

# The Establishment of the Directorate Military Intelligence upon South Africa's Exit from the Commonwealth 1961–1971: In Pursuit of Recognition

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## Abstract

After South Africa had left the Commonwealth in 1961, the South African Defence Force had to develop its own intelligence capacity, as the British intelligence services ceased intelligence provision to South Africa. The Defence Force had limited experience in the field of intelligence as far as personnel, training and structures were concerned. It had no mandate, an insubordinate position in the higher military hierarchy, and no national legislation or departmental prescripts existed to direct its functions. Certain of its functions continuously migrated to other structures in the Defence Force, which hampered its development. Towards the end of the decade, the organisation was temporarily disbanded, and its functions taken over by a newly created Bureau of State Security.

Despite these limitations, the Directorate Military Intelligence evolved into a comprehensive autonomous intelligence organisation over a period of ten years, directed by national legislation, and legitimised as one of the three principal intelligence organisations in South Africa. It performed the main intelligence functions as is globally accepted from the role of an intelligence organisation, viz. collection, analyses, counter-intelligence, and covert action.

This article will provide a narrative, based mainly on primary archival sources, of the evolution of Directorate Military Intelligence between 1961 and 1971 despite the developmental challenges it faced.

**Keywords:** Intelligence, Covert Collection, Foreign Intelligence Services, Analysis, BOSS, Psychological Operations, National Legislation.

## Background and Context

The Union Defence Act of 1912, which provided for the creation of the Union Defence Force (UDF), did not make provision for a military intelligence function. After the creation of the UDF in 1912, the British War Office mainly conducted its military intelligence function. In his book, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, Ian van der Waag however declares that small capacity existed to conduct intelligence on internal security, and that it only concentrated on industrial strikes and unrest on the part of the black

population.<sup>2</sup> Kevin O'Brien, in his book, *The South African Intelligence Services*, states that a Department of Military Intelligence as well as an Intelligence Records Bureau was founded in 1940. The former was inefficient, whilst the latter unsuccessfully attempted to analyse information received from various state departments. The Records Bureau also liaised with other Commonwealth countries.<sup>3</sup> The UDF, and its successor in 1957, the South African Defence Force (SADF), mainly relied on the intelligence services of the United Kingdom for the provision of military intelligence to the UDF and the SADF.

The South African (SA) withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1961 thus had a major negative effect on the military intelligence capability of the SADF. After 1961, the United Kingdom ceased intelligence provision to South Africa, and the exit from the Commonwealth thus exposed the inability of the SADF to execute its own military intelligence function independently.<sup>4</sup> Until that time, the SADF received most of its intelligence from the United Kingdom (UK) intelligence services. The small intelligence section (IS) – re-designated to its more familiar name of Directorate Military Intelligence (DMI) in 1962 – consisted of only five officers and eight non-commissioned officers.<sup>5</sup> Its principal responsibility was the dissemination of intelligence received from the United Kingdom within the SADF. By 1971, however, the Military Intelligence Division was an autonomous entity within the SADF, commanded by a lieutenant general reporting directly to the Commandant General of the SADF (CG SADF). Military Intelligence was by national legislation also instituted as one of the principal intelligence organisations in the Republic of South Africa, alongside the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) and the Security Branch of the South African Police. What is of interest – and also the central theme of this article – are the factors and influences that directed the development of the DMI over this ten-year period to an autonomous national intelligence organisation.

## Historiography

Historiography on SA military intelligence, especially during the 1960s, is limited. Literature on the organisational structure of the DMI as well as its mandate, role, and functions – specifically its principal functions of intelligence, counter-intelligence (CI), collection, and foreign relations – is limited. No historical study has ever been done on the development of military intelligence in South Africa between 1961 and 1971. The lack of a developmental study of the DMI between 1961 and 1971 constitutes a shortfall in the SA military historiography, which the study on which this article is based, aimed to address. This article therefore provides a narrative on the development of the DMI in the first decade after 1961 with an emphasis on the following:

- The detrimental effect of the absence of departmental and political guidelines on the DMI;
- The role of an intelligence organisation and the organisational development of the DMI;
- The absence of intelligence coordination at national level;
- The establishment of the BOSS and subsequent disbandment of the DMI;
- The Potgieter Commission: Finality on the role of the DMI.

The historical data used in this article comprised primary resources in the Department of Defence Archives that were declassified on request according to the *Promotion of Access to Information Act (No. 2 of 2000)*. Interviewees consented to the use of information supplied by them.

## Political Dynamics

By 1961, no national legislation or SADF prescripts existed to guide the execution of military intelligence in South Africa or to mandate the SADF to execute this function. The Union Defence Act of 1912, which provided for the creation of the UDF, did not make provision for a military intelligence function. In his book, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*, Ian van der Waag declares that, prior to 1961, a small capacity did exist to conduct intelligence on internal security but that it concentrated on industrial strikes and unrest amongst the black population.<sup>6</sup> Kevin O'Brien, in his book, *The South African Intelligence Services*, states that a DMI was founded in 1940, as well as an Intelligence Records Bureau. The former was, however, not efficient whilst the latter – ineffectively – attempted to analyse information received from various state departments.<sup>7</sup>

After 1961, hardly any legislation existed to guide the SADF to develop and direct its intelligence capability. Between 1960 and 1970, 11 defence and/or defence amendment acts were passed. None of these addressed the mandate and execution of intelligence. The *Defence Act (No. 13 of 1912)* was still in force, and did not make provision for intelligence activities.<sup>8</sup>

