PORTUGAL'S INTELLIGENCE SERVICES
AND SOUTHERN AFRICA, 1975-1990

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Shortly after the assassination in Portugal in April 1988 of Evo Fernandes, the former secretary-general of the South-African-sponsored bandit organization the MNR, a curious incident took place in Lisbon.[1] The case, because of its political and diplomatic implications, fell under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese police department known by its initials as the DCCB (the Central Directorate against Banditry), roughly equivalent to the British Special Branch. In the course of their investigations, DCCB agents arrested a man in the act of contacting one of their suspects. It turned out that the man was in fact an agent from SIS, the civilian intelligence branch, engaged in investigating the same case. The police were surprised to find SIS operatives engaged in police investigations on their own, since SIS's mandate is theoretically limited to the gathering of intelligence. According to Lisbon press reports, however, SIS sources pointed out that it is common all over the world for this kind of clash to take place, in areas where the responsibilities of different services meet.

Nevertheless, and despite the fact that the incident was speedily forgotten, it is symptomatic of the confusion in the Portuguese intelligence world that such an arrest was made. Some observers have found it hard to believe that in such a small community, the two services were absolutely ignorant of each others' interest in the case.

The history of Portuguese intelligence gathering since 1974 is characterized by ambivalence about its legitimacy, its organization, administration and answerability, and its political role. Current problems within the Portuguese intelligence community are mainly attributable to civilian-military rivalry. Given the size of Portuguese aspirations in southern Africa to the role of mediator between the region and the European Community, it is clear that other actors need to be aware of limitations on Portugal's independent ability to obtain and analyze up-to-date intelligence. In addition there is, as we shall see, an "African connection" in the way the intelligence system has recently been restructured.

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[1] There is an extensive literature on the MNR (Mozambican National Resistance, also known by its Portuguese acronym as RENAMO), its foundation by the Rhodesian intelligence services in the mid-1970s and on its continuing connections with South Africa.

THE DINFO YEARS, 1974-1984

After the overthrow of Marcelo Caetano by the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) in 1974, Portugal's successive governments delayed for over twelve and a half years before managing to set up any sort of intelligence system outside the control of the military itself. This delay was at least partly due to political constraints in post-Fascist Portugal, where the link between "intelligence" and "secret police" in the public mind was understandably strong.

The dismantling of the political "secret police" apparatus of the PIDE/DGS after the revolution in 1974 meant the disappearance as well of the government's intelligence-gathering network—the baby had been thrown out with the bath-water, since no government can make policy without an effective information system. In the years after the revolution of 25 April, it was politically impossible for any Portuguese government to set up a new intelligence service. In the words of the analyst Joaquim Vieira, setting up an intelligence institution was politically about as popular as raising taxes. The reason for this was the close identification in the public mind between any kind of intelligence work, however legitimate, and the repressive apparatus of the PIDE/DGS under fascism.

In this vacuum, responsibility for intelligence devolved by default to the military. The Intelligence Department (Dinfo) of the 2nd Section of the Army General Staff (EMGFA) collected information, with Section "E" (or the Technical Section) as its operational wing. EMGFA and Dinfo accumulated considerable power, and were only nominally under civilian control, since there was no elected political body to which they were accountable. Ironically, the politicians' reluctance to set up a civilian body for intelligence gathering led to the growth of a military department which was at least as independent as the PIDE/DGS in its heyday under fascism.

It may not be idle to speculate that Ramalho Eanes, Portugal's first constitutional president and a military man, did not find this situation completely disagreeable. Certainly, with the succession to the presidency of Mário Soares, who has consistently presented himself as the first civilian head of state for over forty years, things have begun to change. It should also be remembered that Prime Minister Cavaco Silva's government is the first since 1974 to command an absolute single-party majority in parliament, and thus the first to enjoy the freedom of legislative action which goes with such a majority.

