Springbok in a Thunderstorm

From sources within government circles and the ANC's Intelligence Department, MAYIBUYE has unearthed a chilling two-pronged plan of the NP regime for the transition.

Operation Thunderstorm and Operation Springbok. These are the official names of the regime's two-pronged strategy to thwart democracy. Worked out to deal with the post-February 1990 period, the final aim is to force the ANC into an entrenched coalition with, at least, the NP.

Operation Springbok is complex, but simply stated, it aims to prevent the ANC from forming a government on its own. Normally this would not be sinister. It would be fair competition where a party strives to attain maximum advantage in a democratic dispensation.

The difference in this case is the existence of Operation Thunderstorm. As its name suggests, this operation seeks to devastate the country in its wake. It is meant to wreak havoc in order to force the ANC to accept Operation Springbok.

Describing the core of Operation Thunderstorm, a senior official of the ANC Intelligence Department says: "Every plan and action – particularly on the question of violence – is aimed at weakening the ANC so that it is eventually forced into a..."
No friendly bobby on the beat in Phola Park

costitutional coalition. At the heart of the plan is the NP goal to be the main partner in a future government, controlling all levers of power – particularly the army, police and intelligence."

The process of change, according to NP calculations, should be controlled, contained and regulated by the government. This is with the understanding that the status quo, with limited adjustments, would remain intact and protected.

Operation Thunderstorm is designed to weaken the ANC physically through violence and create a climate of uncertainty. The unbanning of the ANC and the release of its leaders would then appear, in the eyes of blacks in particular, as the cause of their terrible suffering. According to the plan, when the NP finally forces the ANC into a coalition, the people would only be too happy to see an end to the violence even if their socio-political conditions are not addressed.

**FORCES BEHIND THUNDERSTORM**
The whole operation to pilot Thunderstorm was left in the hands of the Department of Military Intelligence (DMI). The National Intelligence Service (NIS) was informed about the operation but does not carry out any ground opera-

tions. Sources that have been in contact with the government on security matters allege that it is prepared to discuss most arms of the South African Defence Force, but presently it will not brook any discussions on the DMI.

The most astonishing factor is that NIS, a body responsible for domestic and foreign intelligence, has apparently not tabled a report on its findings about the causes of the violence and the highly unstable conditions in the country.

"There is no way that NIS can say that it has not investigated the highly volatile situation. Neither can it cook up a report that exonerates the DMI, the police and the army. NIS is composed of supposedly intelligent people who know that they could never put together a plausible story about the present situation without burning their fingers in the process. Their simple solution has been to present no report," says one intelligence insider.

But a report was presented to the State President concerning the role of the security forces in the violence, according to one MABUYE source. It contained NIS’s assessment of the allegations that the security forces were behind the violence. The report was never made public.

**ELEMENTS OF THUNDERSTORM**
The main strategy of Operation Thunderstorm is to unleash violence using secret networks of the DMI and the “former” Security Branch of the SAP. This is backed by intensive anti-ANC propaganda involving:

- Blaming the ANC and particularly Umkhonto we Sizwe for the violence. This would also include a deliberate campaign of character assassination directed against selected ANC leaders.
- Fomenting divisions within the ANC and the alliance by trying to isolate the South African Communist Party and so-called radical ANC elements, especially the Youth League.

On the other hand, efforts would be made to portray the regime’s response to violence positively. For this purpose, the South African Broadcasting Corporation and the regime’s network in the printed media would stand it in good stead. In this way, the high-handed actions of the SAP and SADF as well as their lack of resolve in dealing with opponents of the ANC accused of violent crimes would receive as little criticism as possible.

Other measures envisaged as the plan matures are:

- selective arrests of cadres of the ANC and its allies; and
- possible restriction of newspapers highly critical of the government.

The first and most important phase of Operation Thunderstorm has long been in operation. This is reflected partly in the support given to activi-
How Operation Thunderstorm works

Operation Thunderstorm aims to root the idea of “black-on-black violence” in local and international public opinion.

Random shootings, which appear not to be linked to any political rivalry, form part of this strategy. To confuse matters further, the professional hit-squads are provided with arms of Soviet origin – weapons previously associated with the ANC. The train and vigil massacres and, more recently, the murder of 18 people on the eve of June 16 are an example. All the murders were random and the police were quick to let that fact sink in.

