CSVR
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF VIOLENCE AND RECONCILIATION

Wishing Us Away:
Challenges facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa

by Sasha Gear

CSVR
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF VIOLENCE AND RECONCILIATION

PO Box 30778 Braamfontein 2017 South Africa
Tel: +27 11 4035650 Fax: +27 11 3396786
Email: info@csvr.org.za
Web site: http//www.csvr.org.za

"Wishing Us Away: Challenges facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa"

by Sasha Gear

VIOLENCE AND TRANSITION
SERIES VOLUME 8- 2002

Author
Sasha Gear

Cover Photograph
Photograph by John Liebenberg/South Photographs

CONTENTS:

▲ Introduction 8
- ▲ The respondents 8

▲ Betrayal 10
- "We are spanners to fasten bolts, after the bolts have been fastened, we are sidelined ..." 10
- "Up shit creek, no paddles and nowhere to go ..." 13
- "Thrown outside like morning mucus ..." 15
- "It is them now who are in the fat ..." 19
- "Getting into Shell House, it's like when you want to get to heaven..." 20
- "Forgotten' is an understatement; we have been wished away ..." 21
- ▲ Ex-Thokoza SDUs and betrayal 22

▲ The SANDF Experience 23
- "Those problems, I can talk about them maybe, till sunset brother, they are quite a lot ..." 23
- ▲ Demobilisation 23
- ▲ The Service Corps 25
- ▲ Integration 26
- "They're frustrating us out of the system ..." 26

▲ Community Expectations, Perceptions and the Stigmatisation of Ex-combatants 30
- "We run to them ..." 30
- ▲ Stigmatisation during combat 34
- "It's as if we're monsters ..." 34
- ▲ Current experiences of stigmatisation 37
- "They take us in another way ..." 37
- "The heroes of yesterday are now the villains ..." 41
- "The moment the boss finds out ..." 43
- "It's such a good story to say, 'here's another military guy that went cookies' ..." 46

▲ Violence and Crime 47
- ▲ A violent context 47
- "It was safer for me to go into Angola on a military operation than it is for you to travel back to Johannesburg this afternoon ..." 47
- "Violence is harder now ..." 48
- "The comrades have lost their teeth ..." 49
- "Nothing to cover your backside ..." 50
- "I am the big man ..." 50

▲ Surrounded by violence - factors contributing to ex-combatants' potential for violence 51

"He who hesitates is lost ..." 51

"At least if you die like a brave man ..." 52

"A white man in Africa without a weapon is a victim ..." 52

Ex-SADF members and their potential for violence 53

"And if the government doesn't do anything about it ..." 53

Living with violence – experiences of ex-MK members 54

"The worst thing is that the police didn't charge them, but us ..." 55

"The police can see that we are blowing their cover ..." 57

"The police are still looking for us ..." 58

Ex-MKs and 'disarmament' 59

"Must we go back to square one? ..." 60

Ex-Thokoza SDUs - crime fighting and relationships with state security agencies 60

"They do not like bad things ..." 60

"Soldiers are giving us a problem ..." 62

▲ Ex-combatants and criminal involvement 63

Thokoza SDUs and criminal activity prior to the war 66

Thokoza SDUs and criminal activity during the war 66

Ex-combatants and current crime 69

"Your life is on a thin line ..." 69

"I am tired of handouts ..." 71

"Latest BMW, nice clothes and changing girlfriends like pairs of shoes ..." 71

Ex-MKs and the crime pull 73

"Tsotsis, they know me ..." 74

"If you can't beat them, you better join them ..." 76

"You are a time bomb really, you are just ticking away ..." 76

Processes of armed force integration - compounding problems of militarisation? 77

"Without beating about the bushes ..." 79

Preventing crime through building alternative identities 80

"We need them to be engaged in something ..." 80

"They love soccer, they love the team ..." 80

Outbursts of aggression and violence 82

"He became another thing ..." 82

"A temper that is so hard to resist ..." 85

Aggression and violence in the home 87

"You learnt after a while, if something struck you as odd, just to keep quiet ..." 87

"He used to be something; now he's nothing ..." 88

▲ Trauma and Distress 93

"You're a trained specialist ... your means of doing it is by fighting, shooting." 95

"Most of us don't know what debriefing is 'cos we never had it ..." 95

▲ Some additional manifestations of distress 98
"A lot of them become loners ..." 98
"That's why sometimes we drink ..." 99
The attraction of suicide 100
▲ Psychosocial support 101
Traditional cleansing rituals 101
"We are counselling ourselves ..." 102
"We need something to refresh our minds ..." 103
▲ Revenge Violence, Former Enemies and Reconciliation 105
▲ Revenge violence 105
"Some of them are still having those minds of fighting ..." 105
▲ Attitudes to former enemies 107
"We used to call them 'terrorists' ..." 107
▲ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission 110
Ex-SADF members' appraisals of the TRC 110
Ex-MK/SDU members' appraisals of the TRC 112
▲ Thokoza SDUs and the Thokoza Monument 116
"They made it for themselves, not for my friends ..." 116
▲ Conclusion 119
"Forgotten is an understatement ..." 119
▲ Endnotes 121
▲ Acknowledgements 123

This research report follows a survey of related literature, *Now that the war is over: Ex-combatants, Transition and the Question of Violence. A Literature Review*. The latter provides background to many of the issues raised in the current report, and is framed by the following themes:

- South Africa's conflict – who are the combatants?
- Demobilisation and reintegration
- Militarised youth – integration and (lack) of demobilisation initiatives
- Demobilisation, conflict and violence
- War-generated identities as a potential source of future conflict and violence
- War trauma as a potential source of future violence

It is part of the Violence & Transition Series and is available on the CSVR's website.

VIOLENCE AND TRANSITION SERIES

The Violence and Transition Series introduces an extensive research project conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) into the *nature of violence* during South Africa's transition from apartheid rule to democracy. This series comprises a set of self-contained, but interrelated, reports that explore violence across the period 1980-2000 within key social loci and areas, including:

- Revenge Violence and Vigilantism
- Foreigners (immigrants and refugees)
- Hostels and Hostel Residents
- Ex-combatants
- State Security Forces (police and military)
- Taxi Violence

While each report grapples with the dynamics of violence and transition in relation to its particular constituency, all are underpinned by the broad objectives of the series, namely:

- To analyse the causes, extent and forms of violence in South Africa across a timeframe that starts before the political transition and moves through the period characterised by political transformation and reconciliation to the present.
- To assess the legacy of a violent past, and the impact of formal democratisation and transition, on the contemporary nature of violence by researching continuities and changes in its form and targets.
- To investigate the role of perpetrators and victims of violence across this timeframe.
- To evaluate reconciliation strategies and institutions, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established to ameliorate future violence in South Africa.
- To develop a macro-theory for understanding violence in countries moving from authoritarian to democratic rule, that is, "countries in transition".
- To contribute to local and international debates about reconciliation and justice for perpetrators and victims of gross violations of human rights.

Through these objectives, the Violence and Transition Series aims to inform and benefit:

- Policy analysts,
- Government officials and departments,
- NGOs and civic organisations, and
- Researchers,

working in the fields of:

- Violence prevention,
- Transitional criminal justice,
- Victim empowerment,
- Truth commissions,
- Reconciliation,
- Human rights, and
- Crime prevention.

As a country emerging from a past characterised by violence, repression and struggle, South Africa faces new challenges with the slow maturation of democracy. Violence today is complex, dynamic and creative in form, shaped by both apartheid and the mechanisms of transition itself. In order to understand – and prevent – violence during transition an ongoing action-research agenda is required. Through this series, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, offers an initial and exploratory contribution to this process.

The Violence and Transition Series is funded primarily by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The Project was also supported by the Embassy of Ireland and the Charles Stewart-Mott Foundation.

The United States Department of Labor has funded the publication of this particular report [Volume 8]

Series editors:

Piers Pigou
Bronwyn Harris
Brandon Hamber

For further information, please contact:

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

PO Box 30778
Braamfontein
2017
South Africa
+27 11 403 5650 (tel)
+27 11 339 6785 (fax)
http://www.csvr.org.za

Wishing Us Away:
Challenges facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa

Introduction

This report provides an exploration of some key issues affecting ex-combatants in South Africa. It is based on a series of in-depth interviews and focus groups with former members of various armed groupings that participated in South Africa's recent conflict.[1] The analysis is organised under six inter-related themes:

- Betrayal
- The SANDF Experience
- Community Expectations, Perceptions and the Stigmatisation of Ex-combatants
- Violence and Crime
- Trauma and Distress
- Revenge Violence, Former Enemies and Reconciliation

For the purposes of the report, 'ex-combatants' are defined as the fighters of South Africa's past violent conflicts who are not currently situated within the state agencies of safety and security, i.e. South African National Defence Force (SANDF), South African Police Services (SAPS). Little is known of the present situations of these ex-combatants. Indeed, many former fighters, who often carry with them decades of militarised experiences and the accompanying burdens of these have, as one respondent put it, 'just disappeared into South Africa ...' where they must attempt to build new lives for themselves.

Demobilised[2] ex-combatants who no longer hold positions in the formal security structures are conventionally considered a vulnerable population. This is because the termination of their combatant activities requires them to find alternative methods of income generation and support – a demand for which they are often ill equipped. Furthermore, they find themselves in a hostile environment characterised by high levels of unemployment. This vulnerability combined with their former combatant status has led to characterisations of this population as a security threat.

Not all ex-combatants are equally placed in relation to this context. As is evident in South Africa, many former fighters of the Liberation Movement presently occupy prominent positions in both government and the corporate world. These ex-combatants have certainly not 'disappeared' but, instead, play visible and fundamental roles in society. But this is by no means true for the majority of ex-combatants. This investigation attempts to contribute to an understanding of the situations of those ex-combatants who have 'disappeared' from the public eye and the discourses of dominant society.

The respondents

South Africa has a vast and heterogeneous ex-combatant population, originating from an array of armed formations and experiences.[3] This report focuses primarily on some of those whose participation in (or preparation for) armed conflict took place under the auspices of the African National Congress's (ANC) Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), including some who operated within Self Defence Unit (SDU) structures, and the apartheid state's South African Defence Force (SADF).

Within both these general categories there are a host of other combatant category distinctions to be made. At a very broad level the SADF combatants can be divided into Permanent Force members and those who served on a part-time basis as members of the Citizen Force. MK soldiers can broadly be considered to fall into those who left South Africa to train in exile (and who might have been deployed in South Africa or not) and those who operated internally throughout their combatant days. Especially within MK though, categories of combatants cannot be rigidly defined. For example, many, while perceiving themselves to be fighting for liberation in the townships where they lived, had only very tenuous or remote links with the ANC and its formal armed structure (MK). Others 'linked' themselves to MK through minimal training, and/or the provision of certain ordinances. Others who went for training in exile did so for varying periods of time. Some spent the large part of their lives in exile, while many of the later recruits were in exile for as little as one or two years.

For the purposes of this report ex-combatants who participated in the ANC's armed struggle are uniformly referred to as 'MK/SDU'.[4] The majority of these respondents operated primarily inside South Africa. Many of them however, had exile experiences when they left the country to receive training offered by the ANC in the early 1990s. Before this they had operated as SDUs or 'comrades' in the townships. Although some of the research participants spent long periods in exile – having left South Africa in the 1970s or 1980s – these are the minority. Three focus groups with these respondents were complemented by several in-depth interviews.

Former SDUs from the township of Thokoza on the East Rand (Gauteng) are categorised separately from other MK/SDU respondents for their very particular combat experiences. They participated in some of the most intense violent conflict that took place within South Africa's boundaries. The violence that engulfed Thokoza in the early 1990s was akin to that of high-intensity warfare. Respondents in this category are also usually considerably younger than other ex-combatants. One focus group and five in-depth interviews were conducted with these respondents. Additional material was collected through a focus group with parents/caregivers, and another with girlfriends/ex-girlfriends of Thokoza SDUs.

