

ARMED FORCES

A Monthly Journal devoted to Defence matters

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- **Soldiering, Roman Style**
- **Counter — Insurgency
A Junior Leaders' War?**
- **The Nuclear Deterrent**

ARMED FORCES

EDITORIAL

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Cover Picture:

Members of Wemmerpan Commando at physical training

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The Defence Amendment Act changing periods of National Service came into force on the 1 January 1983 and although it is still too early to see just how it will work in practice there are some T's to cross and I's to dot in the mind of the general public. Questions that are being asked are:

How do I register
Am I registered
What is my present situation
Do I wait for the SADF to make the first move.

Generally the public does not want to run foul of the law and with some of our Courts imposing heavy sentences on service evaders there is an atmosphere of apprehension.

The recently issued Your Guide to National Service does not answer these questions either, and thousands of citizens and non-citizens are at present in a situation of limbo. Clause 21, which increases the age limit for registration of immigrants to 55, states that they will become liable for initial national service and additional service after that. The period of initial service is not stated, is it two years or thirty days? The same clause states the "all other South African citizens under the age of 55 are now compelled to register". How, Where and When?

Accepting the fact that all members of the SADF need training and discipline to a level that will enable them to undertake their allocated tasks, this requirement will have to be kept in line with their military commitment coupled with their civilian situation.

An example of what can happen is the situation in which that Mr M. currently finds himself. He entered the country at the age of 15, completed his schooling there and on the advice of his school teacher did not register for military service. At the age of 25 he received registration papers by post which he duly completed and returned. Shortly after that he moved residence. He did not advise of his change of address, which could be an omission rather than by intent. Five years later, December 1982, he was called-up for two years National Service with the January 1983 intake. He was still not taken out South African Citizenship, but has bond repayments and the usual family and hire-purchase commitments to meet. A two year call-up could affect his whole future, admittedly his present situation could be the result of his own actions, or lack of action, but the question arises if it would be in the national interest. Surely there should be some provision under which he could be called-up for lesser periods, sufficient to train him for what's ever his military task will be, together with having to meet an ongoing military commitment.

The rumour mill is working overtime with opinions about new dress regulations for the South African Defence Force. The general opinion being that the existing 'Stepouts' are to be withdrawn and the 'Browns' tarted up to fill the gap. Since 1946 the SADF has not had a very enviable history as regards uniform changes with the fashions coming and going, some not even arriving!

The rationale behind the change is claimed to be the costs involved in issuing 'Stepouts' to all National Servicemen. If rumours are correct and there is to be a change, it will be interesting to find out if it will affect the all important level of morale. When you consider that almost every army issues a 'Stepout' — Just how poor are we?

Even the Portuguese in their near state of poverty had a dress other than their combat dress.

THE EDITOR.

The Rhodesian Air Force

A History from inception to the Bush War

By

S. Monick, OLJ., MA., PhD., ALA., FSA(Scot.),
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Part Four

---8 Squadron (Motto : By Night and By Day): This Squadron was the Rhodesian equivalent of the British RAF Regiment, tasked with guarding and defending the airfields.

Combined squadron operations: It should be borne in mind that several squadrons often operated in unison.

A striking illustration of this inter-squadron co-operation was Operation 'Newton', executed in the Kandeya Tribal Trust Lands in June 1975. In April 1975 the Rhodesian Special Branch had obtained information at the scene of a contact that a ZANLA terrorist meeting had occurred between 22 and 25 March within the orbit of a village later identified as Mauswa; situated in the Hurricane operational area. Mauswa was contained in the terrorist orbit of operations known as Nehanda. It was concluded that the system of meeting used pre-supposed that the various Nehanda Sector terrorist groups would gravitate towards the region of Mauswa village (code name 'Vietnam') a few days before the meeting was scheduled. The RSF plan called for the Selous Scouts to establish clandestine observation points within the cordon area and for the SAS to effect reconnaissance patrols of the area at night in order to monitor movement. The most vital stage of the operation was the establishment of a cordon; within which the terrorist groups would be pressured. The area to be cordoned was approximately eight kilometres by four kilometres, an extensive area. To mount the operation, twelve companies of troops, supported by 2 Engineer Squadron and the mortar platoon from 1 Bn RAR were deployed; the troops drawn from D and E Coys, RAR; 1 and 3 Commandos and the Support Commandos of the RL1; 2 Independent Coy 1 Bn Rhodesia Rifles, D Coy, 2 BN Rhodesia Rifles, D Coy Bn Rhodesia Rifles; and G Coy 8 Bn Rhodesia Rifles. The Rhaf support consisted of 16 helicopters (7 Squadron), three Provosts (2 Squadron), seven Trojans (4 Squadron) and four Dakotas (3 Squadron). There were a number of contacts of 25 June, and a total of seven casualties suffered by the terrorists; the cordon had been incomplete due to paucity of troops endeavouring to cover too extensive an area, and many terrorists escaped.