Over the same period (i.e. 1960–1970), five Defence White Papers and Department of Defence Planning documents were published. Apart from a description of the strategic environment, the command status of the head of the DMI and minor intelligence training methods, none of the White Papers referred to intelligence matters, such as its mandate, structure, and responsibilities. The purpose of the Review of Defence and Armaments Production: Period 1960–1970 was to provide background on the strategic environment within which the SADF found itself during the 1960s. The review served as a planning document for arms production and procurement, as well as the organisational, manpower and financial design of the SADF for the period between 1960 and 1970.<sup>9</sup> The White Paper on Defence 1964–1965 makes no mention of any intelligence or matters that may influence or direct the DMI.<sup>10</sup> Published in 1967, the White Paper on Defence 1965–1967 only makes provision for the upgrading of the head of the DMI to the position of director, directly responsible to the CG SADF.<sup>11</sup> The last White Paper, the White Paper on Defence and Armament Production, April 1969, only provided for the South African Army College at Voortrekkerhoogte to offer training in intelligence, field security, as well as nuclear, biological and chemical warfare.<sup>12</sup>

Until 1966, provision was made for a Secretary for Defence (SecDef) as head of the Department of Defence. The post of SecDef was, however, abolished on 17 October 1966, after a board of enquiry found duplication in the functions of the SecDef and the office of the CG SADF. The SecDef was replaced by the Comptroller, who by mandate, only had financial control over the SADF.<sup>13</sup> Deon Fourie, former head of the Department of

Strategic Studies at the University of South Africa, confirms that, after an investigation ordered by the Minister of Defence, the position of SecDef was discontinued in 1966. All its functions were transferred to the CG SADF who consequently performed the function of accounting officer for the Department of Defence.<sup>14</sup> During the period up to 1970, no political oversight or direction thus existed concerning the conduct of intelligence.

By 1968, the DMI had however only played a limited role in the political dynamics of South Africa as a result of this lack of a clear mandate, procedural guidelines, or political prescripts. This role was played firstly in the provision of intelligence to other role players in the security community and, secondly in support of South African foreign policy.

Political influence on the SADF and the DMI is not the focus of this article. It is, however, relevant to assess which influence the SADF had on the DMI. During the decade of the 1960s, South Africa was marred by a series of incidents that influenced the internal security situation. These events included the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960 and sabotage attacks on electrical infrastructure. The SADF and the DMI were not responsible for protecting the internal security situation, but political intelligence was provided by the DMI to the South African Police, as will be discussed later in this article. The DMI was however to a larger extent involved in the execution of foreign policy by the SA government. This involvement is addressed in the section on special liaison with foreign governments.

## **Organisational Development**

The question may be posed as to what constitutes the essential and accepted tasks of an intelligence organisation. The views of accepted intelligence matter experts were considered. Four main functions reflect the responsibilities of an intelligence service: collection, analysis, CI and covert operations. The organisational development of DMI will be analysed against these functions.

The works of Sherman Kent, Mark Lowenthal and Abraham Shulsky were taken into account for this purpose. Kent served on the staff of the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the United States (US) Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He was instrumental in setting up the US intelligence doctrine, and later served in the History Department of Yale University.<sup>15</sup> Lowenthal taught at Columbia University as well as at the George Washington University on matters such as the role of intelligence in US foreign policy and the history of US intelligence.<sup>16</sup> Shulsky served on the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the US President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. He has written various articles on intelligence and US national security matters.<sup>17</sup>

Although intelligence terminology applied by the three authors differs, their explanations indicate that intelligence comprises the four main functions as mentioned above:

- **Collection** – also referred to as “intelligence collection”, is the gathering of raw data that, once analysed, can be applied for conclusions and advice to policymakers. Collection includes a variety of methods or techniques, such as human intelligence collection, espionage, photographic or imagery sources,

signal interceptions, open sources, and foreign relations through liaison with foreign defence forces.

- **Analysis** – refers to the process whereby all collected information or raw data are considered and compiled into what is referred to as an “intelligence product”. The intelligence product may take on various forms including:
  - **basic intelligence**, which is in essence a summary of the general background and characteristics of a country;
  - **current intelligence**, which is needed by policymakers or military decision-makers; and
  - **intelligence analysis**, which is advice to policymakers to plan and formulate strategic and long-term policy.

Analysis thus deals with issues affecting world security and/or issues threatening the security of the state.

- **Counter-intelligence (CI)** – involves measures that are implemented to protect own intelligence capabilities and military assets from foreign and unauthorised access and exploitation. These measures can be defensive or offensive by nature:
  - **Defensive** measures – usually in the form of policy prescripts – are means to prevent unauthorised access to personnel, information, equipment, and communications.
  - **Offensive** measures are operations against persons suspected of performing acts of espionage or the planning of subversive activities against the interest of the organisation, infiltration of foreign intelligence services (FIS), and deception to mislead hostile forces in terms of own military capabilities;
- **Covert action** – is classified as actions by a government to alter the political, military, economic and social order of a foreign government, with the emphasis on the secret or covert nature of the action. Types of covert action can be described as propaganda where information is directed against a target population by paramilitary operations with the aim of manipulating the constitutional stability of a foreign state. Whether covert action is executed through passive means, such as propaganda, or by using force, defence forces or intelligence organisations will be tasked to carry out such operations. Instead of restricting themselves to intelligence advice for the execution of policy, intelligence organisations are, by implication, tasked with the execution of national policy.