Throughout this period, the military lobby was, of course, quite happy with a vaguely-defined situation in which they ran the only intelligence institution in the country, with no constitutional controls. A centrally important figure during Dinfo's hegemony was the naval officer Frigate-Capt. Pedro Serradas Duarte. He headed the operational arm, Section "E". Serradas Duarte, a "competent and effective operator" was in charge of all external field operations of the department. An indication of the high regard that the military had for him appeared in a tribute published in the official *Diário da República* from Gen. Lemos Ferreira, the Portuguese Chief of Staff. Lemos Ferreira described him as showing "determination, capability, initiative, coolness, responsibility, and physical and mental courage," giving the game away by adding that Dinfo's tasks "passed the boundaries of the purely military."

An example of the hegemonic tendencies of Dinfo, and of military-civilian tension, is the long drawn out police case against the "terrorist" organization FP-25 and the radical leader Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. Dinfo seems to have been involved from early on, and regarded the (civilian) FP-25 case as being indisputably in its military patch, probably because of Otelo's military background. Subsequently the DCCB (Central Directorate against Banditry) of the civil police moved in and after a bitter struggle managed to gain control of the operation, including gathering intelligence about FP-25. After the case was successfully brought to court, DCCB operatives were heard boasting that they had mounted the whole operation without collaborating with Dinfo.

THE ORGANIZATION OF PORTUGUESE INTELLIGENCE

In September 1984 the Portuguese parliament passed a law setting up a system of control for intelligence organizations. This system is described in detail below, but essentially it placed an umbrella organization (SIRP) over three branches: SIED for operations abroad, SIS for domestic security, and a re-named Dinfo, SIM, for the military aspects. This law has met with mysterious obstruction at all levels of government and the military, as far as its implementation is concerned. Of the two new branches, SIS and SIED, only SIS has so far been set up, and only became operational three years after the law was passed. This is at least partly due to the difficulties in defining in practice the operational areas of the three services, and not least, to the unwillingness of Dinfo-SIM to give up any part of its empire.

The Portuguese intelligence system, SIRP (Intelligence Service of the Portuguese Republic) was set up in September 1984 under a law (No.30/84) passed by the Portuguese parliament after considerable debate, and consists of three branches:

1. SIED - Strategic Defence Intelligence Service. This branch had not been set up by March of this year; it is intended to collect intelligence bearing on "national independence and the external security of the state." (See below for more detail).
2. SIS - Security Intelligence Service. Located in a bunker-like 12-storey building in Rua Alexandre Herculano in Lisbon, SIS collects and organizes intelligence on internal security, to prevent sabotage, terrorism, espionage, and actions "against the rule of law." The Director is Ramiro Ladeiro Monteiro (see below), and SIS reports to the Ministry of Internal Administration. SIS has a staff of around 70, and a modest budget of between 300 and 400 million escudos (US$2.2-2.9 million). SIS has no police functions - it cannot arrest or interrogate anyone, nor open prosecutions, as can the DCCB, for instance (see below).
3. SIM - Military Intelligence Service. Formerly Dinfo, SIM collects military intelligence for the armed forces, and guarantees military security. It reports to the Ministry of Defence, through the Chief of the General Staff. The Director of SIM is Brig. Chito Rodrigues.
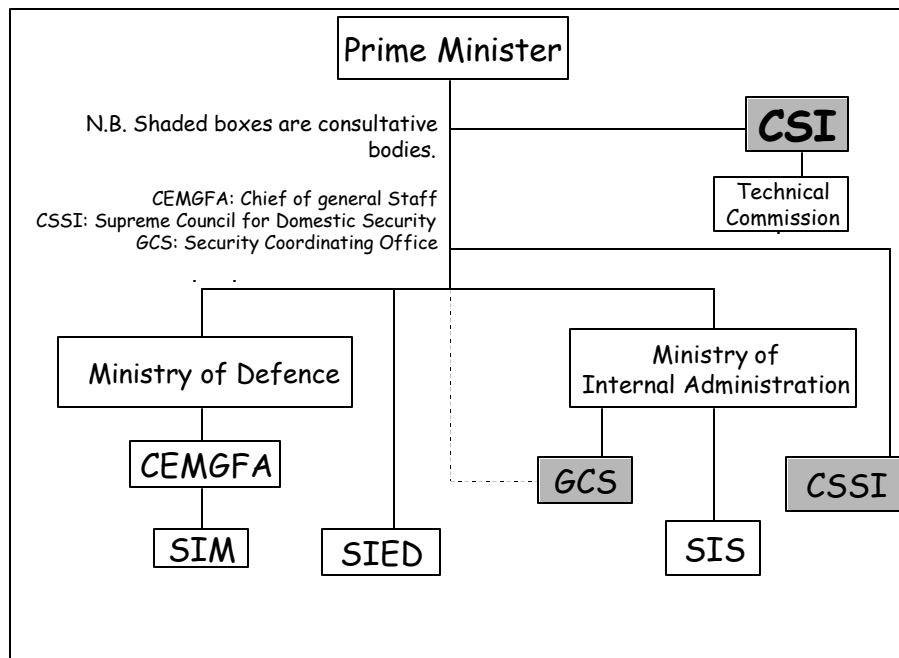
SIRP is run by a Technical Commission, which meets two or three times a month. The secretary-general of the commission is currently Gen. Pedro Cardoso, who could eventually turn out to be the key man in the whole system. However, at present he has no