An outstanding example of different RhAF squadrons operating in close and effective co-operation occurred in November 1977, when Rhodesian forces killed more than 1 200 terrorists, wounding hundreds more, in two attacks on guerrilla camps within Mozambique. These raids wrecked the insurgents' hopes of launching a rainy season offensive. The first attack was launched on the main operational headquarters of ZANLA near Chimoio on the road between Beira and Umtali. Helicopters and airborne troops, preceded by Canberra bombers and jet fighters, swept over the border and flew 86 km into Mozambique. The camp, 16 km north of Beira, was destroyed on 23-24 November. Hundreds of terrorists, waiting to be sent from camps to the forward areas, whence they would enter Rhodesia, were killed. Hundreds more, many wounded, fled in panic through the bush to Chimoio. There was an interval of only one day between this attack and a second launched against Tembue, a guerrilla holding camp north of the Zambezi River. Rhodesian forces had to fly almost 224 km into Mozambique. The raid, like the former, was of two days duration, commencing 25 November. The

RhAF support comprised:- the Hawker Hunters of 1 Squadron; the Dakotas of 3 Squadron (utilized for the transport of paratroopers drawn from the SAS and RL1); and the helicopters of 7 Squadron (the airborne assault being directed from both helicopters and Dakotas). In addition, two Lynx spotters (4 Squadron) were present in the operation; and even a Vampire was recalled from retirement to participate in the operation.

Operation 'Turmoil' (March 1978) provided a further marked illustration of combined squadrons closely co-operating in support of Rhodesian ground forces. The operation involved an attack on the ZIPRA staging post of Kavalamanja in Zambia, situated some 16 km west of Feira (cf. fig. vi) Special Branch became aware of its existence in August 1976. The Zambian Army's base was sited 10 km away from the ZIPRA complex. The Rhodesian reconnaissance team counted 50 Zambian soldiers, all of whom were busily engaged in digging defensive trenchworks around their camp, which dominated the northern route from Kavalamanja to Feira. Troops allocated for the attack consisted of two commandos of the RL1, one company of the RAR and the SAS. The SAS were to drop well north of Kavalamanja, with anti-tank weapons to block the main upper road to Feira, in order to guard against the possibility of interference by the Zambian Army. The RhAF played a vital role in this operation (cf. fig. vi). The attack would be initiated by the Hawker Hunters of 1 Squadron, which would fly in from the south across the river, neutralising all the anti-aircraft positions observed by the Selous Scouts reconnaissance team. The Canberras of 5 Squadron would fly in from the south west along the course of the Zambezi, and deposit their bouncing Alpha bombs. Following upon the Canberras would come the airborne assault troops ferried by the Dakotas of 3 Squadron; simultaneously with the troop carrying helicopters of 7 Squadron which would sweep in at low level across the flooded waters of the Zambesi River.

The heliborne troops would be put down in the west, whilst the paratroopers would be dropped in the north-east. The attack was executed at 10h00 on 6 March 1978. The troops were established in their DZ (dropping zone) positions, and sweeps towards the centre of the ZIPRA complex commenced. Unfortunately, the dense jessie bush covering the area was thicker than had been anticipated and slowed progress in reaching the terrorist base area to a disastrous extent. Consequently, by the time that the sweep had been completed the next morning, the majority of the terrorists had escaped across the flooded plain, taking advantages of the fact that the cordon had not been sealed by nightfall, and the flood plain not covered by stop gaps. The tabulated results were 42 terrorists killed; in addition to the camp's reserve ammunition stores and a number of vehicles captured.