### *Early Development of Wide-Ranging Collection Capabilities*

An effective capacity for intelligence collection was developed through various collection methods. Prior to 1961, the SADF and the UDF had already deployed military attachés (MAs) abroad. Representation was, however, restricted to France, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States. At the end of 1961, Colonel MJ Uys, the Chief Intelligence Officer and head of the IS, recommended the expansion of MAs to include Canada, Italy, Switzerland, and West Germany.<sup>18</sup> Uys motivated his request for the need to expand the overt collection capability of the SADF by referring to the isolation of South

Africa following the exit of the country from the Commonwealth. By 1967, the SADF had extended their military representation to eight countries, viz. Australia, Canada, Italy, France, Portugal, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the United Kingdom, and the United States.<sup>19</sup> The MAs were provided with clear guidelines in terms of what to report on regarding their host countries and the armed forces of the host country. Most important were military operations and exercises as well as personalities in the host defence force. Other responsibilities included:

- Technical intelligence on the military capability of the armed forces of the host country;
- The influence of political developments in the host country;
- The economic situation in the host country and its influence on its armed forces;
- Relations with other foreign MAs, and the stance of the latter towards South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to Uys's motivation in 1961 for the expansion of MAs abroad, he also motivated for the placement of trained intelligence officers – so-called “military intelligence information officers” (MIIOs) – overseas to conduct overt collection. The purpose of the MIIOs was to assist MAs who were over-burdened with their MA responsibilities, which entailed the maintenance and furthering of military relations between the SADF and their host defence forces.<sup>21</sup> MIIOs in France and the United Kingdom were declared officials at the respective SA diplomatic missions, and served as the intelligence liaison officers between the DMI and the intelligence organisations of their host countries.<sup>22</sup>

Information on the scope of covert collection immediately after 1961 is limited. By 1964, the tasks of the production section at the DMI were indicated as –

- Recruitment, training, and deployment of agents;
- Liaison with deployed agents;
- Covert collection of militaries, as well as political and economic information;
- Rendering of technical assistance to agents.<sup>23</sup>

By 1967, a specific covert collection section was considered, whose function was described as the covert collection of information, which could not be collected by any other means.<sup>24</sup>

It was only towards mid-1968 that the DMI structured an independent directorate providing for all the different collection methods to determine the military threat against South Africa and South West Africa (Namibia) at the time. It would appear that, although the structure was recommended and approved, various proposed foreign offices were already operational, and covert collectors deployed. Five were already operational, viz. Lisbon (staffed within the SA Embassy), London, Paris, and two undercover elsewhere in France and West Germany. Three offices in Belgium, Holland and London operated independently. A **liaison section** interacted with friendly FISs and MAs abroad. An **electronic collection and telecommunication section** was in a developmental phase, although a restricted capability already existed at the time. Where these collection activities included covert actions and the placement of covert DMI personnel abroad, it was in

collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) or with their consent. The representatives were also declared in the countries of deployment with the FISs with whom they liaised.<sup>25</sup>

The placement of military representatives on secondment to the DFA should be viewed against the background of the strategic position of South Africa in the early 1960s. During this period, Portugal, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and South Africa collectively viewed themselves as being threatened by the rise of African nationalism, the threat of liberation movements, and a shift in international opinion against European colonialism, including in Africa. Of concern to Portugal, specifically, were their two African colonies in Southern Africa: Angola and Mozambique. These areas were in South Africa's area of strategic interest, and instability in the two countries was viewed as a direct threat to stability in South Africa.<sup>26</sup>

South Africa therefore deemed it important to establish an intelligence collection and liaison capability across the region, subsequently concentrating its regional military foreign relations on the placement of military representatives in Luanda, Angola, and Lourenço Marques (Maputo). Representatives from the SADF were seconded to the DFA for deployment as vice consuls (VCs), as Angola and Mozambique were Portuguese colonies, and South Africa thus had consular representation in these two countries, but not at embassy level.<sup>27</sup> The VCs liaised directly with the armed and intelligence services in their host countries. Their main responsibility was the provision of intelligence to the DMI, collected through liaison with the local Portuguese intelligence agencies. Their method of collection was overt and through liaison with well-placed sources of intelligence. They were not mandated to engage in covert collection and the recruitment and handling of covert agents.<sup>28</sup>

In the early 1960s, the General Staff of the SADF concluded that the DMI had to investigate the conduct of electronic warfare (EW) functions. In 1964, the decision was taken that the army would execute electronic collection, whilst the DMI would be responsible for the crypto and data analysis of the electronically collected data.<sup>29</sup> By 1965, the telecommunication section of the DMI was tasked with –

- The coding and de-coding of secret handwriting;
- Communications with agents, and other intelligence organisations within the SADF and the SAP;
- Interception of electronic communications;
- Crypto-coding and decoding;
- Technical research.<sup>30</sup>

In his book, *A Spook's Progress*, Maritz Spaarwater indicates that, on joining the DMI in 1968, his task was the transcription of intercepted radio broadcasts between Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Lusaka (Zambia) of Radio Freedom broadcasts of the African National Congress (ANC) and Radio Free Africa of the Pan Africanist Congress.<sup>31</sup> By 1969, the mandate of the DMI was broadened to include electronic collection activities in conjunction with the SADF Officers Commanding Maritime Security, Joint Combat

Forces, and the Air Force. Portuguese-speaking national conscripts were deployed to electronic collection stations in Rundu and Katima Mulilo in northern SWA (Namibia).<sup>32</sup>

### *Comprehensive Analysis Capability*

Over the period 1961 to 1971, the DMI compiled a wide array of intelligence products (publications). The DMI annual report of March 1966 displayed a range of intelligence activities for 1965, especially strategic and operational intelligence reports, as depicted in Table 1 below:<sup>33</sup>