This study also draws on a series of interviews with ex-combatants conducted on behalf of the CSVR during 1999 and 2000 in KwaZulu-Natal.[5] These interviews were mainly with former members of the non-statutory forces, i.e. MK, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA, the Pan African Congresses' armed-wing) and local SDUs. In addition, several interviews were conducted with former combatants aligned to the Inkatha Freedom Party, who had been trained by the South African Defence Force in Namibia's Caprivee Strip. Interviews were also held with members of the Inkatha-aligned Self Protection Units (SPUs).

South African Defence Force (SADF) respondents[6] divide between those who were Permanent Force members, and those who were members of the Citizen Force. Alternatively, they can be categorised as ex-Special Forces and former conscripts. (This is the case for respondents, but importantly, not all Permanent Force members were in Special Forces). All respondents who held permanent positions did so within the SADF's Special Forces' Reconnaissance Commandos. In this report these respondents are referred to as 'Special Forces' operators or 'recces'. Also housed within Special Forces but on a part-time (or Citizen Force) basis, were members of the Parachute Battalions. These respondents are also referred to as 'Special Forces' operators or, alternatively, 'parabats'. Most of the ex-Special Forces respondents were deployed exclusively outside South Africa. Interviews were conducted with a total of seven ex-Special Forces operators.

The other main category of SADF respondents is that of former conscripts, specifically those who had done their military service during the 1980s. All but one of these respondents had been involved in combat in either the former South West Africa (Namibia) or Angola. Some of these respondents had, in addition, been deployed in South Africa's townships. One focus group was conducted with former conscripts, and another with female relatives of conscripts who had had similar combat experiences. The female relative group included wives, ex-wives and mothers of former conscripts. Most 'wife' respondents are, in addition, sisters of former conscripts.

While the bulk of the conscript data was collected through these focus groups, this information is supplemented in places with the words of other conscripts, accessed through subscription to an English-medium internet chat-line of ex-SADF soldiers. Although former soldiers with a range of SADF experiences subscribe to 'ArmyTalk'[7], most were engaged with the military in a Citizen Force capacity. This additional method of data collection provides important supplementary material for an ex-combatant category that represents a significant proportion of South Africa's white, adult male population. Subscribers to this group appear to broadly represent a different section of this population from that represented by those who participated in the focus group (none of whom subscribe to the chat-line). Contributions from this source are indicated by "AT", for 'ArmyTalk'.

In addition to these key respondent categories several additional interviews were carried out with former APLA members and members of Inkatha Self Protection Units (SPUs). The small numbers in both cases preclude these interviews from constituting respondent categories. Rather, the interviews are used as supplementary material where appropriate.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted between July 1999 and May 2000. Apart from the specific interviews that took place in KwaZulu Natal (mentioned above) and some ArmyTalk chat-line contributions, the research was done in the province of Gauteng.

With the exception of one APLA interviewee, all ex-combatants who participated in the research process are men. The absence of the voices of ex-MK women particularly, constitutes a crucial gap in the research. In addition, numerous other ex-combatants whose current situations also remain unknown, do not feature. As such, the focus of this study is relatively narrow. However, while its findings are not representative of the diverse ex-combatant population, they are indicative of a range of issues and problems percolating within the ranks of South Africa's former soldiers.

Betrayal

"We are spanners to fasten bolts, after the bolts have been fastened, we are sidelined ..."

This section explores betrayal, the most recurrent theme emerging from the various voices of ex-combatants.

The vast majority of interviewees feel they have been badly let down by those who propelled them into action and inspired their lives as combatants. A common element is the sense that the ideological paradigms that framed the wars they fought in, and their identities as combatants, have been betrayed. For many, the disjuncture between what they fought for and their present realities is a bitter pill to swallow.

> That is why I say that I am still in a struggle ... There is this thing emphasised in the Freedom Charter that there shall be houses, security and comfort here inside South Africa ... and they expect it from us – the comrades – that we should make comfort for ourselves ... But you find the resources for those securities are not available. That's why I say that I am still oppressed, even now, because I'm not employed. [MK/SDU]

> I went to the parabats 'cos I wanted to be worthwhile. We were led to believe we were stopping communism ... I believed, 'Stop the communists outside before they blow up my house and family.' Then you realised it was a political game. Lives were lost. It leaves a bitter taste. We were led down the garden path ... We went in believing we were doing the right thing. What for? ... I hear guys who are bitter to[wards] the politicians like it was a sell out 'We fought, why did you give it away?' ... The ANC government were assisted in getting into power, it wasn't a military victory. Some feel worse off because of that. [Parabat]

Several former SADF members refer to the former ruling National Party with scorn:

> I think throughout the white ex-military, the people hate the New National Party and the old National Party more than they hate the ANC government ... I personally believe that the time of white politics is over in South Africa. The people who are still in politics saying ... we're fighting political battles are only organising a job for themselves. That's what they're doing because they are getting a lot of money for being in parliament and of course they get money from the party, which they get from the normal people who are suffering more and more due to their effects. How can the new National Party, for example, now stand up and say, 'We want to train the power in the country?' They did have the power, they gave it away. [Recce]

For ex-liberation movement combatants in particular, current socio-economic circumstances often underlie the sense of betrayal. This is exacerbated by disparities existing within the ranks of the former liberation movement.

> You'll notice that our cadres are suffering more than everybody in the country. They should have been the first preference of this government – but the government of the ANC, it has thrown them away. [MK/SDU]

> The disparities that exist now are not only between ourselves and our white counterparts but our comrades as well, that have become, overnight, bourgeoisie and they are driving flashy cars and sleeping in very expensive hotels; they fly over our heads. But I think after all is said and done, you look at the thing in a perspective that is consistent with what you did and you will tell yourself, 'Now when I joined the movement I didn't join to benefit myself ... It was the common concern for all South African citizens – that we need[ed] to liberate ourselves from the draconian racial barriers that existed at that time. And for now what you need to do is only to make the most of the worst situation ... the best way you know how.' But there are people who are in a more disadvantaged position than I am. I must recognise that. [MK/SDU]

Ex-combatants' viewpoints about their situation and how they arrived at this current juncture are not uniform. There is, for example, disagreement between some MK/SDU respondents about why they were fighting and what reasonable compensation might therefore be. This is illustrated in an extract from one of the MK/SDU focus groups.

> **R1:** [I] was suffering but even today I still use my tolerance, my political understanding, according to my commitment that I joined [MK] voluntarily. The motive behind was to serve the interests of the large oppressed and defenceless citizens of our country. And you expect funds from the ANC, that after the liberation [we] would be paid? ... According to my knowledge, I do not expect of us that we're expecting some financial payment from the ANC.
>
> **R2:** The first thing that we should understand as comrades is what we have been fighting for ... And we were not fighting to be free ... we were fighting to live nice. Because, the boers, if we were fighting for freedom, they were just going to give us the freedom we want[ed], then [we would] still not enjoy life ... I was fighting for a better life ... So we must understand what we have been politically fighting for. It seems like we do not know what we have been fighting for really, really.

The words of the second respondent reflect a common frustration amongst many former combatants regarding the outcome of the struggle. Although political freedom has been achieved, conditions for many have not changed. Indeed, pervasive socio-economic hardship presents an ongoing and fundamental challenge to those combatants who engaged in the armed struggle, 'fighting for a better life'. Political freedoms have provided no guarantees of improved economic circumstances or opportunities for most South Africans.

This sense of unfulfilled expectations and disillusion permeates the ranks of former combatants as they attempt to come to grips with their current situations. Those who are not beneficiaries of the new dispensation are, in the present, casualties of the ideologies, or fragments thereof, that mobilised them into action. The disjuncture between what they fought for and their current situations leave many feeling, in the words of one respondent, that they 'do not know where they are going'. Many SADF respondents feel they were used and cast aside, brainwashed to be pawns in a political game they neither understood nor had any control over. Compounding their anger, is a pervasive sense that what they fought for has been given away, handed to their enemies on a plate.

Several SADF respondents, however, feel that while many of their colleagues were appalled by the dramatic political developments in the early 1990s, some saw these developments as inevitable.

> A lot of people's approach is 'Hell, what a waste'. My personal approach is ... that the former government were fighting to buy time. Ultimately, even at that stage I think we realised that it was going to happen; it was a question of when. But there are a lot of guys ... [who] were assured that if they fought and volunteered to do this and that, we'd never ever have a communist country. And subsequently it materialises that we have a government where a lot of the members have that affiliation. [Parabat]

> My opinion about being bullshitted from the top is, okay, we were. And they tried to rope you into the army as young as possible so that you weren't wise enough, you were still a puppy. But ... I tell you, it was the right time. Okay we lost *okes* [guys], we lost buddies but it **was** the right time. War is never nice. But it had to happen, there was a reason ... Would you rather have this place looking like Sarajevo – everything blown to bits? [Conscript group]

Views of this nature are more common amongst 'ArmyTalk' subscribers than they are amongst interviewees and focus-group participants.

> I know that change had to happen sooner or later, and maybe because my family politics has always been anti-Nat [Nationalist Party], I didn't shed any tears when they left power. I honestly believe that we are better off now than then. ["AT"]

The sense of having been 'sold down the bloody river' is, however, present among all categories of SADF respondents. Participants in the conscript focus group emphasise their past experiences as a crucial facet of this, and point to the treatment they received when they were soldiers. They were 'cannon fodder', they say. In other words, they were treated as dispensable and were unnecessarily endangered. The secrecy around their deployment also meant that most South Africans had no idea what sort of situations many soldiers encountered. Those that did know, the people in charge, interviewees maintain, didn't care.

> Let's actually get one thing straight. You know what we didn't need was the bullshit we put up with on the border. That we didn't need. I tell you what we did need. We needed support. We never got it. We got a whole lot of bullshit thrown in our faces. Because you know what? The people at the top couldn't give a shit! They probably ran like rabbits. [Conscript group].

While former operators of the SADF Special Forces emphasise the necessity of the secrecy that shrouded military operations, for many former conscripts this constituted a deception that negated their war experiences in the eyes of civilian society. The news blackout that surrounded the SADF's operations meant that other South Africans had little clue that there was even a war going on.

> There were 10 000 of us sitting in Angola and we hear on our radios Pik Botha saying, 'I deny categorically there's any South African troops in Angola'. And it's on the radio and it's 10 000 of you [who] can listen to that. So what are you, dead already when you're there? How would you feel? [Conscript group]

In addition, relatives of former conscripts tell how letters sent by the conscripts were censored, much of them being blacked out with ink by the time they reached their addressees.

The boys were just off to 'the border', a term in which the horrors and victories of war were contained or rendered invisible to the communities from which the conscripts were drawn.

> You come home, 'How's it up on the border. Is it *lekker*?'... It was like nobody even seemed to know there was even a war going on. They make as if there is nothing going on there. It was just like, 'Where have you been man?' 'I've been up at the border' 'Oh, that's nice, so-and-so is also there'. [Conscript group]

A former parabat echoes these concerns. He also highlights a related rift that he says existed between the Permanent Forces and the Citizen Forces.

> There was no counselling or concern for national servicemen or Part Time Force members when they came back from the border. Apart from Col. X, we never had a Permanent Force guy at any of the funerals of our people. A lot of the full time officers used the Citizen Force army to further their careers. They weren't too worried about the troops under their command, whether they died or not. We held the Permanent Force in contempt. I think that if the war had got more intense, we would've started having cases of Permanent Force guys getting shot by their troops. [Parabat]

Although this anger about the past is powerful, most conscript focus group participants combine these views with an elevation of their service as 'the best years of my life', and calls for the reintroduction of conscription. Moreover, the targets of their present anger differ to those of other SADF respondents.

"Up shit creek, no paddles and nowhere to go ..."

Amongst conscript focus-group participants, a sense of betrayal is less apparent than that of more generalised anger. Their anger is directed at a broad range of targets: the former enemy, the present regime and all those whom it represents, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), their white fellow country people, and Africa in general, in which, as white men, they see themselves as under attack literally and figuratively.