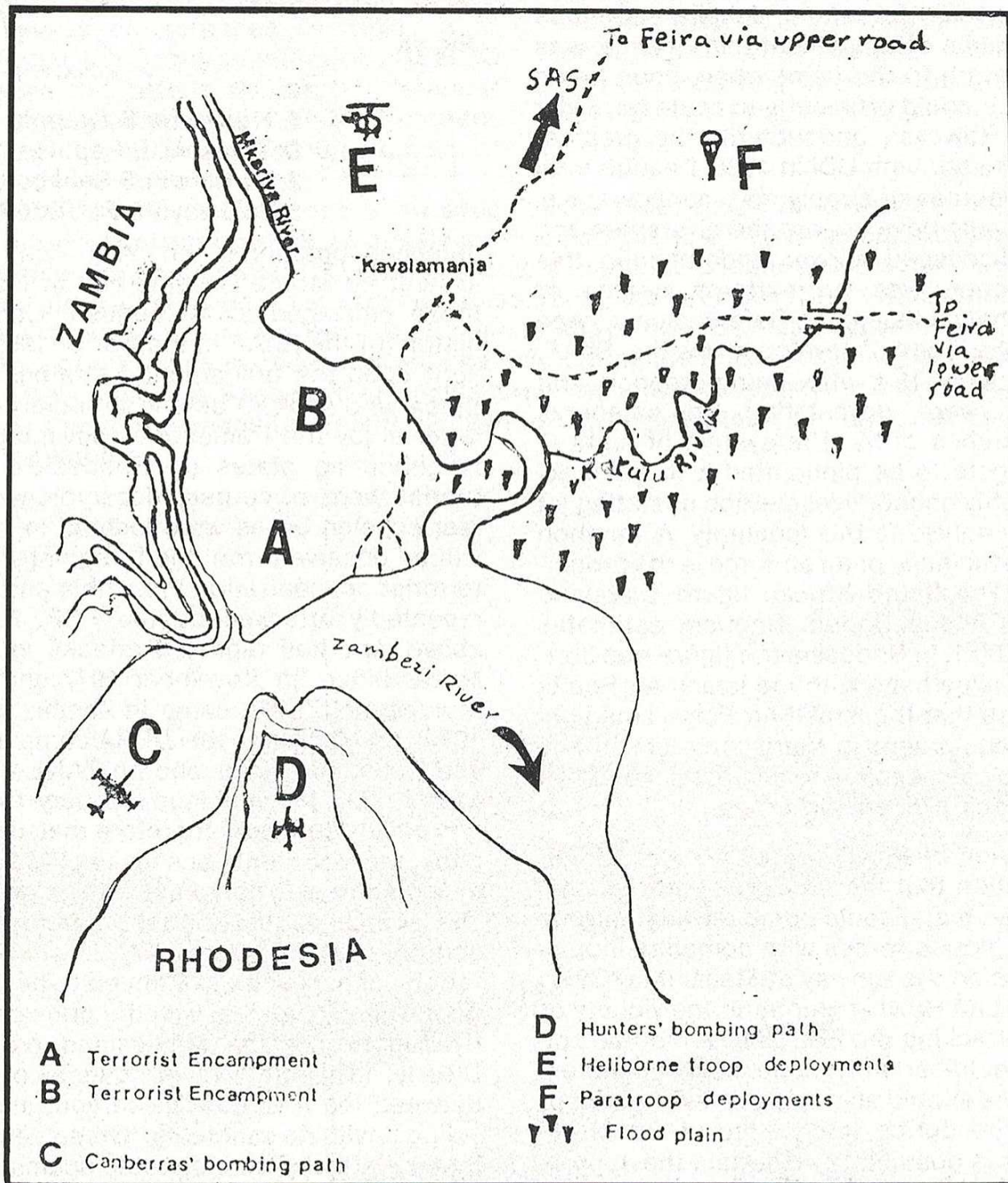
Perhaps the apotheosis of the devastating power of the RhAF operating in combined squadron strengths occurred in October 1978. Chikumbi camp, situated only 19 km north of Lusaka (and known to the Rhodesians as 'Westlands Farm') was obliterated by Hawker Hunters, Canberras and the 20 mm cannon of helicopter gun ships (20 October). The RhAF, under the control of 'Green Leader', dominated Zambian air space for 48 hours. Red Section - two Hawker