*Table 1: Strategic and operational intelligence reports for 1965.*

<b>Type of report</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Client (where indicated)</b>
<b>Military Intelligence</b>		
Order of Battle (ORBAT) of various African states	Not specified	SADF
Strategic and tactical intelligence studies	Eight in African countries	
Intelligence appreciations	Seven	
Target intelligence reports	50	SA Air Force
Intelligence reports and intelligence summaries	Few hundred	Inter-departmental Intelligence Co-ordination Division (IICD)
<b>Political Intelligence</b>		
Intelligence papers	228	
Appreciation of political subversion in South Africa	One	
Appreciation of communist activities in Africa	Two	
Completion of subversive "Omnibus" of 3 425 personalities involved in political and subversive activities against South Africa		
Synopsis of 285 political, subversive, and international organisations engaged in activities against South Africa		
Political and subversive reports	4 562	IICD, South African Police (SAP), FIS, and government departments
Overt collection of weekly summaries of political and subversive information	Weekly	Government departments



Type of report	Number	Client (where indicated)
<b>Military Economic Intelligence</b>		
Assessments on e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect of UK sanctions on Rhodesia (Zimbabwe);</li> <li>• Sustainability of the Portuguese economy;</li> <li>• Implications of Zambian mine strikes.</li> </ul>	Weekly in the form of bulletins and special reports	Government departments
<b>Counter-Intelligence (CI) and Military Security (MS)</b>		
Security vetting of DMI applicants	182	
Field security surveys at units and formations	249	

### *A Cumbersome Start to Counter-Intelligence*

During the 1960s, offensive CI (the investigation of acts of espionage, subversion and sabotage) was accepted as the responsibility of the DMI. Military security, defensive measures to protect SADF personnel, equipment and information by means of policies, instructions, and security surveys of military units from unauthorised access, were accepted as the responsibility of the army, the air force, and the navy. Although the distinction between CI and MS was well-defined, the execution of it however continuously changed up to the early 1970s.

Furthermore, during the founding of the initial IS in 1961, its responsibilities, related to security and intelligence, were already ill-defined. The IS had to structure its MS and CI responsibilities without any precedent as basis, and carried out its security function as it defined the MS and CI. With regard to MS, the IS concentrated on security education and awareness within the SADF and, as a CI function, carried out clandestine infiltration tests of military bases to evaluate its level of security measures and to recruit informants. These actions, however, led to negative perceptions towards the DMI, as commanders perceived the actions as attempts to expose incompetent execution of their commands. The MS component also caused a discrepancy in responsibilities as it investigated security breaches and possible acts of espionage, subversion, and sabotage, which were the responsibility of the CI component. Counter-intelligence was also responsible for the recruitment and handling of informants within and outside the SADF, to collect security-related information within the broad population and subversive organisations and FISs. These were, however, the responsibility of covert collection.<sup>34</sup>

During September 1963, the SAP indicated that it could no longer conduct security screenings of uniformed and civilian members of the SADF. The DMI hence accepted

responsibility for its own vetting in the SADF, although the SAP would remain a source of information in the vetting process.<sup>35</sup> By August 1964, the DMI had an approved vetting structure of 58 personnel under the MS Section.<sup>36</sup>

Between 1964 and 1968, CI was subject to various changes in structure and responsibilities. These mainly related to an extension of offensive CI measures by the DMI and the extension of the MS function to the army, the air force, and the navy. By 1968, CI was reorganised into a structure that would remain unchanged until 1976. Only minor structural adjustments were made, and the description of certain responsibilities was affected. Due to the negative connotation, MS investigations were only conducted on request by officers commanding units and not unannounced by the DMI. The conduct of counter-espionage operations was executed only in consultation with the SAP. Later in 1964, a security committee was founded under chairmanship of the Director Counter-Intelligence, consisting of representatives of the army, the air force, the navy, the Quartermaster General, the Chief of Administration, the Military Psychological Institute, Civil Protection, and the Comptroller of the SADF to coordinate security policy within the SADF.<sup>37</sup>

In November 1968, the first CI regional office was opened in Cape Town. It was responsible for security vetting, MS advisory tasks, and security investigations in the Western Cape Command area.<sup>38</sup> In the same year, CI recognised the necessity of covert and clandestine investigations that were not possible due to the task being carried out by uniformed members of the CI investigations section. The founding of covert field offices was approved by the CG SADF, and would enable CI investigators to operate in civilian clothes, use civilian registered vehicles, and have no contact with the CI headquarters, except on command level.<sup>39</sup>

### *Limited Commencement of Covert Action in Support of the State*

When considering the historical data of the 1960s, it is difficult to categorise clearly the different collection activities as performed by the DMI. The reason for this was that, at times, the covert (or clandestine) and overt nature of the activities was ill-defined, and tended to overlap. An example was the placement of VCs in Angola and Mozambique. Their task, overt intelligence collection, could arguably also be categorised as covert action as they were operating in a covert manner as DFA personnel.

For the purpose of covert action, two intelligence activities will be discussed as they conform to the definition of covert action as discussed in this article.

### *Psychological Operations within the SADF and South African Population*

During 1964, the DMI commenced with planning for the execution of psychological operations (PsyOps) on the premise that South Africa no longer existed in a status of peace, but was subject to a communist-inspired psychological onslaught that manifested in the form of negative media reports against not only South Africa, but also against the SADF. The CG SADF authorised the formation of a PsyOps section within the DMI, with the purpose of countering these media onslaughts by specialised psychological operations to strengthen the preparedness of the SADF. The functions of PsyOps were stipulated as –

- Determination of the psychological onslaught against South Africa with specific reference to the SADF;
- The planning and execution of PsyOps;
- Liaison with relevant authorities.<sup>40</sup>

Early in 1965, in conjunction with the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research, a programme was developed for the implementation of the PsyOps function. The programme would consist of three activities: a psychological analysis/PsyOps intelligence group; a research group; and an action group.