> I tell you what there is in this room now, its complete hatred for the *jops*. It's because we all know what they do, we all know what they are doing now. And the government is turning around and saying, 'Tough shit, you are the White in this country'... Because you know what? The white man in this country, and I am going to quote, unquote here, 'Has had it so good for so long' – which is the *kak* they are preaching to us! Time to tighten your belts because the white man in this country is worth shit. And you know it's not only from the army [that we feel this anger], it's from business and it's going further. We are sitting here, up shit creek, no paddles and there is nowhere to go. And that's why we are now sitting here saying – we fought for this country to make it a better place. What we have done is given it to the kaffir and he is taking it backwards. [Conscript group]

Perceptions of White 'exclusion' are exacerbated by negative assessments of the move to rectify past imbalances through processes of affirmative action.

> It's apartheid reversed. Even worse. Do you want to get the best promotion you can ever get in your life? You must be a black woman. You must be lesbian, alright, and you must be disabled at the same time. Top of the shit pile. Cousin, white male, you are straight at the bottom. [Conscript group]

Frustrations are sometimes underpinned by a fundamentally racist 'logic':

> Take all the men in the world: 50% of them are stuff-ups, [of] all the women in the world 50% are stuff-ups. Anybody who is not White, ... you have also got 50% good *okes* and 50% bad *okes*, but I cut them **all** out of my life because you don't know which ones to choose. Cut them all out of your life and you won't have *kak*. I mean we had no *kak* for the last 80 whatever years, and these *okes* get into your life – they have got problematic lives – Blacks [and] Coloureds, Indians are about your best. But Coloureds and Black *okes* [have] problematic lives hey. I keep them out of my life. [Conscript group]

Perceptions of racial prejudice (with Whites as the underdogs) are intensified by concerns that white people have not demonstrated the necessary solidarity.

> These *okes*, you see, they know they have got us by the balls. They've intimidated us. The Nationalist Party is such a lame duck, then the army, and now every civilian in the street ... I've got a big chip on my shoulder with Whites, about not supporting each other. The spirit is dead. It's not because the war ended in Angola, it's because of the psychological war in our own country. Psychologically, everybody has been just like switched off. [Conscript group]

This reinforces the sense of exclusion:

> The way things are going now, if we had to go to war and fight for this government – I would not fight for them. Because you know, it's not my country. I am going to fight for this black man to take my house, to rape my kids and to shoot my daughter, that is what I am going to be fighting for? While he just smiles? I am not going to. I will never fight! [Conscript group]

Unlike other respondents, most conscript focus-group participants do not direct their intense anger at the people who gave orders, either from within the military or political ranks. This is possibly because they considered themselves to be fighting for their country, stability and the safety of their families rather than the government responsible and the specific military strategy in which they participated. Indeed, this suggests the power and success of the former regime's strategy, with certain segments of the white male population, in cultivating a sense of 'the nation under siege'. As the relative of a former conscript explains,

> My brother didn't go to the army to fight for the government anyway. He went to fight for us. A lot of them [would] go up and fight for their families – they didn't want the bombs and the landmines to come into South Africa. That's why they went there, to stop it. If you had asked my brother if he was doing it for the government, he would have told you where the government could go. And he didn't do it for the SADF. [Wife/sister of conscript]

And their country as they see it, rather than the previous government, has let them down. They experience their situation as fundamentally disempowering and appear to be overwhelmed by a sense of their impotence. The dehumanisation of the enemy instilled through military service not only lives on in this group of respondents particularly, but seems to gain momentum in their experiences of the 'New' South Africa.

> They never fought for the army, they all went up there to fight for their family. It was a whole family thing. 'I want to get this country clean so that I can go home and marry my sweetheart and live in peace and have children'. If they knew what was going to happen today they wouldn't have bothered ... I don't think the anger is aimed at anybody in particular, its just anger with the black colour. Those were the ones they were fighting against. [Wife/sister of conscript]

Their military service took place at a time when their civilian lives were relatively secure and for which they are now nostalgic. Their broader positive associations with their time in the military appear to mitigate their anger at the treatment within the military, or alternatively, their treatment in the military was worthwhile with the overarching objectives in sight – the safety and security of their way of life.

The conscript focus group was conducted during a period in which farm invasions and attacks in Zimbabwe by alleged war veterans were being endorsed by President Mugabe. For some conscripts, the situation north of the border has heightened feelings of anger and disempowerment.

> In Zimbabwe it's starting all over again. It brings back memories, especially when they show this farmer that was beaten to pieces. It's bringing back memories. But they also sit and then they think if it's happening in Zimbabwe it's going to come here ... and he turns round and he looks at me and says, 'Well that's it, if that comes here, we're all gone.' It actually frightens you to think that he thinks – because he knows what they are capable of – that he is rather going to kill us than let them have us. [Wife/sister of conscript].

Not all conscript respondents endorsed these views. For a small minority, blame for their current situation is laid squarely at the door of their military experience and the former government, which, they believe, destroyed their lives. One respondent who is homeless, unemployed and suffers from post-traumatic stress, had this to say:

> Understand you are 17 years old, you have just come out of school, you don't know nothing. You know shit about politics or things like that. You know about biology or geography. Now you come out there and they tell you that you are fighting these *okes*, they are called 'communists'. 'Off you go. These are people that don't believe in God. You can kill them, it's alright.' They didn't tell you about the other people that's in-between over there. They never do. You only find that out when you get there ... My government let me down, hey. They lied to me so much and look where I am now ... And if your parents let you down before that, and then you go to the army and they let you down, and then the government after that lets you down. That's why I say, what kind of person do you come out to be? You come out to be like a negative person. [Conscript group]

> Afterwards, when we came back here ... they just decided we are going to give South West Africa away to these SWAPOs and give them a party on top of it. And that was like putting a cherry on top of the cake, like saying 'Bugger all you *ous* [guys] who got killed there, wounded and whatever'. [Conscript group]

It is important to point out that although this study is based mainly on material gleaned through interviews and focus groups, the predominant views expressed in the conscript focus group generally differ from those of 'ArmyTalk' subscribers. Similar issues were sometimes raised but usually articulated in a different manner. Most notably, the profound anger and entrenched racism that emerged in the conscript group were frequently less vivid in contributions found on the chat line during the research.

These two groupings – the 'ArmyTalk' virtual community and the participants of the conscript focus group – could be considered to broadly represent opposite poles of the heterogeneous conscript population. In general, and when compared with focus-group participants, contributors from the chat line are more favourably placed in terms of employment and security. They tend to regard themselves as secure professionals, and as financially 'comfortable'. Several claim they come from progressive, anti-National Party, middle-class backgrounds. Participants from the conscript focus group, on the other hand, live in more precarious socio-economic circumstances, and are likely to be among those vulnerable to affirmative action policies. They are generally less educated, unemployed, or in less secure employment.

"Thrown outside like morning mucus ..."

There are many facets to the sense of betrayal expressed by former combatants, the most powerful of which is feeling discarded, neglected and forgotten by those for whom they fought. Many feel they have been cast aside, now they are no longer of use. Former liberation movement and SADF members express similar views on a number of issues:

> You'll notice that today our cadres are lying in the streets, loitering in the streets, no jobs, no nothing ... They find themselves being regarded as rotten rubbish which may be thrown into the dirty bin. We were surviving under a terrible situation during the apartheid regime, but now this is a new regime [and] our people are regarded as useless ... I can say: big fishes, they entertain themselves, small fishes are going to be food for big fishes. [MK/SDU]

> In the old days you were a soldier, you had no political views, you were working for the government of the day, finished. But then some guys got involved in the CCB[8], which was a hell of a good organisation no matter what the TRC or anybody says, and they were just dumped like, if I can say it, shit. [Recce]

> This thing that [the] ANC has done to us has destroyed us. For such a long time [we were] working for the ANC [but] the ANC has thrown outside like morning mucus. [MK/SDU]

> There is nothing that we are getting. We are still suffering. We are still the same. [MK/SDU]

> You see history is going to judge us one day, this whole thing, and when it does that, we will know that somehow we failed the very people who brought liberation to this country. [MK/SDU]

> You must just remember what they are doing with us or what has been happening with us is not unique, it has been happening all over the world with soldiers. Soldiers are only important to a government as long as they serve a purpose. [Recce]

For MK respondents, in particular, such feelings are intertwined with their current unemployed status, and their prior expectations that in a liberated South Africa, and in recognition of their sacrifices, they would be provided for.

> What I can say here is that life is hell and catastrophic you see, after we were neglected by our leaders, or maybe by our organisation ... Let me put it this way: I'm not employed you see. [MK/SDU]

> The same life that I was living before is the same life I'm still living today ... we are unemployed. [MK/SDU]

The situation is compounded in the view of some cadres by the calibre of existing leadership within the ANC, and the loss of senior leaders who, it is believed, would have given greater priority to the situation of the ex-combatants.

> I think the organisation was supposed to rope us in from the release [from prison]. Like 'this is our cadre who has gone through a lot, we have to look out for him'. You know, I stay in the shabby shack? ... A lot of comrades refer to this situation as a direct result of Hani passing away, Chris Hani. We all believe he would have not let this perpetuate any further but unfortunately what happened, happened. [MK/SDU]

For many former members of the SADF's permanent force, as with MK members, the need to secure work after the war is a serious concern. Several former recces also link the sense of resentment towards their former superiors to current employment opportunities, or the lack thereof. There is, for example, considerably less anger, they say, amongst those that have secured alternative income-generating opportunities.

> *Ja*, there might be resentment amongst certain elements. But I think that an organisation like EO [Executive Outcomes] – although it was a pure mercenary type of company – opened so

> many doors for so many guys who met government officials from other countries and businessmen or whatever and are now security personnel for mines in Angola and Tanzania and Uganda and wherever. They've got a new life, they've got new everything. [Recce]

While economic circumstances fundamentally inform feelings of anger, they do not adequately explain the sense of betrayal. Several SADF Special Forces respondents focus their anger at the apartheid politicians who made a 180-degree policy turn without warning or consultation. The enemy that the SADF soldiers had been trained to hate and kill was now invited to the negotiation table. Some began to question why they had been fighting in the first place, and others could not understand why everything was being given up. It is not only a job that some have lost, it is the ideological foundations on which they had built and understood their lives and what they were fighting for.

> It's these inconsistencies between what was and what is now ... When [South Africa] changed it was an election that was won but it was dramatically changed over in the sense – okay, we did not have the violence effect, ... the war that we have in the rest of Africa – but religion changed overnight and all those type of things ... You must remember we haven't lost a military war. If the policy was different in the sense that if we had not been taught that we were actually fighting against the ANC as well, or against SWAPO; if we had said we are fighting against communism etc, etc, and the ANC had been just another party inside South Africa, things would have been so different with the change over. But by making the ANC the enemy, by making SWAPO the enemy, you grow up with them the enemy, and then you get this change over and the church tells you, 'You were wrong all these years', and I mean you suddenly realise: **we're** the indoctrinated ones; **we're** the brain-washed ones, not them. You realise that, well, we had the strongest military force in Africa and without firing one shot, everything is gone. And because of that, because some government official or president decided it's time for the ANC to take over, we lost our jobs. We lost our future. Everything that was stable for us is gone. All of a sudden that which we believed in is gone and once your belief is gone, everything goes. [Recce]

For this respondent, the church bears particular responsibility. Having provided theological backing to apartheid and its aggressive anti-communist policies, followers were then expected to accept that what had been preached for years was erroneous and morally unsustainable.

