

The military code of Umkhonto we Sizwe

Preamble

Recognising that our army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, must define its aims and objects in clear and precise terms, and that the rights and duties of each member should be likewise defined without ambiguity, the Politico-Military Council, acting on behalf of the African National Congress of South Africa, has adopted and hereby decrees this code for the guidance of members in cell positions.

1. Umkhonto we Sizwe — a People's Army

The ANC and its allies created Umkhonto as a new and indispensable weapon in the struggle for people's power. Unlike the armed forces of the racist regime of South Africa, which we have vowed to crush and annihilate, and unlike all other armies of imperialism, Umkhonto we Sizwe is a People's Army organised and dedicated to waging a people's war for the liberation of our country.

Umkhonto is an army of volunteers. It consists of volunteers drawn from the revolutionary sections of our people. By joining Umkhonto, combatants commit themselves to the solemn and noble duty of serving our suffering and dispossessed people in the struggle that will continue for each and all of us until victory or death.

In the words of our founding Manifesto, published on the historic day of 16th December 1961: 'Umkhonto we Sizwe will be at the front line of the people's defence. It will be the fighting arm of the people against the racist government and its policies of racial oppression. It will be the striking force of the people for liberty, for rights and for the their final liberation.'

The founding Manifesto of Umkhonto we Sizwe is our definitive declaration of intent, and an essential guide to the reasons for the creation and aims of this, the People's Army. We append the Manifesto to this Code, to be studied and understood by every Umkhonto combatant. It was no coincidence that MK's first operations were launched on December 16th, Dingane's Day. Umkhonto will carry on the warrior tradition of our people under the conditions of modern guerrilla warfare.

Those who join Umkhonto we Sizwe, the People's Army, perform a sacred duty to our people, our nation and the South African Revolution. When we have liberated our country, Umkhonto will constitute the basis of the defence forces of our country and the Revolution, and will serve as an instrument of social progress.

An Umkhonto combatant has

the opportunity to serve in the forefront of the liberation struggle, to meet the enemy and engage him with modern weapons, to become a steeled revolutionary who at all times, is determined to serve and protect the people and his fellow comrades-in-arms.

We look back with great pride to the period of militant non-violent struggle waged by the ANC. During this period our people learnt through their own experience that they could not satisfy their aspirations except by means of armed struggle arising out of our mass political activity and culminating in a revolutionary seizure of power.

When the time was ripe for violent forms of struggle, our people understood and supported the decision to take up arms. They clearly understood as long ago as December 1961, that our Movement had exhausted all peaceful avenues, and that the oppressor had imposed on us a war situation. The alternative to armed struggle was submission. As the Umkhonto Manifesto declared: 'The People's patience is not endless. The time comes in the life of any nation when there remains only two choices — submit or fight. That time has now come in South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom.'

Political and Military Struggle

Umkhonto we Sizwe is the fighting arm of the ANC and its allies. Our armed struggle is a continuation of our political struggle by means that include armed force. The political leadership has primacy over the military. Our military line derives from our political line. Every commander, commissar, instructor and combatant must therefore be clearly acquainted with the policy with regard to all combat tasks and missions. All of us must know clearly who the enemy is, and for what we are fighting. Thus MK cadres are not only military units, they are also political leaders and organisers of our people. That is the major distinction between our people's revolutionary army and the army and wholly militarised authoritarian armed forces of the racists, imperialists and reactionary regimes. Umkhonto cadres, with arms in hand, are political activists and leaders, as well as warriors. This combination of political and military functions is characteristic of all popular, revolutionary armies especially in the phase of guerrilla warfare.

People's War

Umkhonto is a people's army fighting a people's war. We fight to liberate our oppressed and exploited

people. We fight for their interests. Umkhonto has no mercenaries, no paid soldiers or conscripted troops. It consists of the sons and daughters of the most oppressed, the most exploited sections of our people. For these reasons we claim with pride and truth: Umkhonto is the Spear of the Nation.

We fight a people's war, not by armed struggle alone, but first and above all by political education, leadership and mobilisation. It is a people's war because the struggle is to win the active support and participation of all who resist oppression, discrimination, poverty and injustice.

The people support their army by providing it with recruits — their sons and daughters — food, shelter, and information about the enemy. The people open the way for our guerrillas and make the enemy's path hard. Everyone can become a freedom fighter. The struggle has many fronts and is not confined to trained soldiers alone.