- The responsibility of the **analysis–intelligence group** was the determination of the scope of propaganda against – or in support of – South Africa, and the compilation of reports for the action group. The propaganda analysis was based on scrutinising all internal and external newspapers, radio broadcasts, and printed media.
- The **research group** formulated projects and programmes for the execution of PsyOps. Already in the 1960s, the programmes included aspects, such as training of SADF personnel to resist interrogation, indoctrination, and brainwashing, as well as indoctrination and programmes against certain target groups. Specialised PsyOps were developed in conjunction with the SADF Institute for Aviation Medicine.
- The **action group** was responsible for the execution of programmes developed by the research group, by a decentralised system of implementation and execution.

These programmes were not restricted to implementation within the SADF only, but were also directed at the SA population. Various operations were also executed with other state departments to determine the psychological preparedness of the populace, and to institute programmes to strengthen its mental preparedness.<sup>41</sup>

### *Special Liaison with Foreign Governments*

Since the early 1960s, DMI engaged in various intelligence operations and relations not only with FISs, but also with the political leadership of certain countries. These operations were carried out in conjunction with the DFA and in support of SA foreign policy and national interest. The founding of this function within the organisational structure of the DMI, as in the case of covert collection, developed from the above-mentioned action group who described its aim in 1964 as the ‘conduct of special military intelligence operations’ and its tasks as ‘the planning, and specifically execution of these operations, as well as liaison with relevant institutions’.<sup>42</sup> The rationale for these operations was the increasing international isolation of South Africa after 1961 due to its internal political policy and incessant changing foreign policy. This changing foreign policy was dictated by the marginalised international position of South Africa and the willingness of other isolationist states towards which South Africa necessarily tended, or countries who viewed South Africa as a means for the execution of their own foreign policy.<sup>43</sup> Various projects were already conducted in the 1960s.

In October 1965, Brigadier PM Retief, who succeeded Uys in December 1961, had a meeting with Pres. Francois Tombalbaye of Chad on request of the latter and arranged through Jean Mauriceau-Beaupré of the French intelligence service, the *Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage* (SDECE), with whom the DMI maintained excellent relations. At the time, Chad took a pro-Western and anti-communist stance, and the country had the potential for the deployment of a listening post for South Africa. During their meeting, Retief and Tombalbaye agreed on economic cooperation, resulting in the provision of geological equipment and training support from South Africa.<sup>44</sup> Tombalbaye indicated his willingness to engage in close relations with South Africa, but said that such contact should be executed with caution and in a discrete manner so as not to influence Chadian relations with other African states. As the discussions took place with an SA military delegation in the person of Retief from the DMI, Tombalbaye requested that his intentions be directed to the SA Prime Minister.<sup>45</sup>

Strong military relations developed with Pres. Omar Bongo of Gabon who, together with the Ivory Coast, shared strong views against the pro-communist stance of Nigeria and thus sympathised with the Biafran cause. After the Biafran Civil War, the DMI coordinated the donation of T6 training aircraft used for pilot training and surveillance by South Africa, followed up with a commitment by Botha for additional aircraft following requests by Bongo, mediated through Brig. Gen. Fritz Loots. On advice of the DMI and through the excellent relations it maintained with Pres. Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, assistance (unspecified) was provided by South Africa to Kofi Busia, a presidential candidate in the 1969 Ghanaian presidential election, which the latter subsequently won, resulting in a pro-South African stance by Ghana during the tenure of Busia.<sup>46</sup>

### **Absence of a National Intelligence Coordination Structure**

During the first seven years after 1961, the DMI was responsible for the conduct of political and economic intelligence, a responsibility for which the SADF and its intelligence component were not trained. No national intelligence service existed. Also of concern was the lack of a coordinated national intelligence mechanism to render intelligence advice at national level.

As early as 1962, Retief noted his concern that the DMI was not sufficiently staffed and equipped to address intelligence in terms of –

- The economic and industrial potential of African states in particular;
- Certain other foreign states concerning their intent towards South Africa;
- The scientific and technological capabilities of foreign states, not only pertaining to the threat this held for South Africa, but also because South Africa was acquiring military equipment and arms from these states.<sup>47</sup>

By the end 1961, the DMI recommended the founding of an Interdepartmental Intelligence Bureau (IDIB). The aim of the IDIB, consisting of relevant state departments, was to address deficiencies in the national intelligence effort. The proposed IDIB would comprise the secretaries of the prime minister and the participating departments, the CG SADF, and

the commissioner of the SAP. The IDIC would also exercise control over the collection and evaluation of information as well as the dissemination of intelligence. The development of intelligence sources in Africa would be a priority, as well as advising Cabinet on intelligence matters. The recommendations of the DMI were not approved. By 1964, however – and not on the initiative of the DMI – two committees were founded with the aim to coordinate intelligence between the different intelligence-related state departments. A State Security Committee (SSCom) was formed consisting of the Secretary of the DFA, the CG SADF (presented by the DMI), and the Commissioner of the SAP. The SSCom was responsible for evaluating and reporting on aspects threatening state security. In concert with the responsibilities of the SSCom, were initiatives by the SADF to address the potential revolutionary climate in South Africa. In 1965, Exercise Pandora was conducted at the South African Military College in Pretoria. The aim of the exercise, in which the DMI played the leading role, was to coordinate the responsibilities of the SADF, the SAP, and other state departments in countering the internal revolutionary threat. As the onslaught was deemed to be 80 per cent political in nature, all departments ought to have been involved. Structures were instituted to manage and execute a national counter-revolutionary strategy under the auspices of a National Security Council consisting of the prime minister, various departmental ministers, including the Minister of Defence, and the CG SADF.<sup>48</sup>

In February 1968, Loots concluded that it was clear that all these initiatives were ineffective and cumbersome, and he subsequently recommended the founding of a centralised national intelligence mechanism as the structures failed to coordinate interdepartmental intelligence cooperation. He compiled a memorandum to the CG SADF propagating the creation of a central national co-ordinating mechanism to manage all intelligence activities within South Africa. Loots based the necessity of such a mechanism on two arguments:

- Firstly, it was held that government lacked a comprehensive overview of the threat against South Africa, including the military threat; thus, that government was unable to compile a strategy to counter any threat effectively;
- Secondly, the escalation of an unconventional threat internally, such as protest actions and sabotage, necessitated a national coordinated counter-strategy.

