70 percent, according to US officials in Windhoek. We do believe South African claims that most of the insurgents captured each year agree, albeit under pressure, to join the unit. Most Namibian members are Owambos because Koevoet recruits and operates mainly in Sector 10. Koevoet generally takes its pick of the constables graduated by police schools in the north each year, according to the press. [redacted]

Koevoet operates in 25- to 40-man groups in four armored personnel carriers, one supply vehicle, and a fuel truck, according to an authoritative South African defense journal. These self-sufficient units typically patrol for a week or more searching for signs of the guerrillas. Once on a trail, they will pursue relentlessly, ignoring military and political boundaries. Koevoet units frequently call for Air Force or other help once the guerrillas are run to ground. [redacted]



Koevoet police unit simulating an attack [redacted]

Notorious for its brutality—the name is Afrikaans for crowbar—Koevoet achieves high body counts but damages the effort to “win hearts and minds” in northern Namibia. [redacted]

[redacted] the unit tortures civilians to gain information and uses teams disguised as insurgents to terrorize the local residents and turn them against SWAPO. [redacted]

[redacted] Koevoet troops are paid bounties for those they kill, and the unit has been authorized to execute prisoners under certain circumstances. Hardened veterans of the 32nd Battalion and Reconnaissance Commandos have been shocked at discovering evidence of Koevoet atrocities, [redacted]

[redacted] The Windhoek Supreme Court condemned a Koevoet policeman to death in December 1983 for murder, and it sentenced a second policeman to jail for his role in a murder, rape, and robbery. [redacted]

Should Pretoria decide to transfer to the Namibian police only a portion of Koevoet's personnel, it would be difficult for us to detect. Koevoet and a territorial police unit known as the Special Task Force are both territorial equipped with armored personnel carriers and infantry weapons, and they would be virtually indistinguishable in the field. Moreover, the transfer could be arranged easily. US officials report that Brig. Sarel Strijdom, who commands the South African Security Police in Namibia, including Koevoet, also controls the Special Task Force in Windhoek. [redacted]

32nd Battalion. Another unit that may not withdraw from Namibia after independence is the Army's “Buffalo” Battalion. The SWATF Deputy Commander has claimed that the battalion probably will [redacted]

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be disbanded after independence, but Pretoria might try only to feign a demobilization and to transfer to SWATF some or all of the 32nd Battalion. [redacted]

The Buffalo unit is an all-volunteer motorized infantry battalion of about 1,000 black Angolan soldiers and 200 South African officers and sergeants. [redacted]

[redacted] It was formed from hundreds of Portuguese-speaking former guerrillas of the FNLA, who fled to Namibia in 1976 after losing their struggle with the Soviet-supported MPLA. The attache reports that the battalion's headquarters is at Buffalo Base in the western Caprivi Strip. Its forward base at Rundu is in western Kavango, and a mobile command post probably is in southern Angola. [redacted]

The battalion has participated in every major incursion into Angola since 1978, and it penetrated the deepest of all South African units in January 1984 when it spearheaded Operation Askari. [redacted]

[redacted] According to the US attache, three or four of the battalion's seven infantry companies are normally on six-week patrols in southern Angola. Deployed units are controlled by Sector 10's headquarters and resupplied by helicopter. Four companies from the battalion were temporarily assigned as the South African contingent to the Joint Monitoring Commission in Angola in May 1984, according to the attache. [redacted]

Last year's sudden training of black officer candidates from the 32nd Battalion may signal that Pretoria intends to withdraw South African officers and leave the unit in Namibia. Pretoria brought 15 trainees to the Republic for English-language instruction, according to the South African Army newspaper. They returned to the battalion in November to become training and administrative officers. [redacted]

