

# South African Connections

**H**arare - A convicted spy, released from Pretoria Central prison, has arrived here offering an insider's view of South Africa's covert war against Mozambique and other neighboring states.

Thirty-year-old Zimbabwean Patricia Hanekom was one of three young whites arrested in December 1983 for giving secret South African military documents to the outlawed African National Congress (ANC). The documents contained information on South African operations against Mozambique and Zimbabwe and were passed to the targeted governments by the ANC.

Also detained were Hanekom's husband Derek and South African Defense Force (SADF) Corporal Roland Hunter - who obtained the documents while working for a SADF covert operations unit. Derek Hanekom completed his sentence last year, but Hunter has two more years to serve.

The three could have been sentenced to death for high treason, but were allowed to plead guilty to lesser charges - including possession of a tape recording of exiled ANC President Oliver Tambo with intent to disseminate it - because South African authorities did not want to let defense lawyers examine files confiscated on the Hanekoms' farm near Johannesburg.

Until the arrests, Hunter was personal assistant to the SADF's Col. Cornelius (Charles) van Niekerk, who headed a covert operation to harass the Mozambican government. According to Hanekom, van Niekerk continued as South Africa's liaison to the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) even after South Africa signed the March 1984 Nkomati Accord barring further aid to the group (see *AN* November 4, 1985).

Interviewed here after she was freed on November 20 and deported to Zimbabwe, Hanekom gave a detailed account of Hunter's work with SADF's clandestine operations.

She says Hunter, assigned to the anti-Mozambique *Operation Mila*, worked alongside units responsible for similar operations against Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Angola. All four covert schemes were run by the Directorate of Special Tasks under

SADF's chief of staff intelligence. Though South Africa openly supports Unita rebels in Angola and has sent its own invasion forces into that country, the Pretoria government has repeatedly denied charges that it aids armed rebels in Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Mozambique.

Hunter was a reluctant draftee who contemplated leaving South Africa to avoid serving in apartheid's army but remained in the country when his father's friends in the military found him a non-combatant post. Assigned to guard a SADF building, he met van Niekerk, who took a liking to the young man and offered him a "more interesting job."

Hunter soon found himself at the center of a covert operation designed to meet all Renamo's needs, from clothing the group's leaders to secretly supplying them with weapons to promoting assassination of dissidents within the movement. Hanekom cites as an example the killing of one top Renamo leader, former Portuguese secret police officer Orlando Cristina. "A decision was taken by the operation to eliminate him," she says, amidst factional disputes within Renamo.

On several occasions, Hanekom says, Hunter helped load new AK47 machine guns onto helicopters delivering monthly shipments of supplies to Renamo. A warehouse at SADF's Voortrekkerhoogte base in Pretoria contained thousands of the guns, with identifying marks removed. Some or all of them were manufactured in Czechoslovakia and obtained by South Africa through an unknown third party.

They were apparently supplied to Renamo to make it appear that the rebel group relies on weapons captured from the Mozambique army, which uses AK47s. Similarly altered guns have been recovered by the Zimbabwe army from anti-government forces here.

The helicopters Hunter loaded also carried seeds, fertilizer, propaganda leaflets, even pencils - from which the words "made in South Africa" had been removed - for use in a Renamo program to "win hearts and minds" in Mozambique.

Hanekom says Hunter was also responsible for daily delivery of

*Operation Mila's* "Voice of Free Africa" tapes to their transmitter. Ostensibly beamed by Renamo from inside Mozambique, the tapes were actually broadcast from Johannesburg facilities of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, according to Hanekom, who says South African officials also ran a similar broadcast operation, "Radio Truth," directed against Zimbabwe.

Hunter visited three Renamo bases inside South Africa and was responsible for delivering monthly salary payments of 500-750 Rand (U.S. \$250-\$375) - more than ten times the average monthly wage of a worker in Maputo - to top officials of the group. On one occasion, when Renamo President Afonso Dhlakama was preparing to lead a delegation to West Germany in 1983, Hunter was given 5,000 Rand to take them on a clothes shopping spree in Pretoria.

Though the cost of the *Operation Mila* program is not known, the size of van Niekerk's petty cash account - Hanekom says he was authorized to spend up to Rand 250,000 (U.S. \$125,000) without approval from higher authorities - suggests that it was generously funded.

Drawn into the South African anti-apartheid movement while studying at the University of Cape Town in the late 1970s, Hanekom says she and the men arrested with her felt a "moral obligation" to pass information about South Africa's activities to the intended victims so they "would be able to defend their interests better."

She said she was a loyal Zimbabwean whose term in prison strengthened her "dedication to the struggle in South Africa." Like ANC leader Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners held for their work with the banned organization, Hanekom and her confederates rejected a South African offer of early release in exchange for rejecting violent resistance to the apartheid system.

**A**s Patricia Hanekom settled into newfound freedom after serving her term for helping the ANC, another white woman was sentenced by Zimbabwe's High Court to 25 years in jail for spying for South Africa.

Odile Eone Harington was convicted of giving South African forces information that would help them pinpoint and kill ANC members on future raids into Zimbabwe.