The ANC mobilises the people in support of the revolution through skilful combination of all forms of struggle: violent and non-violent, legal and illegal, strikes and demonstrations, boycotts and non-cooperation, propaganda, education and sabotage. A people's war is fought by the people with arms and all other forms and methods of struggle. Without the organised support of the people, armed struggle is in danger of being isolated and strangled. The enemy attempts to isolate us by launching campaigns to win the 'hearts and minds' of the people — of our people — the oppressed and suffering workers and peasants. To defeat the enemy, we must involve the entire people in the National Democratic Revolution.

The enemy controls the state, its armed forces, police and courts. But he does not command the hearts and minds of the people. They are with us in a just war for national liberation. Their support is our chief weapon. What gives the guerrilla his advantage is his political superiority and people's support. As pointed out in Operation Mayibuye (1963) the most important guarantee of victory is 'the support of the people who in certain situations are better protection than mountains and forests'.

Our People's Army

a) Umkhonto we Sizwe fights to liberate our people from racial discrimination, national oppression and exploitation.

b) The common enemy is the racist minority which identifies with and gives aid to the National Party regime, the creator and driving force of apartheid.

Umkhonto we Sizwe Manifesto

Leaflet issued by Umkhonto we Sizwe (*Spear of the Nation*) on 16 December 1961

Units of Umkhonto we Sizwe today carried out planned attacks against Government installations, particularly those connected with the policy of apartheid and race discrimination.

Umkhonto we Sizwe is a new, independent body, formed by Africans. It includes in its ranks South Africans of all races. It is not connected in any way with a so-called "Committee for National Liberation" whose existence has been announced in the press. Umkhonto we Sizwe will carry on the struggle for freedom and democracy by new methods, which are necessary to complement the actions of the established national liberation organizations. Umkhonto we Sizwe fully supports the national liberation movement, and our members jointly and individually, place themselves under the overall political guidance of that movement.

It is, however, well known that the main national liberation organizations in this country have consistently followed a policy of non-violence. They have conducted themselves peaceably at all times, regardless of Government attacks and persecutions upon them, and despite all Government-inspired attempts to provoke them to violence. They have done so because the people prefer peaceful methods of change to achieve their aspirations without the suffering and bitterness of civil war. But the people's patience is not endless.

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom.

The Government has interpreted the peacefulness of the movement as weakness; the people's non-violent policies have been taken as a green light for Government violence. Refusal to resort to force has been interpreted by the Government as an invitation to use armed force against the people without any fear of reprisals. The methods of Umkhonto we Sizwe mark a break with that past.

We are striking out along a new road for the liberation of the people of this country. The Government policy of force, repression and violence will no longer be met with non-violent resistance only! The choice is not ours; it has been

made by the Nationalist Government which has rejected every peaceable demand by the people for rights and freedom and answered every such demand with force and yet more force! Twice in the past 18 months, virtual martial law has been imposed in order to beat down peaceful, non-violent strike action of the people in support of their rights. It is now preparing its forces — enlarging and rearming its armed forces and drawing the white civilian population into commandos and pistol clubs — for full-scale military actions against the people. The Nationalist Government has chosen the course of force and massacre, now, deliberately, as it did at Sharpeville.

Umkhonto we Sizwe will be at the front line of the people's defence. It will be the fighting arm of the people against the Government and its policies of race oppression. It will be the striking force of the people for liberty, for rights and for their final liberation! Let the Government, its supporters who put it into power, and those whose passive toleration of reaction keeps it in power, take note of where the Nationalist Government is leading the country!

We of Umkhonto we Sizwe have always sought — as the liberation movement has sought — to achieve liberation, without bloodshed and civil clash. We do so still. We hope — even at this late hour — that our first actions will awaken every one to a realization of the disastrous situation to which the Nationalist policy is leading. We hope that we will bring the Government and its supporters to their senses before it is too late, so that both the Government and its policies can be changed before matters reach the desperate stage of civil war. We believe our actions to be a blow against the Nationalist preparations for civil war and military rule.

In these actions, we are working in the best interests of all the people of this country — black, brown and white — whose future happiness and well-being cannot be attained without the overthrow of the Nationalist Government, the abolition of white supremacy and the winning of liberty, democracy and full national rights and equality for all the people of this country.

We appeal for the support and encouragement of all those South Africans who seek the happiness and freedom of the people of this country.

*Afrika Mayibuyel!**

Issued by command of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

*Africa Return!