> The church says after 48 years, 'We have been wrong, apartheid was wrong, it was a sin'. And I asked them, 'If one of you can just tell me who will go to heaven, those who died before 1994 or those who died after 1994?' They say I mustn't think like that. I say 'Well, I do think like that because, you – the church – taught what was right and what was wrong, and now you change. Overnight, you change with the political system which tells me that you are running with politics and that you are actually portraying more a political view and not the religious side of it'. So I do have a problem very much with the church and I believe most of the ex-soldiers do ... Do you want to tell me that you don't have one church leader that received the inspiration that they were on the wrong track until the new government came? That proves to me that the church are a system inside South Africa, and perhaps in the world, to indoctrinate people ... I can't accept it. Those were the guys who've actually done me in the most, who've stolen the most from me and who let me down the most. [Recce]

Similarly, ex-MK members have been required to make fundamental ideological shifts. One respondent explains his treatment at the hands of his former comrades:

> My imprisonment was for a just cause, you don't regret that, but to come out // ... You know, I was told by the leadership, 'Look, the kind of politics you were involved in and the politics we are involved in now are two different things. You ... might be very useful to the organisation

but none the less you must understand now, that the politics we are involved [in is] finance and now there is going to be a lot of friction, so you better not go and involve yourself in local structures, you just have to involve yourself in a very minimal form.' And in those days they wanted me to go and volunteer in the Premier's office for the election we had, but I refused on the basis that they were only prepared to give me money for transport, whereas I had a family to look after. That is terrible, I must say. You know, to go sacrifice 13 years, I was prepared to make the supreme sacrifice and I was even sentenced to death. ... I was with the McBride, the Sharpeville 6 and all those other political figures – ... all these people in high posts in Government. And now I was expected to do volunteer work as if I don't have people to look after, and you ask yourself that the disparities that exist now is not only between ourselves and our White counterparts, but our comrades as well. They have become overnight, bourgeoisie. [MK/SDU]

Intensifying their feelings of betrayal, ex-MK members complain that they are currently exploited by the ANC. They suggest that the pattern of being used and then discarded continues in the present when ex-combatants are called upon to assist the organisation as and when it requires, but receive nothing in return, or during the intervening periods.

The ANC would come just like last year; they use us to campaign for them, and we do that, you see. And at the end of the day, there's nothing, ... there's nothing [that] can come [to] your family ... Just to campaign is [a] big job ... [and] other people won't do [it] because they see everyday, they look at the T.V. – *ja* one government official has stolen a certain amount of a taxpayer's money. [MK/SDU]

So now those who we were together with in the struggle, those comrades who are in politics, in the mother body, they no longer want us. We are targets if they want to use us, I would just put it straight like that. They wanted to use us ... during campaigning, when the elections were near. Like the elections are coming in July [so] they start to come nearer to us. I already have a note here to come to the branch ... After they have won, I am nothing anymore, do you understand? So in other words ... we are spanners to fasten bolts, after the bolts have been fastened, we are sidelined. [MK/SDU]

This last respondent had the doors to his house damaged by the state security forces during political violence. The doors, which remain broken, have, for him, become a symbol of ANC neglect of its cadres, the lack of the change he expected would come with liberation, and the frustration at the reality that there is no one who can be held accountable to remedy his situation.

I haven't seen life changing until now. Since [I was] troubled by boers [who were] breaking [the] doors of my house, looking for AKs and hand grenades. Even now the doors are still broken. There is no one to fix them. We reported this to comrades who saw when I showed them, what the boers have done at [my] home. They broke all the things in the house and those things are not fixed, even now. So I do not see anything changing . I am nothing anymore. There are still cracks caused by boers ... When I went to the office, to tell the councillor, 'Hey man, look, this crack was caused [in] those times'. He said, 'There is nothing I can do, it was the boers.' I said, 'But it's you in charge, you were in the struggle, please try'. He said, 'Take out the money'. How will I get money? Should I look for a gun and rob, as if I can't think to destroy my government, do you get that thing? So now, because I am in my senses I will not do what he is getting me to do. I will end there. [MK/SDU]

The SADF's foreign soldiers

Several SADF respondents highlight the situations of one category of their former colleagues whom they consider to have been treated extremely badly and, as one respondent put it, 'sacrificed on the altar of expediency' ["AT"]. These are black foreign soldiers who were recruited or captured by the SADF in Angola, and 'turned' to be reconstituted as units in the SADF's Special Forces. Following the war they were brought to South Africa where they were promised homes and citizenship. Now, however, most are destitute with little support and limited opportunities. For Special Forces respondents, the plight of these particular soldiers is a source of outrage.

> **The guys that we really have to worry about [are] the black members of 32 Battalion and Special Forces who were captured by the military in Angola, and fought for the SADF ... [They're] Portuguese-speaking, Ovambo-speaking, Himba etc. They're now destitute ... We brought them back to South Africa like the bushmen who were dumped in Kimberley ... And now 10 years later, is anybody worrying about those guys? How do you think you're going to feel in a strange country? You are unwelcome in your own country; you are just as unwelcome in the country which is supposed to be looking after you ... These are people who have great reason to be angry. They can't go back to their own country, and they're treated very badly here. They're buggered. They can't even communicate with South Africans. Where do you find a job? I've got all these Portuguese-speaking Blacks who phone me on a daily basis, 'You are our father, please look after us'. But I can't even look after myself because the same system that I worked for has also done me in along the way. [Recce]**

"It is them now who are in the fat ..."

A frequently articulated frustration amongst both main categories of ex-combatants, is the perceived hypocrisy and expedience of the organisations for whom they fought, as well as of the broader population. An important facet of this is the issue of who has secured employment in the 'new' institutions of the state. MK respondents resent that they have not been considered for job opportunities within government. Rather, they claim, it is either those who played no role in the struggle, or worse, those who were actively opposed to it, sometimes fighting for the enemy, who have benefited.

> We have worked hard for the ANC ... But, now what is surprising is that the very ANC takes those *amalumpere* [sell-outs, informers, askaris] who were killing people in the location, and gives them jobs. So ... we meet them [and they are] driving cars of the movement [and] they look down at us [and] talk bad about us. [They say] that we worked for ANC, but today it has left us outside. [MK/SDU]

> If we look at our mother body, we find sell-outs working there, those who were telling us that a white man cannot be painted [that the white man will always be more powerful]. Today it's them who work for the land that we fought for for such a long time ... It is painful to work, work, work - and at that time when the pot was hot, when the fire was red, it was us [on] the frontlines ... to bring back the land. Today we are left behind ... it is them now who are in the fat. [MK/SDU]

Several former cadres believe that by virtue of their particular role in the struggle, they should receive preferential treatment.

> Because they fought for democracy, ex-combatants must get first preference, not the civilians. The government is starting with the civilians and we are just sitting ... We should be the first to know when they are doing something, and that we must be there before other people ... but we are not saying that they must only look out for us because we were fighting for the country. [MK/SDU]

One former conscript expresses similar feelings of resentment and envy towards fellow Whites who left South Africa during apartheid in order to avoid conscription. Not having had the opportunity to do the same, he considers his participation in South Africa's wars to have effectively brought his life opportunities and goals to a sudden halt.

> I also wanted to go to Oxford University or Cambridge ... you know what I mean? Those guys who came back from overseas, that ran away from the army, [would] come back and say, 'You're stupid, why did you go to the army because look what I'm doing?' Now he's driving a BMW and he's got his cell and whatever, and you're just sitting there with the same as what you left here [with]. And you look at these guys and you know you're a mess. [Conscript group, follow-up interview]

"Getting into Shell House, it's like when you want to get to heaven ..."

Contributing to their sense of having been discarded is the difficulty ex-combatants frequently experience when attempting to secure the assistance of their organisations. Both SADF and MK respondents, for example, raise specific problems with the SANDF [see section, The SANDF Experience, below]. MK respondents, in particular, emphasise that they are now distanced from the ANC. This marginalisation, they say, results from a lack of interest on the part of those in the structures, disempowering bureaucracies, and a politics of nepotism and patronage, which, some claim, has become the order of the day.

> Like [the ANC] head office, Shell House, you go and report there [to] launch your grievances. When you get there you find new faces, people who do not know you. Some of them were not even in struggle. But now because there's nepotism operating in the office ... (somebody got her sister in, some their mother), when you get there they just look at you and say, 'No, I don't know you'. They will only speak to people they know ... So it seems that we are thrown away. [MK/SDU]

> It's as if now we have said 'ANC for us all and everybody for himself'. Now you have to know 'who', who knows 'who', who is good buddy-buddies with 'who', so that [you] can move all the steps into there. Unfortunately some of us just don't believe in those things, where you have to go through 'who' and 'who'. [MK/SDU]

> It's difficult to get into Shell House, it's like when you want to get to heaven, really ... The security promise to arrest you, they ask all these things ... [if] you do not have a label that you have been sent by a well known person in the movement, those at the top. Really, it's difficult. It's just like if you knock [at] heaven, and they say, 'It's not your time ... Go back', such things. I had forms with me, they tore them [up] in front of me. You get comrades there who tell you, 'Hey we will call Mr. So-and-So'; I don't know whether he deals with security ... In Shell House you only go as far as the entrance door ... and when you come back [to your area] you will get red tape at the branch which you have to jump before your things can become recommendable. [MK/SDU]

These feelings go hand in hand with a sense amongst ex-combatants of being 'stuck' in the bygone era of the war. The following respondent suggests that this situation actually suits the leadership: ex-combatants can still be utilised for the organisation's political gain while those in leadership positions have long since acquired new priorities and no longer represent their interests.

> We like the organisation, even today, but the time to eat politics is over. *Ja*, [at] that time the Thabo Mbekis were sacrificing, everybody was sacrificing, but today they do not eat politics, as maybe we are supposed to believe that we have to eat politics ... The time to eat politics has past comrades ... If I do not come through somebody, at Shell House my story will not be taken. That thing is killing the organisation ... Everybody has sacrificed.

> [The] comrades in 1990, when they arrived [from exile] were leather [but] today they are fatty boom-boom: you see, they do not eat politics as maybe our leadership at branch level expect us to feed on politics. No comrades, it is time that now things be delivered. [MK/SDU]

"Forgotten' is an understatement, we have been wished away ..."

Similarly, many ex-SADF soldiers who were thoroughly schooled in the ideologies of the old South Africa have a sense of being left behind from the rest of society, being relics of something now forgotten as a result of the politics they too were fed. On the SADF side of the coin though, these ways of thinking no longer suit anyone.

Frustration at the collective amnesia of broader society and those in power is strongly expressed by both main respondent groupings. There is a sense that everybody except the former soldiers is settling into the 'New' South Africa, ensuring that they get what they can out of it and conveniently forgetting the less palatable parts of their recent history that might make this more difficult. At the time the soldiers were encouraged by their communities to believe they were 'doing the right thing'. Suddenly though, it seems they did wrong. As one ex-SADF soldier put it:

> If there are people I loathe above all, they are those who like remora fish on a shark owe their lives to the largesse of their host. They are quite happy to go along for the ride, but as soon as the shark gets caught, they gap it and latch on to the nearest one, leaving the erstwhile host to his fate ... The South Africans have joined the club of those who deny the fact that they supported a political system rightly or wrongly, that gave them an advantage over others, and they now decry the 'Racist Apartheid System', conveniently denying their past until reminded, and then they respond by tearing their clothes and heaping ashes upon themselves. I do not feel any guilt for any of the actions I took part in. What I did, I did in good faith, true to the ideals I was schooled in, and what I believed in at the time. It is not my fault; it is not anybody's, apart from the politicians, who do what they do for the citizens of whatever country. So don't berate yourselves, at the end of the day we are, and will always be, pawns, until somebody wakes up and decides 'Hell no!! This is Bullshit!' and decides to do something about it – and then gets seduced by power. ["AT"]

Similarly, an MK ex-combatant points to those black South Africans who doubted that political change would ever be realised, but who have nevertheless reaped the benefits of transition. He feels it is imperative for them to at least acknowledge those who sacrificed their own futures to fight for liberation.

> These people who were pessimistic you know, 'What do they think? Do they think they can liberate this South Africa with petrol bombs and stones?' They were an elite group ... So we were just these naïve South Africans who were so persistent, who told themselves, 'I'd rather die than just be a number that existed in South Africa, be part of statistics'. And after this is done, now they are fortunate: they have qualifications and certificates. They just springboard, they're being roped in through affirmative action and all other kinds of measures that are seeking to equate the scale ... We welcome that, it's just that even today, they have not thanked the very illiterate people; they are not inclined just to say, 'Let's bend backwards and swallow our pride' and say, 'But you see folks, when you did what you did we said you wouldn't do it, but you did it, and thanks to you, we have this now.' 'Forgotten' is an understatement; we have been wished away. It would be so different if it was like, 'No one will ever forget what you did'. [If] every time you go and sit in that flashy car, in that very comfortable office you [would] say thanks to someone, 'With my qualifications and everything, I would have been a doormat of someone, but today I can compete with whoever'. [MK/SDU]

The experiences of SADF and MK respondents overlap in a number of ways. Both made great sacrifices and both now ultimately feel betrayed. The following SADF interviewee draws specific attention to the commonality of the situation for soldiers on both sides:

It was a major disruption, those camps, I can't emphasise that enough ... By the same token, you must look at our opponents: they learnt some terrific skills but they didn't have the opportunities that I had, so I can't really bemoan my lot. But it's funny that those perhaps that weren't prepared to get involved were prepared to capitalise, on both sides. So isn't the moral of the story, sit back, be meek and mild don't fight for your rights, don't go to war. [Parabat]

Ex-Thokoza SDUs and betrayal

In contrast to other respondent categories, betrayal did not emerge as a central theme in discussions with former members of Thokoza SDUs. A sense of incompleteness following the war, or a need for recompense for their roles in the war, is sometimes expressed.