Of the structures used in Operation Thunderstorm, remnants of the CCB and others are supposed to act “independently”. They also operate within Inkatha Freedom Party. Then there are Battalions 31 and 32 (mainly Angolan mercenaries), Recce 5 (mainly Mozambicans), Koevoet (Namibians) and Recce 3 (former Rhodesians).

Training and support for elements within Inkatha and criminal gangs is crucial for the operation. Inkathagate and other revelations about the collaboration of DMI, CCB, Inkatha and the KwaZulu Police in the Mkhuzhe training camp and other activities in the Eastern and Western Transvaal are only the tip of the iceberg, says a security operative. Taxi wars in the Western Cape, Transvaal and other areas also form part of this strategy.

HOSTELS USED AS BARRACKS

In the PWV, hostels such as Mzimhlophe, Alexandra, Madala, Nhlanzane, Jeppe, Denver and Thokoza are used as barracks and training centres. They also act as places of retreat for forces that have attacked townships. With official sanction, many former occupants of hostels have been driven out to be replaced by people who are operatives of Operation Thunderstorm.

A number of judges and human rights groups have protested at the release of “common criminals” long before their jail terms expire. Sources within the security establishment say the reason is not difficult to find: many of them have been recruited to take part in the violence.

The operation also relies heavily on infiltrating agents into ANC structures. “The amounts of money and other perks, including cars, promised some of the agents have been regu-

larly increased,” says an ANC security operative. Depending on the location of an agent, their briefs include the gathering of general intelligence and operational information of immediate use in the violence as well as provocative actions aimed at discrediting the ANC.

A special and very small DMI unit has been assigned to operate within and control the activities of the extreme right-wing. “Because of the unreliability of some elements in the right-wing, the selection and recruitment of persons to pilot the right-wing campaign of terror and intimidation is considered as primary,” says an ANC senior intelligence officer. “By keeping some right-wing armed groups operational and their activities regulated, the regime would be able to force the ANC to accept the inevitability of a coalition with the NP.”

Mass funeral of seven Soweto residents killed during an attack by Jabulani Hostel inmates, August 1990

Mayibuye July 1992
BEEFING UP THE ARSENAL

The regime’s plans have been adjusted from time to time to meet new realities. The generals behind these plans are said to be seriously concerned with:

- campaigns of mass action;
- the exposés in some newspapers;
- failure to substantially weaken the ANC; and
- the creation of viable self-defence structures in some communities.

As a result, a number of these generals and some senior NP leaders find the temptation to resort to more repression difficult to resist. The recent call-up and De Klerk’s threat to declare a state of emergency reflect this tendency.

What is also alarming are the Bills that the NP has rushed through parliament. The Bill which will allow the regime to tap telephones and violate priv}

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**Opspoor en Uitwis:**
**The Northern Transvaal Plan**

As part of Thunderstorm, a special plan for the Northern Transvaal has been worked out. One of its central themes is “Opspoor en uitwis van vyandelike strukture” [Tracking down and eliminating enemy structures]. It is essentially based on the approach of the Joint Management System.

The plan involves examining the government’s own forces in this area and selecting individuals to be given specific leadership tasks.

A unit is to be – or has been – created to mobilise the forces necessary to carry out the plan. Propaganda is at the centre of the strategy, and it includes controlling media reports to discredit “radical” organisations.

The plan aims to influence the population as follows:

- Infiltration of “enemy structures” to help eliminate them. Special targets will be the ANC, “radical” church leaders, trade unionists, workers’ structures in factories, etc.
- Play the “Charterists” (ANC) against the Black Consciousness groupings and foment ethnic tensions.
- Select certain coloured and Indian leaders from all levels of society – business, religion, education, sports and medicine – and convince them that the government is right and realistic and that their future lies with the NP.
- Create a climate in which pro-NP forces in Lebowa and Gazankulu can operate freely.

**MAYIBUYE** sources are unable to explain why this particular region has been singled out. “We can only surmise that the strength of the extreme right-wing might have led to its selection as a pilot area,” says an intelligence analyst. “However, the plan is applicable in any part of the country.”

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Razor wire to stop protest march in the Cape