Hunters - controlled the air space in the area of the Zambian Air Force base at Mimbwa. Another section of 1 Squadron's Hunters (White Section) policed the area of Lusaka airport, ready to intercept any Zambian Air Force attempt to challenge the Rhodesian strike on Westlands Farm. 'Green Leader' (Sqn Ldr Christopher Dixon, commanding the Canberras) called up Lusaka airport and communicated the following message:

'Lusaka Tower, this is Green Leader. This is a message from the station commander at Mumbwa from the Rhodesian Air Force. We are attacking the terrorist base at Westlands Farm at this time. This attack is against Rhodesian dissidents and not against Zambia. Rhodesia has no quarrel . . . repeat, no quarrel . . . with Zambia or her Security Forces. We therefore ask you not to intervene or oppose our attack. However, we are orbiting your airfield at this time, and are under order to shoot down any Zambian Air Force aircraft which does not comply with this request and attempts to take off. Did you copy all that?'

British (to replace the Rapier air defence system installed by the British Aircraft Corporation, which had fallen into disrepair as the Zambian operators had no idea how it worked) proved as futile as it was later to prove in the Canberra strike of February-March 1979 (cf. above). Once again one notes the combined strengths of the different squadrons lending the diversification essential to such close support operations. The ground attack capabilities of the Hawker Hunters (1 Squadron) were combined with the bombing facilities of the Canberras (5 Squadron); synchronized to arrive over the target (i.e. Chikumbi Camp) were four helicopter gun ships (7 Squadron). It should also be noted that Dolphin-3 (an Air Force Command Dakota) took over the direction of Zambian air space from 'Green Leader'. Possibly the greatest tribute paid to the power of the RhAF in the closing years of the war was made by so incongruous a figure as President Kaunda of Zambia who stated at a news conference, in connection with these attacks:

'I am not a coward. If I sent in our boys to bomb Salisbury and Bulawayo, I would be committing suicide for Zambia.'



Lusaka Tower lamely replied, 'Yes, copied'; there was no attempt by the Zambian Air Force to intervene whilst their 'guests' at the ZIPRA base at Westlands were eliminated. The camp was a major staging area for new recruits. The bombing of the camp shook the windows of President Kaunda's presidential palace, whilst Nkomo was interrupted by the explosions as he sat down to his huge breakfast in his green-painted bungalow nearby. These attacks were in support of a three-day Rhodesian offensive into Zambia which commenced on 18 October and were the heaviest to date. Other camps were also struck, including Mkushi (on the Tazara railway line), old Mkushi and Mboroma. Mkushi (cf. fig vii) was still occupied by Rhodesian forces 24 hours after the first air strike. Over 1 500 guerrillas were killed. The sophisticated air defence system installed in Zambia by the

CONCLUSION TO HISTORY OF THE RhAF:

Throughout the 41 years of its existence (i.e. if one accepts 1939 - the date when the Air Force was officially designated the SRAF, as opposed to 1947, when it was re-constituted) the RhAF exhibited two major characteristics with a remarkable degree of consistency. The first of these characteristics was flexibility. It could adapt to radically different roles and effect important contributions to those roles. Thus, during the years 1954-1962 the RRAF (as it then was) played an important role in the United Kingdom's defence commitment to the Middle East, acting in close and efficient liaison with the RAF in Aden, Kuwait and Cyprus. With the dissolution of the Federation, the RhAF reverted to its original role of territorial defence. However, this role had assumed new and major