The war is war and at the end of it we got nothing. The war just ended. [Thokoza SDU]

But unlike for other respondents, responsibility for this deficiency is not located with an organisation or structure. This is likely because most Thokoza SDU respondents did not consider themselves to be fighting for an organisation or an ideal. Rather, most became directly involved in the conflict in response to the violence that was taking place around them, and the fundamental need for community protection.

[I fought] because my brothers and sisters were dying. [Thokoza SDU]

We were not fighting for the ANC, we were fighting to get our houses back. [Thokoza SDU]

More than anything else, they perceive themselves to have been fighting for their communities, and in the present, do feel a certain amount of appreciation from community members.[9] They also contemplated the end of the violence with fewer immediate expectations than many other ex-combatants. More often, it seems, feelings of resentment or betrayal have been generated in relation to initiatives aimed at ex-SDUs (or started by SDUs themselves), which have taken place since the cessation of hostilities. In this context, numerous post-conflict expectations have been raised and dashed. The Kathorus Police Reservists Programme[10] is one prominent example. Another respondent is perplexed at the apparent inefficacy of the Youth Commission.[11]

Despite the fact that Thokoza SDU respondents do not generally articulate a sense of betrayal, the concerns of one respondent connect closely with the frustrations expressed by MK/SDU respondents. During the conflict this individual occupied a leadership position in one of the SDUs. He has since moved out of the community and has a job. Now, he is concerned that those who remain unemployed amongst his former colleagues feel betrayed by people who have 'made it'. A division between his former colleagues and himself has emerged.

Myself and other people are being perceived as people who led before and at this stage, I'm somewhere else, working. Now, if there is a problem [in the township] I wouldn't go [there] with that confidence that I used to go with before ... Other people who [were] leaders also ... cannot like go with that confidence to those people. I may phrase it as a betrayal to those people. I managed to get some employment for myself and I've left them behind ... I know it's actually haunting them that they're not working, and [for me] to come to them wearing shoes and whatever, they will see a big difference between myself and them ... It's something inside me that I must understand: one day if somebody says, 'I'm asking for R5.00', I must make sure that I don't say, 'I don't have [it]' because that could be a provocation in itself. That person [will think], 'Everyday this person goes to work, we were together on the battlefield, I'm only asking for R5.00'. [MK/ SDU]

The SANDF Experience

"Those problems, I can talk about them maybe, till sunset brother, they are quite a lot ..."

It is certainly not news that the South African National Defence Forces's (SANDF) demobilisation and integration processes have been dogged by many problems. While the demobilisation process affected only members of the former non-statutory forces, MK and APLA, a source in itself of considerable dissatisfaction, these grouping have also expressed most dissatisfaction regarding their integration into the SANDF. The latter process has certainly affected all those integrating, but again, it was only former members of the non-statutory forces who were required to undergo selection procedures. Interviewees confirm and expand on the range of problems previously raised in other studies.

The compilation of the Certified Personnel Register (CPR), which listed the names of MK and APLA cadres who could then be considered for integration into the SANDF, has, for a number of reasons, been regarded as problematic. These include the pervasive climate of uncertainty and suspicion at the time of compiling the lists. Some cadres were still coming out of the underground structures and had little information about or trust in the political situation and plans to build a new national defence force. They consequently failed to submit their names. Similarly, people against whom there were outstanding warrants of arrest and criminal investigations feared that registration would expose them. Others, who had already participated in the National Peace Keeping Force, assumed their names would automatically appear on the register. Mistakes and corruption, respondents claim, also led to omissions from the register of people who had submitted their names. Contrary to expectations, not everyone who submitted their names qualified for inclusion on the register. As a result, many were left angry when their names did not appear. 'The situation was complicated by the fact that it was impossible to distinguish whether their names had been omitted by the ANC or by the SADF people involved in the process'.[12]

Demobilisation

Most respondents who had been demobilised were demobilised against their will. They had hoped for positions in the military but failed to meet the entrance requirements for integration. Instead of the expected opportunity for integration, they found themselves unceremoniously cast aside (albeit with some pecuniary compensations). Not surprisingly, the process has generated considerable dissatisfaction.

The difficulties of the overall situation are compounded by perceptions that the demobilisation process was not consistently implemented and was fraught with unproductive procedures, corruption, inefficiency, and abusive behaviour.

Some complaints stem from what many ex-combatants regard as fundamental weaknesses in the process. These include the fact that only non-statutory force members were evaluated as part of the integration process. Specific integration criteria, such as the reported exclusion of underage applicants, are also regarded as problematic.[13] In addition, the gratuities paid to those demobilising are considered inadequate.

The most significant criterion for being admitted to the SANDF was passing the tests that were conducted to measure soldiers' potential. A number of respondents express scepticism of the method used to grade these tests, and question the way in which the results were communicated to candidates. From their perspective, the testing process was mismanaged, and fuelled suspicion and dissatisfaction.

> In some instances you [would] find that all the group's [test] results had come out [but] ... yours would not come. But the people you wrote with would get their results first. The way it was

> supposed to happen, the results were supposed to come at the same time. [This] is when I started to have doubts, that okay, why is it happening like this? [MK/SDU]

> We were told that we failed. You write but you don't see your results, you are told verbally that you failed the potential test, then [that] you are going to be demobilised – in that manner. [MK/SDU]

> You were supposed to see your results and say 'Okay, I made the mistake here and there'... [But] you were told 'You failed, you failed'... You don't see your script and see where you failed. This surprised me ... because of the things that were taking place. You were told that a person who has passed matric has failed the potential test. You take a person who has never been to school and you are told that he has passed [the] potential test ... Whilst I passed standard 8 someone with standard 2 passed [the test] and I am told that I failed, [even] whilst having a certain level of education. [MK/SDU]

An apparent lack of uniform entrance requirements and procedures is also reported. Some respondents who were demobilised say that their files were lost at assembly points. Several feel that they may have been demobilised simply because their files went missing. Furthermore, because some were discovered to be submitting fraudulent school certificates, others were apparently denied the opportunity to submit qualifications at all, thereby reducing their chances for integration. Procedures are alleged to have been inconsistently applied.

> There was something concerning school qualifications. Then still on top of that, some of us were never given a chance to surrender those [school qualifications] because it was discovered that there were frauds taking place concerning school qualifications. Some people who brought such things were given a second chance to [submit them] and others were not. [MK/SDU]

Some respondents place the blame for this situation squarely with the SADF representatives, referred to as the 'boers':

> It was those criminals from the assembly point. It was the boers not the ANC [that lost our files]. [MK/SDU]

Others implicate their own leaders who, they suggest, no longer have their interests at heart.

> Okay, I am not putting all blame on Whites ... because there were also our people from MK and APLA [at the assembly points]. These things, the way I see [it], were made to fail by the individuals amongst our own leadership. They are involved ... because when you are in good things, you forget about the other people. [MK/SDU]

The issue of money remains a focal point for grievances. One respondent claims that he has not been able to receive his demobilisation gratuity because of corruption in the system.

> When we tried to find out what happened to those cheques, they said to us [that the] cheques are frauds ... They fraud[ed] those cheques ... Until today I'm a victim ... of my cheque, a R22 000 one. I'm still crying. [MK/SDU]

Several respondents say that they are still awaiting demobilisation payments:

> My problem is that we were demobilised but they robbed us of our money. Some of us don't have the monies that we were promised after demobilisation. [MK/SDU]

During the course of the research process, several respondents, having written to the President's Office to express their grievances about payment, were finally paid out their demobilisation gratuities.

The Service Corps

The SANDF's Service Corps was established in January 1995 to assist demobilised soldiers to integrate into civil society by means of skills training, conversion courses and career profiling. The Corps has proven, however, to be an ineffective and controversial programme (Frankel, 2000, p. 205). [14]

Those respondents who have had experience with the Service Corps highlight several problems. They complain that they were given little choice in the type of training they received, that they were treated as good-for-nothings, and in a racist manner.

> When we arrived at Springs, they told us to choose courses. We said we wanted motor mechanic [training]. They said 'No'. They called us 'monkeys' [and] said that monkeys are not suitable for motor mechanic [courses], but are suitable for bricklay[ing] and carpentry courses. [MK/SDU]

Most of these respondents were among the Service Corps' first intakes, for whom the experience is generally considered to have been particularly problematic. This is acknowledged by Service Corps staff themselves. In some cases, the training that was promised was not actually delivered in full or at all. A number of ex-combatants interviewed in KwaZulu-Natal said that they put their names down for courses when they were demobilised, but more than two years later had not heard from the Service Corps.[15] Other respondents (from Gauteng) are unhappy about the amount of training they received, which they claim was considerably less than the 18 months they were promised. Respondents tell of being involved in Service Corps programmes for as little as 10 months, and productively involved in training for only six weeks when they had been told courses would continue for three months.

Inadequate communication and the raising of unrealistic expectations of the available Service Corps programmes offer some explanation for the levels of dissatisfaction, particularly with regard to the duration of the courses. An 18-month placement with the Service Corps did not translate into 18 months of training, although respondents suggest that this is what they were led to believe, at least initially. (Several respondents, however, have had the opportunity to receive training at a later stage, in which the Service Corps has played a co-ordinating role.)

> They told us that at the Service Corps we would be taught skills and after that they would give us jobs or we would work with countries like China ... We joined the Service Corps and ... they dumped us in camps, giving us food and a place to sleep. We started complaining about being dumped and not doing that 18 months' training. After we complained, they took us to academy schools for 45 days but they [had] said three months. I did a welding course at the academy ... After the course they gave us basic training certificates. They took us back to the camps and we stayed there. After that they told us to help the engineering guys and we used to get R20.00 a day. They dismissed 1 800 people because they noticed that we had a lot of complaints about the 18 months' training they [had] promised us at Waalmansdaal. [MK/SDU]

Grievances have been exacerbated by the fact that, even with training, unemployment remains a reality for many. In the opinion of a Service Corps official, ex-combatants' continued desperation for work colours their perceptions of the quality of the training that was provided.

> The problem is that after they got the package and training they found themselves unemployed in the township – bitter and unemployed. But I think justice was done. We [now] also try to help them find jobs, but they are competing with graduates ... It was only a six-week training course so he claims the course was incompetent. That is not true, but three years later, he's still unemployed. [Service Corps official]

One female respondent, who was in the process of training through the Service Corps at the time of the interview, was more positive about the training and the Service Corps generally. Her appreciation, however, appears to be firmly based on her hope that she will be able to find work in the future.

> I feel that the Service Corps has helped a lot, especially ... because if I continue with it I may find a job. At least when I am here, I have peace of mind. The R600.00 [allowance] that they are giving us in a month is not enough but you are in a position that you can buy food in the house. In future, if I get myself a job I will be able to get a house and take my family to live with me. [APLA woman]

Both of the Service Corps officials interviewed express their own frustrations. They complain of a sense of entitlement and a lack of gratitude amongst participants in their programmes. They also say that there is a lack of recognition, on the part of participants, regarding the constraints facing the Service Corps. One of these officials, in particular, spoke of his frustration at the suspicion with which Service Corps initiatives are regarded and the way in which offers of free training are received. Often the first question asked by ex-combatants is whether they will be paid for attending courses, he says. The same official maintains that some participants perceive interaction with the Service Corps as an opportunity to voice their grievances about the way they have been treated more generally.