C) Our programme is the Freedom Charter; it defines the goals of all democrats regardless of colour, race or creed.

d) The interests of the people and the demands of the revolution are inseparable and the main concern of the people's army.

e) Our MK Manifesto declares that the army includes in its ranks South Africans of all races. But the overwhelming majority are members of the most oppressed and exploited people. By this dedication and commitment and training, they represent the vanguard of our people. In Umkhonto language, the army is the Spear of the Nation.

5. Umkhonto insists on a high standard of selfless devotion to the revolution on the part of all its members. They are required at all times to:

- behave correctly to the people;
- respect their persons and property
- refrain from molesting or interfering with their legitimate activities;
- assist them to solve their problems and where possible give material aid in their labour; and
- demonstrate high moral qualities in word and deed.

Revolutionary Discipline and Consciousness

To defeat the enemy in combat, our soldiers must be disciplined, trained to obey commands promptly, and ready to spring into battle immediately when ordered. Vigilance, alertness and readiness to engage the enemy at a moment's notice are qualities that can develop only out of discipline, proper training and political consciousness.

Bourgeois and reactionary armies like the army forces of the racists, instil a mechanical and robot-like obedience in their units. The people's army has a different conception of discipline and loyalty. Umkhonto soldiers are volunteers, willing and trained to carry out orders in the knowledge that instant obedience is the only way to safeguard life, both of the individual and his comrades-in-arms, and to protect the people whom he serves.

Umkhonto soldiers pledge themselves to safeguard the revolution at all times regardless of personal hardships, suffering and danger. A soldier who breaks discipline, disobeys commands or by improper conduct betrays the high standards of our army will be

punished. Such punishment is necessary to maintain the qualities expected of a people's army. Every attempt is made to correct bad behaviour and rehabilitate members who violate the army's code. But punishment is severe in cases of serious crimes, treachery and criminal neglect endangering the safety of others and the security of the army.

Our procedure and rules are well defined, precise and to the point. Military orders are issued with a definite purpose and must be obeyed. It is the duty and responsibility of every soldier to know and understand the army's code of conduct, to recognise his military commanders, to be clear about his own duties, and to carry out orders immediately and without question. Orders must be obeyed. It is the duty and responsibility of every soldier to know and understand the army's code of conduct, to recognise his military commanders, to be clear about his own duties, and to carry out orders immediately and without question. Orders must be obeyed cheerfully, promptly and exactly. A soldier who does not understand an order has a right to have it explained. He must know

when to raise problems, to whom he must report, and how to obtain clarification. He must not, in any circumstances, refuse to obey a command or argue over the execution of an order.

Outright disobedience and failure to obey an order promptly may have serious consequences. A soldier who thinks that he has been given a wrong order must obey it first and if need be complain afterwards to his commander. Our commanding officers, commissars, instructors and others who are entrusted with responsibility to lead must be above reproach. They are to be a shining example of modesty, sound moral behaviour, correct attitudes towards all members, respectful and helpful to every member of the army, regardless of his position. Commanders and Political Commissars occupy a central role in Umkhonto. Without them disorder can result. They are the principal target of the enemy and must be given maximum protection. Umkhonto is engaged in guerrilla warfare against a powerful and remorseless enemy which resorts to torture, banditry and terrorism.

During the stage of guerrilla warfare, great initiative and resourcefulness are required of every combatant. Under such conditions, formalities such as the courtesy of saluting commanders are reduced to a minimum, while discipline and vigilance are maintained at the highest levels.

In our external training bases, however, we have conditions and facilities similar to those of a regular army. Here we insist on full military procedures, including the practice of saluting commanding personnel; higher ranks; parades; roll calls; and fall-ins. These are necessary for orderly camp life and discipline and co-operation among guerrillas in combat zones.

The inner forms of discipline, arising from political maturity and consciousness of our struggle, are far more important and enduring than a discipline enforced from above. But a proud bearing, alertness and quick response to commands, a smart uniform, and respect of leadership, commanders and commissars are the hallmarks of a good soldier who is proud of his platoon, detachment and army.

With the triumph of our revolution, Umkhonto will be the official army of our country, the true shield of our nation, defending the people against external aggression and internal counter-revolution. To prepare ourselves for these noble tasks, we must live up to the army's code of conduct in all respects and at all times during the present phase of our struggle.

General Regulations

1. All army units shall preserve and safeguard political and military and organisational information relating to the army's security and well being.

The wilful or negligent disclosure of classified information to unauthorised persons, and the unauthorised acquisition and/or retention of secrets and classified documents shall be an offence.