dimensions since the period 1947-1954, prior to the Force's contribution to CENTO; these new dimensions accrued, of course from the development of an intensive insurgency onslaught upon the established government of Rhodesia. In this new emphasis upon territorial defence, in close co-operation with ground forces, the RhAF once again made a crucial contribution. Its seven flying squadrons provided the diversification necessary for a flexible and efficient response to the contingencies of a COIN war, providing ground attack (1 and 2 Squadrons), Transport (3 Squadron), forward air control (4 Squadron), bombing and reconnaissance (5 Squadron), training (6 Squadron) and vital helicopter support (7 Squadron).

The second major characteristic that the RhAF manifested in its history was resilience. This aspect was displayed in its very early years, when its initial strength of Tiger Moths was developed into the sole Imperial air force available to the British Empire in East Africa at the outset of World War 2. However, the power of resilience was displayed to a greater degree after the conclusion of World War 2 when, its identity having been absorbed into the Royal Air Force, it was reconstituted as an independent force and, despite enormous and most daunting problems of equipment and finance, was able to augment its strength to the point when, upon being redesignated the RRAF, it could efficiently execute far wider defence commitments. However, undoubtedly the greatest test of this flexibility occurred with UDI in 1965. Despite total severance of its major sources of supply and manpower (i.e. the United Kingdom) it could develop into the diversified and highly efficient force discussed above. Underpinning this characteristic of resilience was an extreme degree of resourcefulness and technical ingenuity. Reference has been made above to the Alpha bombs developed by the RhAF, which bounced to a height of 15 ft after being dropped, and then exploded. These were devastating anti-personnel weapons; dropped in batches of 50. The system of night illumination, enabling targets to be pinpointed with great accuracy, as well as the highly economical method of starting jet engines, are further testimonies to this ingenuity. A common index for assessing the efficiency of an air force is the proportion of men to aircraft. The South African figure is approximately 100:1; in the USA and United Kingdom estimates range between 250:1 to 400:1. In Rhodesia the figure was 25:1. The closest comparison is perhaps with the Israeli Air Force; with the important proviso that the Israeli Air Force could obtain the latest American equipment, in sharp contrast with the RhAF, whose equipment was obsolete in comparison with all other (including many black African) air forces.

The foregoing discussion of RhAF operations should certainly refute any conception that the Air Force enjoyed total air superiority in the sense that it could bomb terrorist targets or air supply Rhodesian ground forces with complete impunity. The fate of the Dakota on the runway at Mapai (May 1977) and that of the Canberra and Hawker Hunter in the vicinity of Monte Cassino, when attacking the FRELIMO armoured column in October 1979, should certainly dispel such an impression. With this context one should also cite the destruction of a Canberra by ground fire during the course of Operation 'Manyatela' (cf. above). It is possible to ascertain the approximate number of RhAF personnel killed during the period 1965-1979; this numbered approximately 46. It is highly significant that approximately 19 members of the Force were killed between January 1977 and October 1979; a figure which contrasts with the three killed in action (excluding air accidents) between 1965 and 1977. The Military Balance (9) cites the total strength of the RhAF in 1978-1979 as consisting of 1 300 personnel and 84 combat aircraft.

These casualty figures are clearly an index of the extended role played by the RhAF after 1977 (a period characterized by the development of terrorist forces in Mozambique and Zambia, following upon the capitulation of the Portuguese in 1974/5); and the increasing sophistication of the terrorist anti-aircraft weaponry in the final years of the conflict. (In this context, one should bear in mind the extensive anti-aircraft