Territorial Police

South Africa also has strengthened the territorial police to block a SWAPO takeover in Namibia, according to US embassy reporting. Efforts to enlarge the police force circumvent the UN independence plan, which calls for confining to bases in Namibia or removing all military forces during the transition to independence while employing the police alongside UN troops to maintain order. Even as South Africa

was agreeing to the UN plan in 1978, the Namibian Commissioner of Police announced that the territorial police were being strengthened, mainly in Owambo. Several months later, US officials reported that South Africa tried to conceal an expansion of the territorial police. At that time it transferred to them about 1,500 Namibian home guards, previously trained and commanded by the South African Army. The new policemen were renamed Special Constables, dressed in camouflage, and employed as a paramilitary counter-insurgency force. [redacted]

In September 1980, one month after SWATF was formed, the South-West Africa Police (SWAP) was established under the authority of the Administrator General, according to the government gazette. All functions of a national police force were transferred to it, except that Pretoria retained control of the Security Police and all intelligence units. According to the US Embassy, seconded South African policemen were given the choice of joining SWAP permanently or returning to duty in the Republic. Maj. Gen. Dolph Gouws, then head of the South African Police in Namibia, was among the first to accept a permanent position with SWAP—as its commander. [redacted]

[redacted] SWAP operates only in Namibia, and we believe that operations into Angola indeed are generally left to the military. [redacted]

SWAP has three principal elements, according to US officials in Namibia. The small and lightly armed Criminal Investigation Division handles detective work. The Special Task Force, equipped with armored personnel carriers and crew-served weapons, is responsible for riot control and counterterrorism in urban areas. Similar to the Koevoet unit in firepower and mobility, it is a significant supplement to the military's counterinsurgency capabilities. The paramilitary Special Constables are armed with infantry weapons and guard government officials, buildings, and facilities. [redacted]

Outlook

At present rates of growth, training, and equipping, we believe Namibian forces could take over all ground force operations against SWAPO in two or three

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years. They might do so in one year if Pretoria permanently transferred to Namibian control most of the 6,000 South African Defense Force and Police personnel already serving in SWATF, the 32nd Battalion, and the Koevoet Police. We expect SWATF to accept more volunteers and expand conscription in 1985. South Africa could begin to reduce its separate military contingent in Namibia as soon as mid-1985, when the current rainy season and heightened insurgent activity end.⁵ [redacted]

⁵ South Africa began to reorganize its border defenses near southern Namibia and Botswana last year, probably in anticipation of an eventual troop withdrawal from Namibia. Chief of the Army Lieutenant General Geldenhuys told 11,000 troops participating in a major training exercise near the border in September that the site at Lothalha was to become the western headquarters of South Africa's border defenses, according to the press. The exercise, in our view, tested procedures and forces earmarked for the command. [redacted]

While SWATF also is developing into a formidable conventional army, it remains dependent upon South African support. Assuming continued infusions of funds, equipment, and training, it could soon rival or surpass the ground combat forces of most black African states. Namibia has no domestic arms production, however, and SWATF will remain dependent upon foreign equipment and technical services. It also relies on South Africa to provide all combat air and naval support, and SWATF's dependence on Pretoria for transport, communications, intelligence, and medical support is likely to persist. Although ample military manpower is available, low educational levels among nonwhite Namibians will slow the force's development. Requirements for foreigners to fill

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Forming a National Army

The model for a merger of guerrilla units and government forces into a Namibian national army would be the relatively successful integration of guerrillas and government troops at independence in Zimbabwe. At that time, insurgents of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) were combined with troops of the Rhodesian Government. The mainly Shona-speaking and Chinese-supported ZANU had long opposed the mostly Ndebele-speaking and Soviet-backed ZAPU, while both groups waged war on the white supremacist government. [redacted]

The Zimbabwe experience was not without incident, but, in our view, it reduced the potential for factional strife. Tribal-based violence disrupted several of the integrated battalions, and the ZANU government aggravated the situation by purging white Air Force officers and discriminating against former ZAPU guerrillas when it reduced the Army's size by one-third. Nonetheless, only a few hundred of the 20,000 veterans who were discharged or deserted turned to armed dissidence, and Zimbabwe's integrated battalions sent to protect transportation routes in Mozambique have performed effectively against the Mozambican insurgents. [redacted]