2. All combatants must defend the ANC and be loyal to it, the army and the revolution. The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:
- Disloyalty or deception designed or likely to give assistance to the enemy.
 - Rebellion or revolt against the army command or part of it or attempts to commit such an act of rebellion or revolt.
 - Conduct which causes despondency, spreads a spirit of defeatism, or undermines morale in any member or section of the army.
 - Cowardly conduct in the face of the enemy.
 - Wilful disobedience or refusal of orders properly given by a commander.
 - Desertion from the army.

3. All combatants shall act in such a manner that the people will put their trust in the army, recognise it as their protector, and accept the liberation movement as their legitimate and authentic representative.

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

- Conduct that weakens the people's trust, confidence and faith in the ANC and Umkhonto.
- Theft from a comrade or the people, looting of property, or other forcible seizure of goods.
- Abuse of authority and/or power
- Cruelty inflicted on a member of the army or public.
- Assaults, rape, disorderly conduct, the use of insulting and/or obscene language, bullying and intimidation, whether against a comrade or member of the public.
- Shameful conduct likely to disgrace the ANC, army or the offender, or bring them into disrepute, or provoke indignation and contempt against them, such as violating the rights and dignity of the opposite sex, whether in operational or base areas.
- Unjustifiable homicide.
- Ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons in custody.

4. All combatants shall protect the leadership and property of the ANC and Umkhonto.

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

- Failure to protect commanders and commissars against assaults or attacks.
- Wilful or negligent destruction, neglect or misuse of the property and/or funds of the ANC and army.
- Failure to submit and hand over to the commanding authority property seized or acquired during military operations.
- Negligence in handling, using or storing and loss of weapons.

5. All combatants are required to have

the permission of a competent authority to travel, move from one place to another, or leave a camp, base or residence to which they are assigned.

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

- Absence without permission.
- Escaping or attempting to escape from the custody of a competent authority.

6. All combatants and members of the ANC and Umkhonto shall observe high moral standards and show an adequate sense of responsibility.

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

- Smoking dagga or using other harmful drugs or being in unauthorised possession of the same.
- Neglect of duty.
- Drunkenness on duty and/or in public.

7. All members of the ANC and combatants are required to promote and preserve the unity of the ANC, the army, the liberation movement and the people.

Any act or speech that provokes tribal or regional animosities or spreads disunity by means of factionalism and/or racism shall be an offence.

8. Punishment.

All members of the ANC and combatants are required to respect the terms of the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War in line with the formal acceptance by the ANC of these terms in 1981. Any violation of these terms shall be an offence.

All members of the ANC and Umkhonto shall tactfully observe the general regulations and shall be liable to the penalties prescribed for offences under the regulations. The purpose of punishment is to deter members from committing an offence, assist offenders to rehabilitate and protect the ANC, Umkhonto, liberation and revolution. In imposing punishment, the competent authorities shall be guided by high political principles to the exclusion of personal animosity or any trace of vendetta. Punishment shall be administered humanely and without undue harshness or cruelty.

The following punishments may be ordered for offences under the regulations according to the gravity of the offence and the circumstances under which it was committed:

- Reprimand or rebuke administered in private or public.
- Suspension from duty for a specified period.
- Fatigue and drills.
- Restriction with hard labour for a specified period determined by tribunal.
- Demotion from a position of responsibility.
- Restriction in a rehabilitation centre.
- Dishonourable discharge.

8. Solitary confinement for a period determined by tribunal.

9. The maximum penalty.

10. Any other penalty not included herein but appearing in the schedule of penalties for grave or serious crimes and violations.

Rules and Regulations Covering the Handling of Weapons and Explosives of our Movement.

Introduction

Among the most sacred duties of a soldier in MK is to protect and preserve the weaponry and other war material of our army – in certain circumstances even with his life. The loss of a weapon would be regarded in the same light as the loss of a limb and has serious consequences for the body of our army.

Our weaponry and other war materials are there to be used against our enemy and must, at all times, be maintained in a proper state of combat readiness and must only be used to further our revolution. This is the duty of every organ and individual soldier entrusted with the task of handling such material.

In the interest of our revolution the following rules and regulations will be strictly enforced.

1. The Politico-Military Council under the direction of the NEC shall be the organ which decides on the distribution and use of all weapons and explosives in any given area.

2. All members of the ANC who possess a personal weapon or weapons are under obligation to declare it or them to the authorised organs or persons in the Movement for registration and for determining whether the comrade should be authorised to keep the weapon or surrender it.