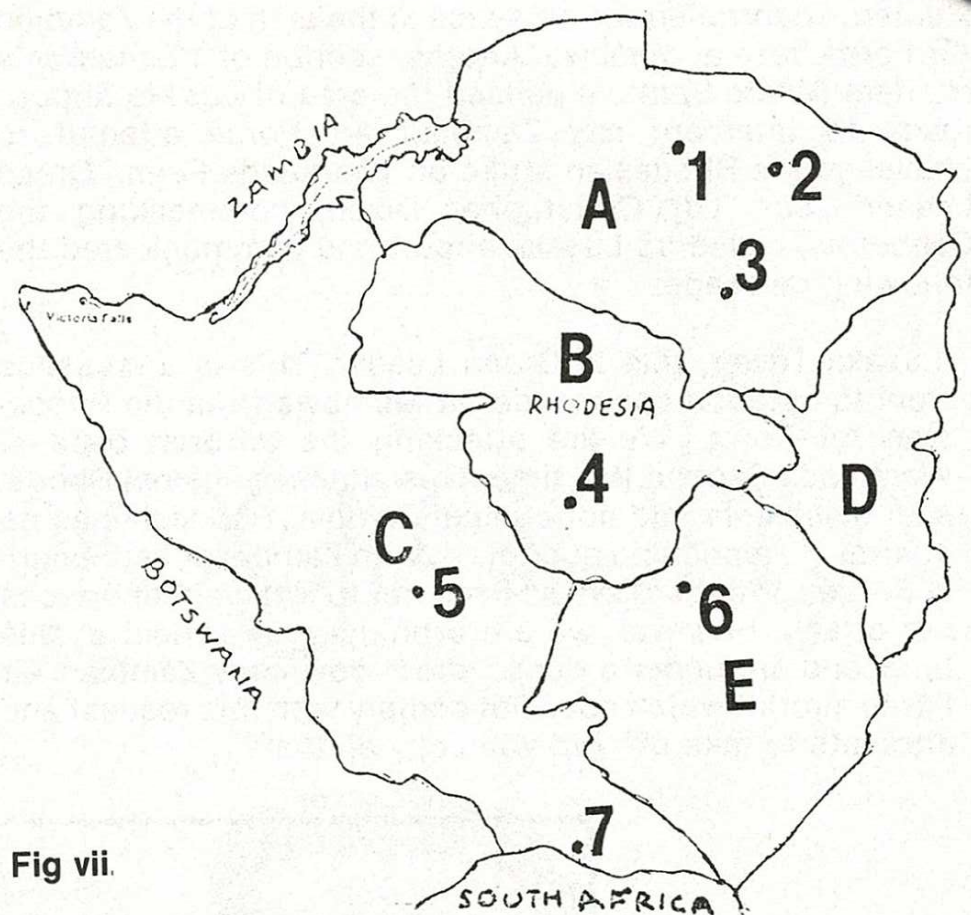


Fig vii.

**A Hurricane B Grapple C Tangent
D Thrasher E Repulse. 1 Centenary
2 Mt Darwin 3 Salisbury 4 Gwelo
5 Bulawayo 6 Ft Victoria 7 Beit Bridge.**

defences positioned on 'Ack Ack' hill in the Rhodesian assault on Monte Cassino Hill in October 1979, as well as those emplaced at Mulungushi Camp in April 1979). The history of the RhAF in the war of 1965-1980 casts an incisive light upon the fundamental strategic problems confronting those who seek to defend a society under attack when the latter enjoy the tremendous advantage of safe sanctuary in neighbouring states (in Rhodesia's case the close sanctuaries were, of course, Mozambique and Zambia, whilst the rear echelon bases were located in Tanzania and Angola). It will be observed from the foregoing discussion that areas of terrorist concentration in Zambia and Mozambique had to be repeatedly attacked by the RSF. For example, as stated above, one had repeated attacks in the vicinity of Chimoi, Mozambique (in November 1977 and October 1979); on the Mulungushi ZIPRA camp in Zambia (October 1978 and April 1979); on Mboroma, the ZIPRA camp in Zambia (October 1978 and December 1978); and on ZANLA camps in the region of Madulo Pan, Mozambique (January 1977 and May/June 1977). It is clearly apparent, therefore that, despite often devastating raids, the insurgents possessed the infrastructure - in terms of logistics and personnel - to re-group and re-consolidate. The source of that infrastructure was, of course, the host country providing sanctuary. It will be recalled that the terrorists, of necessity, continued to be clustered in the proximity of Chimoio, as this was the principal FRELIMO administrative centre for the Manicaland province of Mozambique. Clearly, this points to the danger of sharply distinguishing between the insurgent movement and the host country providing it with its sanctuary. 'Green Leader', when emphasizing that the attacks were directed against 'Rhodesian dissidents' and not against Zambian forces (cf. above) was executing a policy determined by diplomatic/political, as opposed to strictly military, considerations.