> They want to use the place to address their grievances. They say, 'Call the generals' and we're just trying to help. It's mostly the SDUs we deal with because most of the exiles got into the SANDF, others have better jobs, they're in government, private companies, NGOs or small businesses ... The [SDUs] still feel like either the ANC or PAC is owing them something. I don't think so. So many people benefited – people who weren't in exile, we got them on our [MK and APLA] lists. Now they're saying they're neglected. [Service Corps official]

Interestingly, his words reflect the view that former SDUs are less entitled to assistance than former exiles. This distinction between former SDUs and externally trained cadres was raised on several occasions. His colleague, for example, also suggested that one difficulty faced by the Service Corps is that their clients tend to be the less disciplined SDUs as opposed to the more thoroughly trained exiles.

In response to the range of problems that has arisen, some changes have been made to Service Corps programmes, and others are reportedly in the pipeline. An evaluation of the programme and its impact has yet to be undertaken.

Integration

"They're frustrating us out of the system ..."

All non-statutory ex-combatant respondents who were integrated into the SANDF have since been dismissed or have resigned their posts. Anger, bitterness and frustration at the treatment received in the SANDF remain powerfully present. Their complaints include: the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction; the stigmatisation and marginalisation of former MK members; physical and psychological harassment; an absence of transparency in the institution; the inefficacy or lack of channels to address grievances; and unfair dismissals and disciplinary procedures. Most issues are underscored by concerns about racist attitudes and practices, which many consider to be systemic.

> What I would like to emphasise is that in the defence force, the boers were harassing us a lot ... If we had problems, they told us that MK no longer exists [and that] this army belongs to SADF. So we were not able to work together with them because they were harassing us; doing all sorts of things to us ... We were even training in Afrikaans. So these are some of the prob-

> lems we were getting in the camps. Sometimes the comrades were even beaten during training in the camps. It was those problems and many others I cannot explain. They are quite a lot, you see ... I can talk about them maybe till sunset brother, they are quite a lot. [MK/SDU]

Official reactions to complaints or disciplinary problems are a source of considerable anger.

> If we had problems and told the senior commanders, they would drag their feet, and did not attend to our problem. So when we wrote to the Minister of Defence, the Minister sent people to the camp. Those people, who were unknown to us, told us that we do not want to work [and said], 'Why is it always the members of MK who have problems?' [MK/SDU]

> There is nowhere to go: you will just try by all means to challenge the structures but nobody will attend [to] you. You'll end up being rendered useless. [MK/SDU]

> They said I was absent without leave. Yes I agree that I was absent without leave, but when I went back to the camp, I had a letter from the district surgeon that I was ill on those days. They told me that I would [need to] produce the proof in court and that they were arresting me. I asked why they were arresting me and they told me that I would run away before going to court. [MK/SDU]

Respondents say that MK members were discriminated against by the military's administration, which was dominated by SADF elements. Remuneration issues such as the reported non-payment of salaries or docked salaries remain a key grievance.

> Sometimes those boers used to freeze our monies and you couldn't claim your money for about six months, and you didn't know what the problem was and they would just not pay you, but you worked for it. [MK/SDU]

Alleged SANDF administrative bungling also colours attitudes towards the military. Some ex-soldiers who claim they were unfairly dismissed, for example, protest that they have not been paid monies due to them.

> I went straight to the personnel person to check how much I was supposed to get before I leave. They made a print-out for me ... Now it is three years and I still have not received my money ... I decided to go to Pretoria headquarters and I told them my situation. They told me to go back to my unit. [The unit] told me that I was discharged from the army in 1996. I asked them how it happened because in 1997 I was still involved. I used to mark the role-call everyday. They told me that there was no way I was working at that time. Even today, I still have the print out of the money that I was supposed to get. [MK/SDU]

Divisions within SANDF forces, which have on occasion resulted in violence, are raised as a significant obstacle to integration. In one extreme example, several respondents explain how they were lured to a *shebeen*[16] outside their military camp in the Eastern Cape, where they were attacked by 'former comrades' with hand grenades. Attempts to seek parliamentary intervention failed, and as far as they are aware, the police investigation had not progressed. This incident, they claim, was orchestrated by elements of the old guard within the SANDF. The story, however, also suggests instances of significant tension between former members of the different liberation armies within the SANDF, as well as between the former liberation forces and the former SADF:

> [The attackers] were the people who have been bought by the same members of SADF. Actually it could be members of APLA who the SADF was able to buy, you see. We were staying with some of them in the camp, but we were divided. MK was on the one side, APLA on the other and SADF had its own side. We were not on good terms. [MK/SDU]

In addition, some respondents point to tensions between externally trained MK cadres and SDU members. In part, these are attributed to the lack of differentiation in the integration process between more formally trained MK soldiers and lesser-trained SDUs. SDU members who were included in the integration process were classified as 'MK' and were included as a result of their names appearing on MK's submission to the Certified Personnel Register (CPR).

> There is no certificate that recommends you as an SDU. The only certificate you have which recommends you is 'APLA' or 'MK'. In that way you can understand that as an SDU you fall under MK. The difference: we were trained inside and others trained outside. No matter if you were trained under SDU, you have a certificate which will recommend you as an MK if MK instructors trained you.[17] [MK/SDU]

An MK respondent says that ex-SDU members have often been ill-disciplined but because they were identified as 'MK' their behaviour reflected badly on other ex-MK cadres, and the non-statutory forces in general. This has caused resentment of SDUs amongst those with more rigorous training.

> The level of training of SDUs compared to MK soldiers was low. It was a different type of training and a different type of people [were] used [as] and trained as SDUs. They were not proper soldiers and they did not have the same discipline. SDUs should have been treated differently from MK soldiers but they weren't: they were in the same category as MK soldiers. Many SDUs had no experience of the army and they lacked military discipline. Many could not handle the army and they showed themselves to be undisciplined. The SDU problems resulted in problems for everyone. Pockets of mutiny and resistance to take orders, slowed down the integration process. Most SDUs would not say they were SDU but called themselves 'MK' members and this meant that the SDU behaviour affected all MK people and statutory forces lost respect for all non-statutory forces. [MK]

The problem of discipline raised by this respondent likely led to the legitimate dismissal of some non-statutory force members. That grievances with the integration process outlined in this discussion are raised by both those who were dismissed and who left of their own volition however, point to significant structural problems with the process itself. Some felt that given the conditions they faced in the SANDF, they had little option but to leave voluntarily.

> I liked the courses very much but those frustrations that we had in the military made me have to leave. Most ex-combatants are strong, we have courage, but we didn't see that anybody was even addressing these problems. It was frustrating not to even be able to **raise** problems. In the army there's a channel of command: you have to go up six levels and all the people [you encounter at the different levels], you have a problem with ... I would've stayed if I thought, down the line, the problems would be solved. I wanted to be somebody in the army but I left as a private. There were methods of frustrating us out of the system. [MK/SDU]

One issue contributing to dissatisfaction is the difficulty involved for some ex-liberation army members in adapting to a conventional military environment. This is evident for example in the bureaucracy and hierarchy that the respondent (cited above) found himself up against. Concerns about discriminatory treatment and that non-statutory members have been targets of a deliberate campaign to force them out of the military exacerbate the situation. For some, discrimination was reflected in the verbal abuse that they were subjected to during training.

> The training was not fair because the boers used to call us names like *'poes'*, *'kak'*, *'aussie'*, 'moffie', 'terrorist, 'hey, *wat soek jy hierso*?' [What do you want here?] and [said that] they are going to make sure that we leave the army because we don't belong there. [MK/SDU]

The insulting of troops, however, is typical in many conventional militaries. SADF conscripts were also subjected to a host of insults during basic training. This issue was the subject of a series of exchanges on the 'ArmyTalk' chat line in which some former SADF members argued that liberation movement fighters who

complained about their treatment in the SANDF had no real grounds for protest, and had unrealistic expectations as to how they should be treated.

> What kind of army is this? If they were insulted by this it's a good thing that they were never in the old SADF! ["AT"]

This does not negate the perceptions and feelings aroused by such treatment among former MK and APLA cadres. Indeed, the methods of training, it appears, have not been adapted, nor mechanisms provided to facilitate the delicate process of integrating diverse armed forces. Moreover, on the bases of respondent reports, new insults, aimed particularly at the former liberation army soldiers, have been added to the repertoire of verbal abuse.

The experiences of former SADF members in the SANDF are generally unexplored in this study. This is because all except one respondent left the force before the change and so have no experiences of the process of integration that brought about the SANDF. A very small proportion of SADF interviewees have volunteered to remain available for call-up as members of the Citizen Force should they be required. However, the likelihood of this actually materialising, they say, is remote.

The bulk of those leaving the military come from within the SADF, and systems to facilitate this process have been relatively comprehensive, in terms of pensions, medical-aid and retrenchment packages. Many former SADF members have also taken advantage of the Voluntary Severance Package (VSP), which is calculated on years of service rendered. In comparison with the demobilisation packages offered to former liberation movement cadres, these incentives and protections can be regarded as generous.[18] Nevertheless, one respondent (a former recce) who had stayed on is also dissatisfied and frustrated at the treatment he received from his former employer. He decided to leave the force primarily because of the changes that were taking place and the implications he expected these would have for his career.

> Then the new government took over and some guys left, like myself, not because I couldn't live with the situation. I couldn't live with no career being spelled out to me. I was aspiring to become a big boss in the army one day ... I stayed to the end of 1996 and opted to take a severance package because what was going on did not please me at all. I worked for whatever I received in life and suddenly guys were just getting it for free and your chances were getting smaller and smaller to really get somewhere ... It was a political game [that was] going on and I'm a soldier, not a politician. I don't want to play political games. My boss at this stage was a political appointment who I'd no problems with; ... really, I got on with him quite well, and actually when I left he's ... the guy that tried the hardest to keep me in the system - one of my former enemies – and that pleased me. I like this *oke*, but where was I going? Where would I end up? What would happen to my career and my future? And I just decided to take the other option. [Recce]

This respondent has also struggled to access monies due to him, and several years after opting to take the VSP, has still not received it. The delay in payout has had serious consequences for his life after the military and his ability to engage in alternative income generation. Unlike those from the former liberation armies who have, similarly, not received the monies due to them, he attributes the problem to administrative incompetence rather than political sabotage. But this treatment, in combination with his dealings with the SANDF since his departure, have resulted in a profound sense of betrayal, anger and resentment.

> We were 4 000 guys that left [that] month ... I was one of only four guys that put my name up for voluntary service if they ever required me ... I think that's bloody loyal. Then I started getting all these backfires. Now, if you've got a commissioned rank which is the rank that the State President has given you, you keep that for the rest of your life. Now, I had queries, I wrote ... to army headquarters - because that's what you must do, you're not allowed to speak to them, you must write letters ... 'Dear Brigadier, nah, nah, nah'. He writes back to me, 'Dear Mr [name]'. So *ja*, I'm not a soldier anymore but I was a Lieutenant-Colonel. So why are you addressing me as 'Mr'?!

I could see his bloody attitude; he was not interested in trying to help me. So any problem is fixed from the top down, not from the bottom up. And that's why you people are doing these studies where the bottom is realising the top has got no intentions of doing it ... And that's the bottom line of the whole problem ... The voluntary severance package is a once-off payment and that's it. 'There you go, cheers'. And they never speak to you again; they hate you and you are now bad. While you're serving you cannot go on leave because it is so important you have to be available for this say it to the tape as well. Everything that ever went wrong in that organisation was your fault and it's about time that you left and you should have left many years ago. That's the way you're handled ... There's a very, very bad attitude in the military, old as well as now, to its soldiers leaving the force. [Recce]

Community Expectations, Perceptions and the Stigmatisation of Ex-combatants

The perceptions that society and communities have of ex-combatants impact fundamentally on the nature and experience of their attempts to reintegrate into their communities. Ex-combatants are significant social players in South Africa and both play and are ascribed multiple and conflicting roles. They may, for example, be seen as political players, crime-fighters, outsiders and scape-goats. This section focuses on those roles and qualities that others attribute to ex-combatants.