3. All weapons not supplied by authorised persons in the hands of individuals or groups must be reported and declared immediately. Failing to fulfil this requirement constitutes a serious offence against the Movement and carries with it a heavy punishment.

4. Unauthorised possession and use of weapons is strictly prohibited.

5. It is strictly forbidden to point a weapon, loaded or otherwise, at any person other than our enemy.

6. It is serious offence to abandon without proper cause, lose, misuse, neglect or damage weapons, ammunition and explosives.

7. Unauthorised exchange, barter or transfer of a weapon(s) is strictly forbidden.

8. All weapons, ammunition and explosives must be handled by authorised persons and must be totally concealed in public except during combat marches in our training camps and schools and where permission is granted to have weapons for the defence of ANC personnel and property.

9. All records, inventories of all war materials have to be kept by Ordnance, Security and by any organ entrusted with such material.

10. The use of materials for emergency purposes has to be reported to the appropriate authority.

11. The security and care of weapons shall be the responsibility of those entrusted with them.

12. All transfer and movement of war materials from one area to the

other shall be entrusted to the Ordnance Department

13. Safety measures must be observed when handling weapons and explosives.

14. Authorised persons are not allowed to handle weapons under the influence of liquor.

THE BATTLE OF NYATUWE

(Related by Comrade Rogers, a Wankie veteran).

WE reached Nyatuwe early in the morning before sunrise. After establishing an outpost and detailing some comrades for guard duties, I, Masimini and the overall commander left for reconnaissance around the area. Nyantuwe is a river but it was dry at the time.

On the side we had camped there was a small bush which provided good cover against airplanes, helicopters, and distant people. A hundred metres from this bush, on the north-western side of the river, there was a hillock with huge rocks on top. On the other side there was dry elephant grass.

The hillock was a very strategic position because from it you could observe allround and would be in a position to spot the enemy from afar. The sector of fire also would be 360 degrees. But we couldn't occupy it because of lack of cover from the air. After scouting the area we decided to have only one outpost with all-round defence, everybody sleeping at his position.

The sun was about to rise. We had decided to camp there till 16.30 hours. We would then clear the area of traces for an hour and continue with our march at 17.30 hours. After having meals I went to sleep. Our outpost was near, just at the edge of the forest, and my position was $\pm 20m$ from the outpost.

At about 0.7.00 hrs a spotter plane circled over our position twice. We ignored it. Just when I was beginning to fall asleep, I think at 08.30 hrs, a deafening salvo of automatic rifles fire from all directions broke the silence. From the sound it was clear the weapons were not ours. Then I heard a boer voice bellowing: "SURRENDER"

When I lifted my head a long burst went off and the ZAPU comrade who was manning the outpost 20m from me was hit. The enemy was firing from hip position and the noise made by their weapons overwhelmed ours. Their fire pinned me down. I lay flat as I was on the ground, with bullets hitting the

sand all around me.

This sudden volley from the enemy, coupled with white men voices shouting "surrender" unnerved some of the comrades. There was some little confusion. But fortunately some of the comrades took position and returned fire. Masimini was shouting on top of his voice saying he will shoot any son-of-a-bitch who ran away, ordering them to fire back. Others had merely taken cover and were not firing at the enemy.

I heard Masimini calling my name, coming towards my direction. Besides him there were Kid Marongrong (ZAPU) and Sibanyoni, nicknamed Ntsimbikayigobi. They saw I was pinned down, Masimini and Kid had sub-machine guns and Sibanyoni a light machine-gun. With long burst the three guns spoke, and the enemy was forced to take cover.

In a few seconds I was up, took my bag and gun, told Masimini and Sibanyoni to follow me and ordered Kid to cover me. On the way I met Zami (Bothwell Tamane) who was alone manning another position, firing at the enemy. The fire that side was very heavy. I thought the enemy could be trying to make a breakthrough that side. I instructed Sibanyoni to take position besides Zami with his L.M.G. and ordered Zami to cease fire and wait till the enemy was 50m away. I told him that the day was still young and we had to be careful not to exhaust our supplies of ammunition. "Our survival depends on our accuracy," I said. I also gave them their sectors of fire.

Suddenly the enemy burst out from the trees and there were helicopters hovering over us. We took positions (I and Masimini), joined by Sharp (MK). We were five. None opened fire. The enemy was firing from the hip, rushing towards us. When I estimated they were 50m and their fire was already pinning us down, I replied with my sub-machine guns.