In point of fact, the ability of the insurgents to persistently re-group despite devastating ground/air attacks would ultimately have stroyed the effectiveness of the RhAF in two major respects. First, as was decisively proved by the American involvement in Vietnam, the technological assault upon insurgency (and, of course, air power represents the application of technology to war 'par excellence') is most expensive. It should be borne in mind that the enormous volumes of fire power expended by the RhAF in these attacks could not continue indefinitely within the context of a sanctions attacked economy. The economic dimensions of the Rhodesian COIN war have been discussed in a previous paper

in this journal. It is appropriate to quote an extract in this regard (8).

'... sanctions (in effect the problem of foreign currency) only proved a decisive factor when the Rhodesian Government committed itself to a war of attrition. The response to sanctions was profoundly crippled by the war's consumption of foreign reserves which, whilst limited, might nevertheless have proved adequate if the COIN offensive had been determined by the objectives of a swift victory with small forces... the COIN operations in the last years of the decade cost approximately R1,4m per day, representing two-fifths of the country's budget. In 1971-72, before the war intensified, Defence and Police spending totalled £34 m sterling. The 1976-77 estimates were £122 m, representing an increase of 34% over the previous year... overall defence expenditure for the year ending June, 1977 consumed some 23% of the total expenditure.'

Second, the technological ceiling of the RhAF was definitely fixed, its obsolete Canberras, Dakotas and Hawker Hunters could not be replaced with more modern aircraft, due to sanctions (its Vampires had been scrapped in 1976). It is reasonable to assume that the Soviet mentors of FRELIMO would have strengthened the latter's anti-aircraft defences with sophisticated missile systems as well as M1G fighters. The undoubted technical ingenuity and resourcefulness of

the RhAF could not have availed in such a situation. A case in point was the Alpha bombs, discussed above. Whilst a significant contribution to the Rhodesian bombing attacks, it rendered the Canberra bombers (originally designed to be high altitude aircraft) increasingly vulnerable to the terrorist anti-aircraft defences, due to the necessity to bomb from a height of 300 ft.

This, the options available to the RhAF were contracting in terms of time scales (as, indeed, they were for all the other units of the RSF) and the only viable approach - in strictly military terms - was to make no distinction between the insurgents and the governmental infrastructure which was supporting them during a period in which the Rhodesians enjoyed total air superiority; a period which may be roughly equated with the time span 1975-1977. (Such an approach was more relevant in the case of Mozambique than to Zambia, in which the commitment to the insurgent cause was somewhat less than total; and where it appeared that the Rhodesian attacks upon specifically ZIPRA targets was compelling the Zambian government to re-appraise its attitude towards its disruptive 'guests'. This ambivalent attitude was, indeed, manifest prior to the Rhodesian cross-border raids; in 1975, for example, 1 550 insurgents were incarcerated in Zambian prisons, following upon Herbert Chitepo's assassination in April of that year, including virtually the entire ZIPRA high command).

ADVANCED FIGHTER CONCEPT - Defense of U.S. air space in the 1990s might be entrusted to aircraft such as the two illustrated above. This artist's conception shows a possible Advanced Tactical Fighter under study by the Lockheed-California Company. It could defend the continental U.S. against enemy supersonic bombers and would have long-range capability to perform deep strike and air-to-air missions in any theater. Resembling the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird both in design and performance, the proposed ATF would use new advanced aluminium alloys that cost less than titanium. Such alloys would make feasible the manufacture of the airframe under conventional fabricating methods, according to Lockheed engineers. Titanium would be used in extremely high heat areas such as engine nacelles, where temperatures can reach 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Some advanced carbon graphite composites would be used in the inner parts of the airframe. Lockheed has no immediate plans to develop such a fighter.

