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'SADF sent thousands of AK47s to Renamo'

Peta Thornycroft

THE South African Defence Force shipped thousands of AK47s to Renamo in Mozambique — and many of the guns have returned to unleash a reign of terror in this country.

This is the claim of Roland Hunter (33), who was serving as a conscripted clerk in Military Intelligence at the time.

It was the information he gathered and passed on to the ANC which sent him to jail for five years.

For the first time since his release two years ago, Mr Hunter has come forward to tell the story of South Africa's involvement in arming, training and bank-rolling the Renamo rebels.

"I have decided to go public because of accusations in some quarters that all the AK47s, seen as the ANC's traditional weapon, originated from them, when I saw with my own eyes thousands and thousands sent into Mozambique."

Yesterday SADF spokesman Colonel John Rolt said he would investigate Mr Hunter's allegations.

Roland Hunter's trial and that of two members of the ANC to whom he was passing the information, Derek Hanekom and his wife Patricia, was held in camera.

The prosecution considered the matter so delicate at that time that his defence council was not allowed access to a number of the State's documents.

For 15 months before the Nkomati Accord was signed — which led to the ANC's expulsion from Mozambique — Roland Hunter, who was one of Renamo's paymasters in South Africa, helped prepare monthly shipments of about 60 tons of AK47s, ammunition, mortars and other military equipment, which was air-lifted into Mo-

zambique and dropped by parachute.

He said he collected the pallets of weapons from two civilian-looking warehouses in Pretoria West. One of them was "enormous. It looked like a hangar, with boxes stacked to the top. The other was a smaller, more old-fashioned warehouse.

"It was common knowledge that the weapons were secured by Armscor from Israel. The stencil lettering on the boxes of AK47s showed they originated in Romania or Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. When we loaded them on the Samel 100 we were told by a senior officer to paint over the identifications on those boxes, which could be seen as the vehicle went from the warehouse to Voortrekkerhoogte."

In addition to helping organise shipments of weapons to Mozambique, Roland Hunter, now an economist, visited three camps near Phalaborwa where Renamo soldiers, and its present President, Afonso Dhlakama, were being trained and funded by the SADF.

He said he once drove Mr Dhlakama and two other senior members of Renamo to a clothes shop in Pretoria, where they bought suits, paid for by the SADF, to attend a meeting in Germany.

He said he regularly travelled with up to R4 000 in his pocket to pay Renamo personnel, R800 for Dhlakama and senior officers, while the rank and file only earned R40 a month. But the rand was worth five times more in 1983 than today.

"Every detail I have mentioned is well known to the SADF and the legal team which represented me at the time.

"I only know what went on for 15 months until my arrest in 1983. I don't know what happened afterwards nor whether there were other supply drops to Renamo."

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