A merger of Namibian guerrillas and government troops would have a fair chance of success if it took account of strong ethnic divisions within SWATF. These divisions persist because Namibian society, like that in Zimbabwe, is fragmented into regionally concentrated tribal groups and because most SWATF units have been recruited from a single locality rather than from the territory as a whole. Every northern homeland, for example, has one or more battalions of blacks, each formed from a single tribe. Where different ethnic groups have been combined in the same SWATF unit, factious violence has sometimes occurred. The ethnically mixed 51st Battalion was disrupted by tribal fighting in February 1984. [redacted]

A sound plan for a merger would also have to consider tribal tensions within SWAPO. Since the purge in 1980 that expelled SWAPO Vice President Mishake Muyongo and most of his Caprivian followers, most guerrillas have been recruited among the Owambo and Kavango tribesmen living near the

Angolan-Namibian border. These northern guerrillas resent SWAPO members from central and southern Namibia whose ethnic groups do little fighting but hold prestigious positions in the organization's political wing. Moreover, Kavangos also resent the Owambos for monopolizing all senior posts in SWAPO's military wing. Even the Owambos are divided; the large Kwanyama subgroup controls most key positions in SWAPO, to the irritation of the second-largest subgroup, the Ndongas. [redacted]

Any scheme that kept former units intact would preserve tribal identities and unit loyalties, and a simple merger that combined similar whole units to match compatible skills and equipment—thus simplifying operations, maintenance, and training—would create volatile combinations. In addition, putting SWAPO's guerrilla detachments with SWATF's light infantry battalions would mix combat-hardened veterans from those units that have been at the forefront of the fighting and enemies for 18 years. Virtually all members of those units are northern Namibians, so recriminations probably would be harsh. At the same time, combining conventionally organized units would produce the uncomfortable combination of SWAPO's northern blacks and SWATF's central Namibians, who are mainly whites and mixed-race Coloreds. [redacted]

More complicated, but potentially less factious, would be a merger that reconstituted units on a national basis. This formula would disband SWATF's and the guerrillas' units, integrate personnel of various ethnic groups, and carefully balance all leadership positions. Individual SWATF and SWAPO commanders undoubtedly would resist altering unit structures, however, because total integration would eliminate their personal power bases. [redacted]

Once formed, the national army could occupy SWATF's existing facilities economically and efficiently. Initially concerned with internal security and order, the new army would be well located at SWATF's installations in the north among the majority of the population. As the regime consolidated control and formulated its own perceptions of security threats and needs, it could construct new facilities and move forces there. [redacted]

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senior command, administrative, and technical positions will diminish but not disappear over the next few years, and the willingness of seconded South Africans to remain in the force permanently will depend on the conditions at independence. [redacted]

succeed, however, it must take into account the make-up of both armies, and avoid combining units with volatile ethnic, regional, and political differences. [redacted]

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Implications for the United States

In our view, SWATF's growing maturity enhances South Africa's political flexibility in Namibia. Pretoria could rely on SWATF, with South African air and logistic support, to defend a puppet regime in Windhoek, thus enabling a South African withdrawal without allowing SWAPO to take over. Alternatively, it could use the force as a proxy to continue its counterinsurgency campaign and postpone Namibian independence indefinitely. If Pretoria believed that including SWATF in a national army would guarantee leverage over any government that came to power in Windhoek, it might encourage South African acceptance of independence for Namibia. [redacted]

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Incorporating SWATF in a Namibian national army would, however, be a difficult task that would require modifying the UN independence plan. UN Security Council Resolution 435 provides for an international force of 7,500 men to monitor a cease-fire, to ensure the departure of all except 1,500 South African troops, to repatriate as many as 8,000 insurgents located outside Namibia, to confine to bases all guerrillas and South African forces, and to dismantle the territorial units. A UN force of that size would be outnumbered by the Namibian troops, and we doubt South Africa—after investing so heavily in SWATF—will agree to its dissolution. The SWATF Commander said publicly in 1978 that his troops will turn in their heavy weapons—but not individual arms—to unit armories, and that any demobilization would be temporary. [redacted]