Loots therefore propagated a national coordinating mechanism, and not a new central intelligence organisation, as all the elements to conduct intelligence already existed among relevant state departments. The departments Loots referred to were –

- The DFA for the collection and evaluation of political intelligence;
- The SAP for internal security; and
- The DMI for the collection and evaluation of military intelligence.

As was the case with the recommendations of Retief in 1964, these recommendations of Loots were disapproved.<sup>49</sup>

## **DMI Ostensibly an Autonomous Intelligence Organisation**

Despite the lack of departmental prescripts and national legislation to mandate its intelligence functions, the compulsory execution of non-military-related intelligence tasks and ineffective intelligence coordination, by 1968, the DMI appeared to be an effective intelligence organisation, performing all the functions of an intelligence service.

Training of intelligence personnel was conducted at the South African Army College in subjects such as field intelligence; CI; psychological warfare; photo interpretation; sabotage, interrogation and linguistic training; technical intelligence; as well as signal intelligence.<sup>50</sup> Certain specialised courses, such as agent handling and training for covert deployments abroad, were conducted in the Alphen Building in central Pretoria, the headquarters of the DMI.<sup>51</sup>

By 1965, the strength of the DMI was approved at 260, although the actual strength was only 173.<sup>52</sup> In 1968, civilian members were provided the opportunity to militarise, which 19 members accepted, ranging from the rank level of lieutenant to colonel.<sup>53</sup> Between 1968 and 1970, various policy frameworks were developed for fair labour practises for civilian members within a military environment in terms of remuneration, military training, and promotion opportunities.<sup>54</sup> In 1969, the DMI recruited 11 conscripts as –

- Translators of Portuguese, French, German, and Russian documents;
- Qualified drafters for the compilation of maps;
- Telecommunications technicians;
- Administrative personnel;
- Graduates in the fields of political science, economy, international politics, and geography.<sup>55</sup>

By decree of the Minister of Defence, the DMI was allotted the status of an independent corps on 1 January 1968, named the South African Military Intelligence Corps (SAMIC).<sup>56</sup>

Although the DMI appeared by 1968 to be an established intelligence organisation, events later in the year however drastically changed this situation, and would usher in two years of uncertainty for the DMI. These events were the establishment of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) in 1968, which led to the disbandment of the DMI and the introduction of the Potgieter Report instituted by Prime Minister BJ Vorster in September 1969 into the security and intelligence establishment in South Africa.

## **Emergence of the BOSS and the Disbandment of the DMI**

The emergence of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) as well as the temporary disbandment and re-instatement of the DMI – after its brief incorporation within the BOSS structure – occurred between October 1968 and April 1969. Although this relatively short period had no significant impact on the long-term operation of the DMI, it remains important in the context of the subsequent demarcation of responsibilities and relations of the DMI and the BOSS. Central to these developments was Hendrik van den Berg, former head of the Security Branch of the SAP and newly appointed head of the BOSS, as well as Prime Minister Vorster, and Minister of Defence, PW Botha.

The CG SADF convened a Supreme Command Council (SCC) meeting during October 1968 with the specific aim to brief the SCC on the envisaged new BOSS that would be founded and headed by Van den Berg, and the appointment of Loots as the deputy head of the BOSS. The DMI within the SADF would be dissolved, and most of its functions and personnel transferred to the BOSS. With the exception of the CI function, which was transferred to the Chief of Defence Staff within the SADF, the DMI was officially disbanded on 30 October 1968.<sup>57</sup> Events however followed that would lead to the exit of the former DMI elements from BOSS and the re-instatement of the DMI by April 1969, merely six months later. The main reasons for the reinstatement of DMI were:

- Opposition by the SCC of the SADF;
- An indication by the transferred DMI component that the envisaged coordinated intelligence approach was not effective;
- Most importantly, poor relations and confrontations between Botha, who harboured serious reservations about the new intelligence compensation, and Van den Berg.

The problems raised by Botha were threefold:

- Firstly, Botha accused Van den Berg of poor relations with Loots and excluding the transferred DMI elements at BOSS meetings.
- Secondly, the practice of Van den Berg serving as the prime minister's security advisor was in principle unsound, and a conflict of interest, and the BOSS could not be allotted internal policing functions without proper legislation directing its mandate.<sup>58</sup>
- Lastly, Van den Berg's intent with the newly instituted BOSS, which included a declaration by Van den Berg of his intent with the BOSS, his own allocated powers as head of the BOSS, and his role as security advisor to the prime minister.<sup>59</sup>

On 24 February 1969, Van den Berg – in his capacity as the security advisor to the Prime Minister – forwarded his intent as head of the BOSS in a directive entitled 'Funksionering van die Buro vir Staatsveiligheid' (Functioning of the Bureau of State Security) to the CG SADF.<sup>60</sup> According to the directive, the BOSS would act as the central intelligence organisation, and would advise relevant departments on matters of intelligence and CI concern. Van den Berg would be –

- Responsible only to the prime minister;
- Mandated to task any department on intelligence matters;
- Have extended powers to coordinate and evaluate intelligence of national, security, and military nature.