Respondents were asked how they think they are perceived by those around them. The data collected on this subject therefore deals mainly with ex-combatant's own perceptions of others' perceptions of them. The limitations of the research meant that a broader approach was possible only in a few cases. In the East Rand township of Thokoza, for instance, in addition to interviews with ex-SDU members, a focus group was conducted with some of their parents/care-givers, and another with female personal partners of SDUs (whether the relationship was current or in the past). Turning to the SADF, female family members and partners of former conscripts also participated in a focus group. However, because both conscripts and their female relatives were silent on issues of stigmatisation and community perception, they are not cited here. This silence is likely explained by the fact that National Service was compulsory and most white South African men were enlisted. As such, conscription was accepted as 'normal'.

Most respondents describe perceptions of themselves as negative; many report the experience of stigmatisation. Nevertheless, perceptions that can be broadly categorised as positive do arise. For instance, ex-combatants may be perceived as leaders and protectors. Although such attributes are 'positive', the expectations that accompany them might, in fact, impact on individuals in very negative ways. These expectations usually accompany the cessation of conflict and the return of combatants to civilian ranks.

"We run to them ..."

Leadership is one example of a role that may be expected of ex-combatants. While the number of former MK combatants in government and other high-ranking positions is testimony to the ability of many to fulfil these roles, the expectation may also be imposed on others who are not equipped, or do not wish, to do so. This has been noted particularly in the case of former exiles when they returned to South Africa.

Communities expected returnees to play a leadership role and to give guidance. Sometimes the returnees had no support structures and people with no capacity to give guidance were forced into situations they could not handle. When these returnees failed to give the guidance the community required, they were rejected by the same community who had requested assistance. [MK, KZN]

This section, dealing with some of the broadly characterised 'positive' roles taken on by ex-combatants, draws entirely on interviews in the particular context of Thokoza. This is because respondents in Thokoza are rare in the emphasis they put on 'positive' community perceptions of ex-combatants. Most other respondents speak only, or primarily, about the ways in which others define them as outsiders. No doubt this is in part attributable to the broader research methodology applied in Thokoza where parents/caregivers and personal partners were interviewed (in addition to ex-combatants themselves). It is also likely to be related to the particular form that violence took in this locality: it was more intense and geographically concentrated than in most other areas. The possible impact of the nature of violence in Thokoza on current community perceptions is discussed below. The focus here is on perceptions of SDUs in the particular context of Thokoza. Findings cannot therefore be assumed to be applicable to other contexts. Furthermore, they should also not be taken as representative even of perceptions in Thokoza. They emerge from discussions with a small and particular group of people.

Some former Thokoza SDUs provide leadership within their community. There is little in the words of Thokoza respondents, to suggest however, that a prior expectation existed for SDUs to fill these roles. In this respect, the nature of the role differs from that assigned to returning exiles. Rather, it seems, some individuals have grown into these roles by virtue of their previous function in defending their community. Often, they had previously occupied positions of leadership in the self-defence structures. One Thokoza respondent clearly retains significant status in the community-at-large, as well as among other former SDUs. He does not resent his leadership role, but explains how he too feels stretched by the demands of the role. A considerable invasion of his privacy accompanies it and he feels ill equipped to handle some of the requests made of him.

> I can't have privacy in Thokoza. All the people want to stay with me, complaining, doing this and that. Sometimes [a] husband and wife come and complain, and I'm still young to solve those [sorts of] problems … Sometimes someone can hate you [because] you didn't solve his problems they way he wanted you to solve them. [Thokoza SDU]

His status in the community is substantiated in interviews with family members of other ex-SDUs:

> We are lucky [to have] a child like him. They're demanding too much of his brain. Why? Because he is holding all the cases of the children in Thokoza. Whenever a parent has a problem with a child, they go to him … He has become Thokoza's father. So we are appealing that they should get him another job where they can give him an office, where he [would] be able to work at human resources or whatever, because he is a child who surpasses even a policeman here in Thokoza. If a person like him, and [the] other youngsters who are working with him … can get given sort of social jobs to assist the parents to calm down those [children] who're still having anger, that would be very helpful to the parents and the community. He and his group are very helpful today in the community. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

Expanding on the drawbacks of such prominence, the ex-SDU member explains that his name is sometimes used in other peoples' power struggles. Indeed, his influence requires his involvement with and management of a range of diverse conflicts. Thokoza respondents suggest that these former SDUs generally (and not only this individual) continue to represent substantial political capital in the community. Bad-mouthing the SDUs can be used for political gain. Others seeking power in the community may attempt to co-opt them to create or entrench their own credentials. This could be achieved by getting the ex-SDUs 'on board' or, unbeknownst to the SDUs, using them as a threat to intimidate others. The fear the SDUs commanded in the past makes this possible.

> There are people who want positions you see, at other people's expense. You find that he/she will go there using ... [our] names because the SDU before, was like a thing you could scare people with, like 'I am going to fetch *amagents*' [the guys]. [Thokoza SDU]

Moreover, former SDU members say that when they voluntarily lend their support to local politicians, conflict situations may arise as competitors attempt to outdo them.

> A person who comes with something right, we support him. So only to find that maybe it appears that we prefer a certain [person] ... [According to other people] it's like we defend a specific person or that person misuses or is buying us to defend him in order to be protected. When we support the right thing in the township ... there is this thing that others would see that we favour a particular side and [say], 'Let me also pull from a certain side'. That is when it becomes a problem. [Thokoza SDU]

As is hinted at by this respondent, ex-SDU members may still be regarded as 'defenders' and 'protectors'. In addition to the potential of having this 'protector' role manipulated in local political struggles, some former SDU members continue to be regarded as valuable crime fighters in the community. SDU respondents themselves refer less to this particular role than do parent/care-giver respondents. The latter emphasise the importance of this function and claim they feel much safer for the presence of the ex-SDUs.[19]

Parents/care-givers also speak of positive social relations generated amongst the SDU members through the experience of the war. Unlike the roles detailed above, these are referred to as unambiguously positive. They speak of the SDU members' loyalty and commitment to one another that continues in the present.

> They are one thing. That's why when [one] is hungry, the other feeds him. He is able to lose a cent that he has and give it to the other one. That is what I have noticed about them: they are united a lot. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

Parents/care-givers also regard themselves to have been unified through the experience of violence.

> This war has built us anew, even the parents in Thokoza. Today your neighbour is like your sister. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

For some people in the community and family members, certain former SDUs have become an important pillar of support.

> This group that is from counselling is advanced a lot ... They are able to leave you as a parent, satisfied and warm. They are the children whom, when we experience problems, we run to them. They can think more than an older person, and [help with things that] you as an older person ... would not be able to [sort out] ... Even when an older person is sick, they ... take him to hospital and check that he is admitted. They work like older people. As children they are very careful. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

This respondent attributes the capacity to offer this support to the counselling some of the Kathorus[20] SDU members received. Parent/care-giver respondents repeatedly refer to the benefits for those who received counselling and participated in a course on peer counselling.[21] They see this experience as the key variable at play in the future of these young ex-combatants.

> We have children who are divided into two parties. We have children who did counselling, we have children who did not do counselling. So you find that those who did not do counselling, there is still that thing in their hearts ... There is a problem of some boys who did not go to counselling. There is one boy who did not go ... [and] he thinks he is still in the war. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

The discussion thus far has dealt with what have been broadly defined as 'positive' perceptions of the roles performed by and attributed to ex-Thokoza SDUs. It is important to bear in mind that the 'community perceptions', other than the SDUs' own understanding of these, are provided by a small number of parents and care-givers most of whom are, themselves, very active in the community. It is certainly not the case that they only speak of the positive. For example, they do not deny that some are involved in crime. What is striking however, is the extent to which some community members are committed to supporting the former SDUs in adjusting to life after the conflict.

> When you speak to them, you must chat to them like their friends; you must not be harsh because when you are harsh, they are also harsh; they are guided by how you speak to them ... If you fight with them, they get angry, they jump on top of you and tell you that 'You will never tell us anything'. But when you speak to them nicely and show them that 'Where is your future if things are like this?' they can see. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

These respondents acknowledge that their own acceptance of, and commitment to their children are not necessarily replicated throughout the community. Indeed, the situation for many ex-SDU members and their families is complex and often difficult. In some instances, families of SDU members have not provided the necessary support.

> Sometimes it depends on us, the parents, we do not want to face the truth. [The parents] were supposed to take him to counselling if they see that this child is still behaving in that way because they know that there is a person who has died due to that thing. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

Some families found themselves divided by the roles different family members played in the conflict, and this continues to impact on family dynamics and prospects for reconciliation.

> [For] other children it happens that their parents were on other sides during the time of war. You would find that a parent was in IFP, and that a child was in ANC. That child is prone to harassment when he goes back home. [There] is not a parent who was standing at his side, you see. So children are harassed today. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

Respondents express particular concern about those who lost their parents in the violence.

> Some of the children are orphans today. They are the ones who we hurt for because there are children who were separated [from] their parents and they do not study, they do not eat. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

In stark contrast to the words of parents and care-givers cited above, girlfriends (past and current) of former Thokoza SDUs speak of the fear with which others contemplate former SDUs. This relates directly to the SDUs' commanding and largely unchecked violent role during the conflict. Some of these respondents consider levels of fear to have subsided substantially.

> I think [other people] are not afraid of them now compared to when there was violence. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

Others claim the fear remains powerfully present and point to the difficulties individuals may face in redefining themselves in the eyes of others.

> You would end up being scared of [the SDUs] because they were heartless. When you said something wrong, you were beaten or shot at. That is why [people] were being scared this much. And even now some of us are still scared of them, because we tell ourselves that they are still the way [they were] in the beginning. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

> I think it is difficult because when people are afraid of you, and now you have changed, we can't see you have changed. We can't see that, even if you do something [good they] just say, 'Ah no, he's pretending' you know. I think because people were afraid of them, it's difficult. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

These young women say that they too, as intimate partners of ex-SDU members, encounter the stigma attached to their boyfriends.

> They say to me, 'How can you live with such a person?' [I say] because I still love this person. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

> I tell those people, 'Okay this person was an SDU in the beginning [but] a person does change, so he is a fine person – not that [because] he was an SDU, now I must be scared to have an affair with him. Life can just go on as life goes on. He has changed, he is not like in the beginning.' [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

Importantly, a minority of these respondents say they themselves are afraid of their partners or ex-partners. Similarly, some within the parent/caregiver group tell of certain ex-SDU members who are terrifying to their families. This, they attribute to a lack of counselling.

Stigmatisation during combat

"It's as if we're monsters ..."

Respondents from all ex-combatant groupings say that they are targets of stigmatisation as a result of their status as former soldiers.

Several respondents also refer to stigmatisation during their time in the armed forces. Former liberation fighters tell of being stigmatised both by their colleagues and by certain sectors of civilian society. In the examples provided by those who were in the SADF, the labelling emanated from elements in civilian society and the international press. Former SADF Special Forces members, for example, complain of propaganda disseminated during the war which was aimed at discrediting their military operations and which, they maintain, omitted to take into account the nature of war, military strategy and hierarchy. Some also complain of ongoing misrepresentation of their past military activities.

> This house has got so many terrorists sleeping there tonight. If you go in, you sort out; you cannot switch on a light [and] say, 'Hey, who of you are terrorists?' ... It doesn't work that way! You go in, and you take out. If you throw a hand-grenade into a room ... the hand-grenade doesn't choose between children and women and men. So if there're fingers pointed at soldiers who killed civilians, the fingers must rather be pointed back at the intelligence that led them to that house. They were acting on orders, they got an order signed by the State President: 'Attack that target'. [Recce]

> There's a lot of propaganda been put around by the current government and the international press about combat scenarios, it's as if we're monsters. [Parabat]

Certain incidents received more coverage than others. The notorious massacre at Kassinga in Angola in 1978 is regarded as 'possibly the single most controversial external operation of the (Truth) Commission's mandate period'.[22] Critics of the SADF viewed it as a brutal attack on a refugee camp, resulting in the slaughter of 600 people, many of them women and children. According to the SADF, Kassinga was the planning headquarters of the South West African People's Organisation's (SWAPO) armed wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), and as such, a legitimate target.