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Nonetheless, a merger of SWAPO guerrilla forces with the larger and well-trained SWATF units into a national army might improve prospects for post-independence stability. It would avoid dispersing thousands of ex-combatants disgruntled over their lost pay and poor prospects for reemployment. Later, a phased demobilization in step with programs to employ ex-servicemen could more safely reduce the force to a reasonable and affordable size. For a merger to

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Appendix

Major SWATF Units

The South West African Territory Force (SWATF) consists of full-time, reaction, and area defense units. Full-time forces include 10 infantry battalions and specialized units for reconnaissance and tracking. They are all based in the Border Operational Area (BOA) and committed to day-to-day counterinsurgency operations. The reaction force is the 91st Brigade, a unit of reservists based in Windhoek as a territorial reserve. Area defense units are the 26 or more militia detachments located throughout Namibia and used for local defense.⁶

The Full-Time Force

SWATF's primary tactical formation is the motorized light infantry battalion. Ethnically mixed battalions, numbered in the 50 series, are the best equipped and apparently most capable SWATF battalions, partly because they contain large components of South African troops. The ethnically distinct battalions, with unit designations in the hundreds, appear to have less equipment. Although black volunteers fill the ranks, most officers and sergeants are whites seconded from the South African Army.

Full-Time Multiracial Units

The 51st through 54th Battalions are deployed from west to east just south of the Angolan border in Sector 10. They were formed in the late 1970s to bar infiltration into Owambo.

that a mixed battalion usually consists of four companies—two each of South Africans and Namibians—each of the four battalions consists of about 700 troops. for the mixed battalions are orderly and

⁶ Except where otherwise noted, this appendix is based on and South African defense journals. In all, five full-time battalions, the 1st South West Africa Specialist Unit, and the 91st Brigade.

secure. They usually are cleared of surrounding vegetation, enclosed by an earth wall and fence, and feature dispersed trenches and weapons positions.

51st Battalion. The battalion is based at Ruacana, and elements are deployed at several smaller camps in the area,

It has four infantry companies (one of ethnically mixed Namibians, one on rotation from the 101st Battalion, and two on rotation from South Africa), an armored car company, and three artillery batteries.

The battalion guards the border, a nearby hydroelectric installation, powerlines, and the water pipeline into Owambo.

52nd Battalion. The unit is based at Ogongo and includes a motorcycle unit, according to the press. It protects the border and the road to the Ruacana hydroelectric facility.

53rd Battalion. The battalion is based at Ondangwa and guards the border and a key road intersection. this is the most concentrated of SWATF's four ethnically mixed battalions. Buffel mine-resistant vehicles and a few Eland armored cars have been seen there.

54th Battalion. Based at Eenhana, the battalion guards the border. one infantry company from the 701st Battalion normally is attached.

Full-Time Ethnically Distinct Battalions

The ethnically distinct battalions were organized in the mid-1970s and based in all four area commands of the BOA. Battalion personnel strengths vary widely, and their bases appear less organized and secure than those of the multiethnic battalions. The surrounding

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vegetation frequently has not been cut back, often a single fence marks the perimeter, and fewer vehicles are parked inside. Photography of the 101st Battalion shows that it has been expanded and motorized since 1983, and it may serve as a model of what these battalions are intended to become.

101st (Ovambo) Battalion. The 101st is the largest and best equipped ethnic battalion.

the battalion has over 2,000 men assigned, mostly Ndonga Ovambos. It apparently has overcome early recruitment problems among the historically pro-SWAPO Ovambos. The battalion has four operational infantry companies, another four companies in training, plus communications, maintenance, and supply units. When organized in 1974, it was known as the 35th Battalion.