State departments were expected to second members, acceptable to Van den Berg himself, to the BOSS. Further –

- A National Intelligence Appreciation (NIAP) would be created for the SADF and the relevant state departments for the compilation of their own departmental strategies.

- The NIAP would be the exclusive responsibility and mandate of the BOSS.
- The BOSS would control, coordinate, and execute all CI, espionage, and security activities in South Africa, although in cooperation with departments.
- The BOSS would have unhindered access to departments who would be expected to report all security matters systematically to the BOSS who would advise departments on suggested courses of action.
- Psychological warfare and propaganda operations would be planned, controlled, and executed by the BOSS in cooperation with applicable state departments.
- State departments could conduct their own tactical and departmental intelligence, with the provision that matters related to security and intelligence had to be forwarded to the BOSS.<sup>61</sup>

Van den Berg's intent drew immediate and alarmed response from the CG SADF.

On request of the CG SADF, Brig. H de V du Toit, former deputy to Loots, was requested to comment on the stated intent of Van den Berg.<sup>62</sup> On 11 March 1969, Du Toit commented that the main task of the BOSS – which included intelligence as well as security – was unsound, and against international intelligence practices:

- Security implied a policing function with specific training and expertise, and as such should be relegated to the SAP;
- The BOSS could not fulfil the role as overarching intelligence organisation whilst at the same time executing the full spectrum of intelligence activities;
- Military intelligence by the SADF could not be relegated to tactical level, as this would deprive the DMI of performing strategic intelligence as one of its main responsibilities was to advise the CG SADF on the external threat against South Africa;
- The entire intent was further flawed by ambiguities, such as unclear distinction between security and safety, liaison officers who manage the interest of their departments, and the potential subjectivity and discretion of the security advisor, who in this case was Van den Berg;
- Lastly, Du Toit also referred to the personal power that would be allotted to Van den Berg as security advisor to the prime minister. This would result in Van den Berg having unhindered access, a mandate and authoritative control over the wide spectrum of SA intelligence departments, as well as the choice of departmental seconded personnel according to his personal preference.<sup>63</sup>

Based on Du Toit's comments, Botha wasted no time, and unilaterally withdrew the DMI component from BOSS, and on 17 April 1969, informed Vorster accordingly.<sup>64</sup> Following the decision by Botha, the CG SANDF re-instated the DMI under the SADF on 21 April 1969.<sup>65</sup> In April 1969, after consultations between himself, the ministers of defence and police, the CG SADF, and Van den Berg, Vorster issued a directive confirming the re-instatement of the DMI.<sup>66</sup>

The withdrawal of the DMI from BOSS did not have any effect on the functioning and status of the BOSS. On 7 May 1969, Vorster issued a directive regarding the state



security dispensation for South Africa. The directive provided for the appointment of a national security advisor for the prime minister and the establishment of a central national intelligence service, directed by the national security advisor. The DMI was mandated to conduct political, economic, industrial, and geographical intelligence, but only when required for analysis of a military threat against the state. The BOSS was mandated as the national central intelligence organisation, and would be responsible for:

- The formulation of intelligence policy;
- The coordination of intelligence activities within the different intelligence-related state departments;
- The investigation of all aspects threatening the security of the state;
- The provision of advice to the prime minister and relevant state departments regarding such a threat.<sup>67</sup>

Despite its withdrawal from the BOSS, its re-instatement as an autonomous intelligence organisation within the SADF, as well as the directive by Vorster authorising its role and mandate, the DMI would, nevertheless, again be the subject of investigation. It would appear that Vorster, after the founding of the BOSS and the re-establishment of the DMI, continued to harbour reservations concerning the division of intelligence responsibilities within South Africa.

### **The Potgieter Report: Finality in the Role of the DMI**

On 15 September 1969, Vorster appointed Justice HJ Potgieter to investigate the security of the state with specific reference to the role of the different intelligence organisations within South Africa. The findings of the investigation, detailed in the report by the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to Security of the State (“the Potgieter Report”), stipulated the division of responsibilities of the intelligence services.<sup>68</sup> Potgieter was tasked to determine whether the state departments involved in intelligence matters regarding the security of the state functioned properly and in a co-ordinated manner, and to advise on any aspect concerning the security of the state and the necessity to amend legislation regarding the newly founded BOSS.<sup>69</sup>

The Potgieter Commission acknowledged the DMI as a legitimate organisation within South Africa dealing with aspects regarding the security of the state. The Commission determined that the DMI had to be mandated to address, apart from the military, also political, economic, educational and psychological intelligence, and subversive aspects, as well as terrorism, sabotage, and espionage. Most importantly, however, Potgieter emphasised that the SADF, based on the conduct of intelligence since 1961, acted within its mandate by being responsible for the safeguarding of South Africa. He concluded that, as there was no national coordinating organisation, structure, or central intelligence organisation, it was reasonable and acceptable that the SADF had to take this national intelligence responsibility upon itself. It was acceptable that political, economic, and social intelligence fell within the intelligence responsibility of the DMI due to the overlapping of these aspects and the influence it had on national threat assessments.<sup>70</sup>

Potgieter confirmed that the BOSS, as structured and mandated at the time, had to act as the central intelligence organisation for the state and as structure for the central evaluation of national intelligence in conjunction with other intelligence departments. The BOSS was the only intelligence organisation mandated to collect covert information, both internally and externally, except for the SADF, who could do so during times of war. The BOSS was obliged to provide state departments with collected information that fell within their area of responsibility, while state departments had to provide the BOSS with information that fell within the mandate of the latter.<sup>71</sup> The recommendations of the Potgieter Report were promulgated in the *Security Intelligence and State Security Council Act (No. 64 of 1972)*.<sup>72</sup>

Following the Potgieter Report, Du Toit demarcated the responsibilities of the DMI and his views on the scope of intelligence and liaison between the BOSS and the DMI. The latter would include political, economic, industrial, technical, scientific, social, psychological, geographical, and tactical intelligence. It would be the task of the DMI to compile a military analysis, considering and including strategic and tactical aspects, and to advise the SADF Defence Staff Council (DSC). Du Toit concluded by summarising the main responsibilities of the DMI as –

- Advising the DSC on the military threat against South Africa, and on a counter-strategy;
- Furnishing the services with strategic intelligence for operational planning;
- Coordinating the military intelligence function within the SADF.