formal hierarchical powers, although holding the deciding vote in cases of impasse. It remains to be seen how much influence he will eventually wield.

The Technical Commission operates from a government building in Rua Gomes Teixeira, and is legally the executive arm of the coordinating body known as the Intelligence Supreme Council (CSI). It was only after the CSI's last meeting, in November 1987, that SIS was finally allowed to begin operations. The CSI is chaired by the Prime Minister and consists of:

- ❑ The deputy Prime Minister;
- ❑ The Ministers of State;
  - ❑ Defence;
  - ❑ Internal Administration;
  - ❑ Justice;
  - ❑ Foreign Affairs;
  - ❑ Finance and Planning;
- ❑ The Ministers of the Republic for the Azores;
  - ❑ and for Madeira;
- ❑ The Presidents of the Regional Governments;
- ❑ The Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces;
- ❑ The Directors of SIED, SIS and SIM;
- ❑ and the general secretary of the Technical Commission.

Clearly, such a large and heavyweight body meets only rarely.

Control and accountability of SIRP is exercised first by the Portuguese parliament (the National Assembly), through the Intelligence Services Accounting Council (CFSI), which

consists of three deputies elected in a secret ballot by a two-thirds majority. Current members are Montalvão Machado (Social-Democrat); Anselmo Rodrigues (Socialist); and Marques Júnior (Democratic Renewal; this is the party of Ramalho Eanes).

CFSI does receive annual reports from SIRP. The first pair of these secret reports were submitted in 1987 to the National Assembly from SIM and SIS via their ministries, and are presently (March 1988) under discussion by the committee. Although the committee is supposed to analyse SIRP's activities to make sure that it observes legal and constitutional norms, and respects the civil rights of Portuguese citizens, it is unclear exactly how it is able (or indeed supposed) to do this. In fact, the CFSI does not even have terms of reference to define, for instance, whether it can intervene at any time, or only when the annual reports are presented. CFSI member Montalvao Machado has recently refused to comment on the grounds that this was a "confidential matter."

The second controlling committee is the Data Accounting Committee (CFD), which consists of the attorney-general Dias Bravo and his two deputies Lourenco Martins and Garcia Marques. The CFD's only task is to verify that SIS does not break any laws about computerized data bases. Since SIS will not receive a working computer until 1989, the work is not onerous.