102nd (Kaokoland) Battalion. The battalion probably consists of only about 250 Kaokolanders, Hereros, and Ovahimas at Opuwa in the separate battalion area. The 102nd remains small due to Kaokoland's sparse population and little SWAPO activity. It was formed in the mid-1970s and later designated the 37th Battalion.

201st (Bushman) Battalion. The unit has about 900 mostly Baraqewena (Kung) Bushmen based at Omega base in the western Caprivi Oos (Sector 20) but operating primarily in Sector 10, At least one company is at Ondangwa, combined with South African paratroopers as a rapid reaction force. The 201st also provides scouts to other units. It was the first Bushman unit, formed about 1974 as the 31st Battalion.

202nd (Kavango) Battalion. The 202nd has about 1,200 troops, mostly Kavangos with one South African Army company attached, based at Rundu in Sector 20,

for only about 950 troops, assuming that SWATF assigns four to six men per squad tent, normal for South African units in Namibia. In our judgment, however, SWATF may assign more men than that to a tent. Moreover, it probably does not have spare tents for the two or more companies that are invariably in the field.

it had expanded to six companies by February 1985. The battalion has a few armored cars and a horse-mounted element, and was formed in 1975 as the 34th Battalion.

203rd (Bushman) Battalion. The battalion's 300 mostly Vasekela Bushmen troops are based 90 kilometers west of Tsumkwe but are mostly deployed in small numbers guarding wells throughout the Bushman homeland (Sector 50), according to press accounts. Others are on duty in the BOA. It is the former 36th Battalion formed in 1978.

701st (Caprivi) Battalion. The 701st has about 600 mostly Lozi troops at Mapacha in Sector 70 and is charged with patrolling the Zambezi River border with Zambia and Sector 10's northeastern border with Angola, It has a few armored cars, and was known as the 33rd Battalion when formed in about 1977.

1st South West Africa Reconnaissance Regiment. The 1st SWARR is a small and newly formed unit of elite reconnaissance personnel based in Kavango, according to embassy reporting.

South West Africa Specialist Unit. This special unit for tracking based at Ondangwa in Sector 10 has elements of horse-mounted infantry, motorcycle troops, Bushman trackers, and dog handlers, It was formed in 1977, according to the press.

Reaction and Area Forces

SWATF, because it is modeled after the South African Army, includes a substantial number of units manned by reservists. It is grooming a territorial reserve as an on-call reaction force for the full-time units in the north. Similar to a South African conventional brigade, its personnel are mostly reservists with

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a small cadre of full-time professionals, and it has more heavy equipment than is normally seen with Namibian counterinsurgency units. SWATF also has a unit of light aircraft and at least 26 militia units for local defense. [redacted]

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91st Brigade

The 91st is a multiracial unit of at least 1,500 men at Windhoek in Sector 40, [redacted]

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[redacted] It is directly subordinate to General Meiring, rather than to an intermediate sector command. The brigade's fully manned 911th Infantry Battalion has taken part in counter guerrilla operations in the BOA, but the greatly understrength 912th and 913th Battalions probably are not operational. Forty Buffel vehicles and eight 25-pounder (140-mm) guns [redacted]

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[redacted] The 91st was formed in the late 1970s as the 41st Battalion. [redacted]

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1st South West Africa Squadron

The squadron has 20 privately owned light aircraft and 40 volunteer reserve pilots at Eros Field outside Windhoek in Sector 40. Pilot reservists fly their own aircraft and provide SWATF with a limited capability for aerial reconnaissance, search and rescue, and administrative and logistic support. The unit was formerly known as the 112th Air Commando Squadron. [redacted]

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Area Force Units

At least 26 units of local militia, formed from all ethnic groups, are located throughout Namibia and subordinate to the various sector commands, according to official announcements. Because the sectors south of the BOA have no full-time SWATF units assigned, they rely on the area force units for local defense against guerrilla attack. [redacted]

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