

## **Operation Marion**

236 One of the first instances of covert military assistance between Inkatha and the South African government was *Operation Marion*, the SADF Military Intelligence project set up in early 1986 in order to provide assistance to Inkatha and the KwaZulu government. During 1985, Chief Buthelezi was alerted by Military Intelligence to alleged assassination plans against him. This prompted him, in late 1985, to approach Military Intelligence with a request for various capabilities, including an offensive paramilitary capacity, in order to take on the ANC/UDF. His request was made directly to the then Director of Military Intelligence, General PH 'Tienie' Groenewald. According to Groenewald, Chief Buthelezi commented that :

*although he was a supporter of a peaceful solution, the ANC must realise that if it uses violence against KwaZulu and its people, the Zulu, who has already received fame as a soldier, is also in a position to take violent action against the ANC. He himself would like to take the struggle to the ANC in Lusaka although at present he does not have such a capacity.*

237 Flowing out of this was what has become known as the Caprivi training, the clandestine training in offensive action of some 200 Inkatha supporters conducted by the Special Forces arm of the SADF in the Caprivi Strip, South West Africa/ Namibia in 1986. Secret military intelligence documents make it clear that the project was undertaken as much to further the strategic aims of the South African government and Defence Force, as it was in response to a request from Chief Buthelezi. Planning for this project took place in circumstances of utmost secrecy, and involved the highest echelons of the State Security Council and Military Intelligence on the one hand, and Chief Buthelezi and his personal assistant, Mr MZ Khumalo, on the other. The defence force was at pains to ensure that the entire project was covert, and that the funding of the project could not be traced back to its source.

238 Training was given to three distinct groups - the VIP protection group, the contra-mobilisation group and the offensive group. Significantly, all three received offensive training. The training lasted six months and included training in the use of Soviet bloc weapons, heavy-duty weapons such as mortars and rocket-launchers, and the use of explosives, landmines and hand grenades. The trainees were taught how to carry out attacks without leaving a trace and how to avoid arrest, detention and interrogation at the hands of the police. They were also taught how to attack houses with the aim of killing all the occupants.