RIVALRY BETWEEN THE SIM AND THE SIS

Rivalry between the military and civilian wings of Portuguese intelligence came to a head with the establishment of the new SIS. Perhaps coincidentally, when Dinfo became SIM, and as SIS came on line, in late 1987, the military intelligence leadership was changed. The head of Dinfo, a Brig. Salavessa, was removed and naval Frigate-Capt. Pedro Serradas Duarte left Section "E" quietly for a position in a private security company. It has been suggested by Lisbon newspapers that Serradas Duarte should have been removed over a year ago, but that he was kept on because of Dinfo's involvment in the "GAL" scandal, to avoid giving an impression of great upheavals in the department. However, the CEMFGA, Gen. Lemos Ferreira has stated publicly that Serradas Duarte was leaving "by his own choice." His present private sector position is certainly more lucrative; perhaps three or four times more so. He was replaced by Lt.-Col. Veiga Diogo, an internal promotion.

Why, then, the sackings? One possible interpretation is that they were an attempt to get rid of the empire-builders, and thus allow SIM to fully integrate itself within SIRP. In support of this theory, can be cited the use of Lt.-Col. Fernando Ramos as a training officer within the civilian SIS.

SIS, which was only actually set up about eighteen months ago, and became operational in late 1987, has a staff of young and inexperienced "licenciados" (holders of MA degrees). SIM, on the other hand, as we have seen, is in essence a re-baptised DINFO, and includes virtually all the experienced specialists in intelligence analysis in the country. SIS was set up with help from the United Kingdom, Israel, the United States, West Germany, Spain and Brazil. Indeed, SIRP itself is modelled on British practice; Israel's contribution was also a major one. Many SIS operatives have been on training courses with friendly (i.e. Western) services.

Clearly, a good proportion of SIS activity centres around the processing of intelligence provided by these friendly services (including the EEC and NATO). About 70-80 percent of the material analysed is published information. However, SIS has already gained a reputation for receiving more than it gives out, both because it is very much a "closed" organization, in the context of inter-service rivalries, and also because it has limited capacity for independent intelligence-gathering on its own behalf. Informed observers in Portugal worry that, given this level of reliance on second-hand intelligence, SIS could easily fall victim to any disinformation manoeuvres, for which it would be an easy target. South Africa might well be a country in a position to exploit such a weakness.

The first operational "success" for SIS was in the Luís Quebu Sambu case. Sambu, a Guinean employed in Bissau's embassy in Lisbon, claimed political asylum in Portugal late last year, alleging that he had been ordered to "eliminate" anti-PAIGC oppositionists. Although the newspapers attributed this case to Dinfo or even the police DCCB, it was in fact handled by SIS. (A few years ago, in a similar case, a Czech defector's request for asylum was so badly handled by Lisbon's "secret services" that the individual in question was returned to his country; Portugal's reputation among the friendly services suffered accordingly).

Recruitment is a major problem for SIS. It will be recalled that Dinfo operated for a dozen years as the only intelligence organization in Portugal, so it is natural that there should be a shortage of experienced civilian "spies." Since it was not possible for former PIDE agents to be used, Dinfo recruited and trained, in the years after the April coup, civilian specialists who had returned, mainly from Angola but also from Mozambique, and who were willing to go to work for the army. At least 100 of these specialists, both men and women, were given desk jobs in Dinfo-SIM, but a large number were also taken on as field operatives. The present Director os SIS, Ladeiro Monteiro, worked until 25 April for SCIA, the [colonial] Angolan Central Intelligence Service.

SIS is forbidden by law from employing ex-PIDEs, even as freelancers, and from keeping computerized data on Portuguese citizens. The organization recently (19 March) confirmed to the weekly *Expresso* that it was obeying this law, although it is hard to imagine any other reply.