On 29 November 1971, the DMI was renamed Military Intelligence Division (MID), and the military intelligence and CI functions were amalgamated under the MID. Du Toit replaced Loots, was promoted to Major General, and appointed in the new post of Director General Military Intelligence (DGMI).<sup>73</sup>

During the decade 1960–1970, the DMI developed and structured itself according to the four main functions of an intelligence organisation as discussed previously, namely collection, analysis, CI, and covert operations. Most of the collection methods were already instituted by the DMI during the first decade after 1961 following collection of information through a network of SADF MAs and MIOs in Africa and abroad. The DMI supported the DFA in the advancement of SA foreign policy in Africa, although electronic and clandestine collection methods were applied in the developing stage. Analysis was the military intelligence function that developed most rapidly during the first decade after 1961. The reason might have been the effective recruitment system of the DMI whereby a substantial number of graduated members were recruited. These graduated members contributed not only to military intelligence, but also to the analyses of economic and political intelligence that were the responsibility of the DMI due to the absence of a national intelligence service. The CI function was subject to and hampered by continuous changes during the first decade after 1961, mainly due to ongoing adjustments in the structure of a developing SADF during this first decade. The responsibility of CI continuously migrated between the DMI and alternative structures within the rest of the SADF. Discrepancies also existed in terms of what was considered offensive and defensive responsibilities. During this first decade, the CI function – although distinguishing between

offensive and defensive – consisted primarily of defensive policies and regulations. During the 1960s, the DMI – although to a limited extent – already became involved in covert action as a direct result of strategic and political priorities of the state. Special liaison with foreign countries, in conjunction with the DFA, and the conduct of psychological operations amongst their own populations as well as against internal and foreign entities and persons acting against the state, all had political motives.

The successful evolution of the DMI to an autonomous organisation in 10 years can be attributed to various factors but the following are considered the most important ones:

- The dynamic personalities and leader qualities of its initial officers commanding, especially Retief with his ability to understand the core essentials of the intelligence function;
- An effective strategy in personnel acquisition and recruitment strategy within the SADF of experienced and academically qualified personnel from universities or elsewhere in the civil service;
- A well-established foreign intelligence network that enabled liaison with foreign intelligence services and efficient collection of information data as an imperative basis for intelligence analysis.

## **Conclusion**

Directly after its founding in 1961, the DMI was faced with various challenges. It was understaffed, lacked experience, and had no real knowledge of the conduct of intelligence or the role of an intelligence organisation. None of its members had any official intelligence training, especially on strategic level. In the absence of a civilian intelligence organisation, at least until 1968, the DMI conducted economic, political, and socio-economic intelligence, responsibilities that are not the primary functions of a military intelligence organisation.

During the decade 1961–1970, the DMI recommended on two occasions – in 1962 and again in 1968 – the founding of an organisation to conduct non-military-related intelligence as well as the coordination of intelligence-related activities of other national departments, and the compilation of a single intelligence analysis for consideration at national political level. Neither of these recommendations was approved, although an inter-departmental committee was established, albeit mostly ineffective, to consider intelligence matters.

A total lack of political guidelines and intelligence legislation characterised this period. None of various defence white papers addressed intelligence matters; the post of SecDef, which would normally provide political guidelines, was dissolved; and no intelligence legislation was promulgated.

The establishment of the BOSS in 1968 led to the temporary disbandment of the DMI, an occurrence that however had no major effect on the DMI. By 1971, the DMI was recognised as one of the official intelligence organisations within the SA intelligence community by the Potgieter Commission appointed by Prime Minister Vorster. By this time, the DMI had already successfully operationalised various intelligence functions.

Most of the collection methods, namely electronic, human and covert collection were already instituted during this period through a network of overt and covert collectors and the establishment of an electronic warfare capability. Analysis was the intelligence function that developed the most rapidly within the first decade after 1961. Shortly after 1961, the DMI already submitted operational, strategic, political, military, and economic intelligence. The CI function was subject to continuous changes during this period, mainly due to continuous changes in the structure of a developing SADF and the continuous migration of the CI responsibility between the DMI and structures within the rest of the SADF. In 1971, the CI organisation was however confirmed as a DMI responsibility. Covert action operations already existed in the form of psychological programmes against a hostile media and liaison with foreign governments in support of the DFA.

Despite the challenges of the first decade of its existence, by 1971, the DMI had established itself as a recognised organisation performing the four main functions of an intelligence organisation, as stated at the outset of this article.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Chris Pfeiffer was a career soldier who spent 38 years of his career at Defence Intelligence of the SA National Defence Force. Most of posts were in intelligence analysis, training, and foreign relations where he spent time in Chile and Spain. His interests cover South African history, ancient civilisations as well as African political history where the thesis of his Masters in Security Studies addressed security sector reform in South Sudan after cessation from Sudan. This article is an extract of his D Phil thesis on *The political and strategic influences on the development of military intelligence in the SADF: 1961 – 1990*.
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- <sup>63</sup> Funksionering van die Buro vir Staatsveiligheid, Veiligheidsadviseur van die EM, 24 February 1969, enclosure 41 and 42.
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