The question of legality is highly sensitive in post-PIDE Portugal: nobody in SIS admits, even anonymously and off the record, that telephone-tapping or opening letters are even remote possibilities. Nevertheless, the Social Democrat's parliamentary leader Correia Afonso complained in March that SD deputies' letters had been opened; in one case the correspondence came from the Iraqi embassy. Businessmen and even the police have also complained that they suspect that their telephones are tapped. Only the Judiciary Police may legally tap telephones in Portugal, and then only after obtaining a warrant from a judge. They have their own equipment and technicians. After the revolution of 1974, workers at the central telephone exchange in Lisbon demanded that the PIDE tapping equipment be destroyed; this was not done, and many people are convinced that it is still in place, beside the police taps.

Although the Portuguese themselves are unable to recycle former PIDE agents, the South Africans have had no such scruples. The French socialist daily *Le Matin* reported on 20 November 1987, that South Africa had set up a unit of ex-PIDEs and former OAS men to monitor anti-apartheid activists in Europe. It is unclear what relationship, if any, this unit has with the "Z-squads." Warm links existed between the French SDECE and PIDE for many years, and have been well documented in such publications as the memoirs of Count Alexandre de Marenches, SDECE chief from 1970 to 1981 and subsequent interviews. Marenches followed Angolan events personally and was a great admirer of Jonas Savimbi.

Until recently, as pointed out above, DINFO was working extensively outside the area of purely military intelligence, although theoretically it had no authorization to do this. However, in practice, DINFO was not only permitted but was actively encouraged to collect intelligence on subversion, terrorism and rebellion (e.g. the FP-25 movement; but see above). This situation enabled the politicians of the day to avoid having to create a new "secret service" with all the overtones, in the Portuguese context, of a PIDE-style political police. However, after SIRP was set up and Dinfo was purged, there may have been a military change of heart.

Military sources now claim that it is SIS which is trying to build an empire, refusing offers of help in training, failing to share intelligence even of a military nature, and trying to poach personnel. In part this is due to inexperience: SIS regards all intelligence as fundamental and top secret, without discrimination. But SIS also offers much higher (salaries than its military counterpart, as well as such perks as life insurance and big bonuses.

SIED: THE MISSING ARM OF PORTUGUESE INTELLIGENCE

Although SIED exists on paper, it remains the great lacuna in the tripartite SIRP system. So long as SIED is not working, it would not be an exaggeration to say that SIRP itself cannot become effective. In operational terms, SIED's role is to pull together into a coherent picture the intelligence gathered by the other two branches, whether on large economic questions such as market substitution, political ones such as international alliances, public opinion, armed conflict, the EEC, and so forth; or in detailed terms, specific questions of state security.

But at the time of writing, it is not known whether SIED will be headed by a soldier or by a career diplomat, for example, nor whether it will report directly to the Prime Minister, or through an intermediate ministry (which cannot, by law, be either of the ministries controlling SIM and SIS). There is no 1988 budget allocation for SIED, so its establishment cannot even be started before 1989. Nor, as will be evident from the account of SIM-SIS rivalry given above, is there much chance of finding personnel for the new vector.

But SIED is not the only non-operational body in the system. The GCS (Security Coordination Office), set up by the Internal Security Law of June 1987, and even the CSI itself (see above) occupy their places in the organogram, but do little else.

CONCLUSION

In summary then, we have a situation in which the armed forces controlled intelligence independently for well over a decade, using a mixture of military and civilian personnel, these latter largely ex-settlers from Angola, and expanding to cover all aspects of security work. In 1984 a civil system was conceived and partially set up, integrating existing military intelligence with a new civil branch staffed largely by inexperienced and extremely "territorial" youngsters. The system is top-heavy and complex, and includes several bodies, including the vital SIED, which are not operational. It is also extremely vulnerable to errors of judgement, planted disinformation, and internal conflicts. It is also not subject to really effective mechanisms of accountability.

Given that the three stated planks of Portuguese foreign policy are the EEC for economic matters, NATO for defence, and PALOP for cultural and linguistic influence, the present situation gives some food for thought to actors in this region.

Harare, July-August 1990