> This particular operation, the allegation was [that] it was a refugee camp, which still sticks its head up from time to time ... To my mind it was anything but a refugee camp, with respect. To my mind it was an enemy base which was well defended ... there were trenches, there were anti-aircraft positions which were shooting at us as we were exiting, and armoured vehicles arrived – a column of 20 or so, with tanks and all sorts of things ... The perception which came out afterwards [was] that this had been a turkey shoot of ... thousands of refugees. Also, some pictures were being distributed, apparently in Europe, which showed mass graves and all sorts of things ... In these glossy pictures ... they were alleging that there were also women and children in the mass graves [but] all you saw effectively was men in uniform or women in uniform ... It wasn't a refugee camp, there's no ways. [Parabat]

Former soldiers express anger and frustration about what they see as the misrepresentation of their military actions. Some speak of the impact that this has had on their personal relationships:

> I was involved with a lovely girl who I wanted to marry. On one of my leaves, I came back and she was all standoffish. I said, 'What's going on? Why don't you want to come near me?' She'd heard these stories of the method to harden the national servicemen where you had this puppy to look after and then you had to kill it and cut it up or something. That's bullshit! I don't know where stories like that came from. I never experienced anything like that but it ruined the relationship, and she was such a lovely girl. [Recce]

For these soldiers, the belief is that anti-apartheid activists and propagandists deliberately generated such misrepresentation. Moreover, the secrecy surrounding military operations frustrated efforts to provide detailed explanations of military activities and specific events. Nevertheless, negative representations of the SADF were rare in white South Africa during the conflict, and energies were generally geared towards supporting the image of SADF soldiers.

A few liberation movement respondents say they too were labelled during the conflict period because of their military involvement. They refer to the disdain and cynicism that they were subjected to by those in the community who did not support armed insurrection, or considered such actions to be counter-productive.[23] Labelling and targeting both between different organisations within the movement, and within organisations themselves are also reported.

Ex-Thokoza SDUs speak of a tendency during the conflict period, for criminal acts to be attributed to them. As the following respondent points out, this happened in a context where the line between criminal and political activity became increasingly blurred. Many were involved in crime under the guise of being SDUs, and others did crime 'on the side'. Genuine defence structures were sometimes involved in crime to finance their SDU activities, and criminals were employed by SDUs to secure weapons and funding. In this situation, innocent SDU members were also labelled as criminals.

> Some of the people were doing their own business during the SDU activity [so] if there was any car theft, then people [would] say automatically, 'It's the SDU' ... [But] it was the criminal element. At our section we were different, we were surviving on donations ... At other sections there was no chance of collecting money because parents were not [there]. They were totally displaced from their parents ... [So] it was different and some of the people decided not even to join the SDU, just to do their own things. That's where the criminal element came ... But we can't deny that we ... had criminal activity during the violence. There was because some people ... went outside [the area and would] go and steal things there, and come back with them. [Thokoza SDU]

More generally, community perceptions regarding MK/SDUs participation in the conflict were not homogenous. Divisions arose over issues of tactics and certain practices, such as the 'necklacing' of alleged informers. This practice was officially disapproved of by the ANC and UDF leadership, although clearly supported by certain elements within both structures.

The increased involvement of youth at the forefront of violent struggle also contributed to inter-generational conflict.

> At that time you were exposed to certain things you were not supposed to see ... I'm young and I [was] not having enemies with my class, I [was] having enemies with the adult – '*Lentwana iya phapha*' – This boy is rude, disrespectful, uncontrollable – involved in politics [they would say] ... We [were] becoming more the enemy of the adult. That was my main worry. [MK/SDU]

An APLA cadre's story of exclusion and stigmatisation

Division and stigma were generated by a variety of circumstances. For one former APLA cadre, the experience of being labelled as an informer by his fellow combatants and those in other liberation movements structured his entire life as a combatant. Having a family member employed by the state security forces was particularly problematic.

> **When we were running away from *hippos* [police vehicles], during '84 / '85 ... I preferred not to join [the activists] because I feared the stigma; like my father was a traffic officer, you see ... I believed I could not [be] fully integrated [or] enjoy [an activist] identity then.**

Later, when he did become politically involved, his choice of organisation meant that he was labelled and targeted by members of another liberation organisation. In fact, his first experience of violence was at the hands of ANC youth who, he maintains, in seeking to dominate youth politics, harassed him because of his PAC affiliation.

> **I was nearly killed by ANC guys, ... I was labelled a 'Zimzim', something like that – the label given to Azanian cadres. [The ANC guys] ... saw us as a threat to their domination. There was a lot of violence between the different liberation movements; they never saw eye to eye. They came to my school [and] said I was spreading the Zimzim ideology. They associated anyone who joined an organisation with a name Azania, with a Zimzim – whether PAC or BCM [Black Consciousness Movement]. They tried to attack me and then some of my school mates told them I was not a Zimzim ... And one time I was wearing a badge [with] the 'Great and beloved Azanian leader' [on it]. The first time I realised that it's dangerous to wear that thing [was when] I saw students running away from me.**

Because of his father's association with the state security structures, this respondent was keen to prove his loyalty to the Azanian Youth Union (AZANYU). His attempt to do so did not work. In his desperation to be recognised as a bone fide supporter he spray-painted a wall with PAC slogans and names that he had read in a pamphlet. But the pamphlet provided faulty information and he misspelt the names of PAC leaders, increasing suspicions about him, which in turn led him to take more drastic action.

> **So that gave me problems during my activity in AZANYU you see, so I tried to organise some guns and shoot the police ... [to] prove my loyalty to AZANYU.**

And it was to escape the difficulty of being a township youth with a traffic officer for a father (in combination with his political convictions) that he went into exile to join APLA.[24]

> **I went into exile to shift away from that stigma that my father is a traffic cop, [so] that I could have an identity of my own.**

In exile, the stigma of this family connection remained and he became an object of suspicion and derision at the PAC camp.

> **When I reached exile they said I was an ANC person, later they said I was CIA, [then] they said I was going to run to MK ... [Then] they said I was an Inkatha member. Later they said I was an agent of the police ... In the APLA camp, when they said my arguments were controversial ... nasty words were thrown to me ... 'When we arrive in South Africa we're going to kill your father'. I said, 'I don't have a problem because to me a nation comes first, it's a nation ... not my family'.**

As a result, he says, of being regarded with constant suspicion, he became paranoid and has since been diagnosed as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. He attributes the illness to the stresses of exile, a fundamental part of which, for him, was being a target of suspicion. This, coupled with physical illness saw him spending much of his time in exile in camp isolation or hospital. While it is impossible to ascertain exactly when the illness commenced as well as what proportion of his experience of stigmatisation was induced by the illness rather than actual experience, it is noteworthy that his psychological condition mirrors his representation of his life as a combatant – a time dominated by suspicion and fear of suspicion.

I started suspecting the [APLA commanders] that these guys were using *muti* [traditional medicine] ... I thought they could read people's minds you see ... I was satisfied because I thought they could read everything in my mind [and would] see whether I'm innocent or not. Instead they took me to mental hospital. I [was] there I don't remember how long, [then] they took me back to the camp. So I stayed there trying to prove my innocence, I told myself, 'I'm going to get well and one day I'll be deployed in South Africa and I'll prove myself.' I was never deployed; instead I got sick[er] and sick[er] ... I said 'No, I 'm giving up'. It was getting stressful because a lot of cadres were getting beaten up for punishment. The punishment was no longer exercises and doing positive things for the PAC, it was now beating up people ... When I came back to South Africa, they said, 'When you arrive in South Africa, you're going to sell us out, you're going to join the police.' What I used to tell myself was that when I arrived home, I [would] organise for the PAC so that those who persecuted me [would] feel small.

Current experiences of stigmatisation

"They take us in another way ..."

Former soldiers continue to be stigmatised and stereotyped in their post-military lives, say respondents. While it is their previous militarised involvement that makes them targets, for both former MK and SADF combatants, current circumstances play an important role in their stigmatisation. For many MK respondents, it is their own present situations that provide the main impetus for broader community perceptions of them. For SADF Special Forces, it is not their personal circumstances but rather the significantly altered political environment that affects the values and meanings attached to their former combatant role and status.

Intensifying feelings of betrayal and alienation amongst MK/SDU respondents is their humiliation at their current socio-economic circumstances. Other people, they say, question and ridicule their previous and continued devotion to the ANC, when, in material terms, they seem to have received nothing in return.

> Some people in the community will tell us that we went to exile and fought for the country, [but] 'What do you have? Who are you?' and 'What's the ANC doing for you?' [MK/SDU]

> [The community] take us in another way. It means that we are not people who are supposed to stay in the location because they ask you, 'Alright you were in exile, what have you benefited [because] you were in exile? Nothing.' [MK/SDU]

Those who humiliate them are sometimes people who did not sacrifice, but have nevertheless benefited in the new dispensation. Those who chided them in the past, accusing them of naïvety in thinking anything could come of their struggle, continue to deride them as misdirected idealists who have wasted their lives. Some ex-soldiers' anger and resentment intensify with the sense that even their former enemies have become beneficiaries of transformation.

> In the locations you find that some whom we were fighting against not to trouble the community, are now laughing at us. They ask us 'What have you benefited, because it's us who have benefited?' ... It means that we are stupid in other words ... If we try to campaign [for the ANC] people ask you nicely, 'When [did] you start campaigning? You are still a pedestrian, you do not have a car, you do not have anything' ... So it is these things that discourage us. [MK/SDU]

> It is ... [those who were cynical that the apartheid regime could ever by brought down] who are now in the fat. And they turn around in the corners and [say] 'Look at those *mdlwembe* [criminals / unruly people].' They call us *mdlwembe* now. [They are saying] that these ones had no direction because you see that they walk on the pavement; they were walking with their Umkhonto we Sizwe, which is now defunct. [MK/SDU]

In the domestic realm, ex-combatants' prior expectations that they would be able to support their families, together with the expectations of family members themselves, weigh heavily on many former liberation fighters. There is considerable pressure to provide and humiliation when unable to do so. It is this pressure, some argue, than can lead ex-combatants to get, involved in crime.

> Families suffered you know ... For you to be known as an activist or combatant, the family [would] be under constant threats from the security [forces] ... Now your family ... say, 'Okay, we suffered, but now your people, the people you made us suffer for, are in power, so we need to benefit as well.' And only to find that you are unable to make ends meet. That kind of gets to you. If you are unable to put things on the table, that becomes a very big problem and that kind of pressure leads one to look at the things [he] can do. You ... look at the people who have resorted to crime ... and realise that maybe they're driving flashy cars, they have all this and you think, 'Oh God, I have these expertise, I was trained, I can strive in these conditions'. So you take these expertise and use them ... in a manner which is not consistent with what you were trained for ... [and] which is wrong of course. But the pressures that you get from your families and community become too immense for you. [MK/SDU]

The alienation from others is profound. The following respondent's inability to secure employment both informs and compounds his family's – and especially the younger members' – derision and dismissal of him.

> We're staying at home with nephews, nieces, uncles, grandfathers ... [If] maybe a young man was lucky enough to find a job, he does not regard you as anything in the house. He doesn't want to hear what you have to say. He says, 'Hey don't tell me anything you hobo. I was not there in your early days; stay away from me'. You find that you are abused in the house. When you try to tell your grandmother, she says 'Hey leave him alone' ... That is why you see ... a lot of shacks. People are forced to leave their homes. This is an effort to find peace in the heart. He runs away from the problem in the home, that his nephew looks down at him ... The girls are worse. When you try to guide as an uncle, you become a target to be beaten. Such things trouble us inside ... The uncle is ridiculed; he has been trained as a soldier, but he is just an uncle. This is because of unemployment. [MK/SDU]

For him it is not the previous status of soldier that is used to denigrate him but the lack of a status for the present, a consequence of unemployment. His past is ignored.

This loss of recognition often paradoxically coexists with the experience of stigmatisation, and produces an increasing sense of detachment from other people.

> If I am sitting with people, maybe chatting, some of them ... will say, 'There is that comrade'. I haven't said a word, [but it's] '*Ja*, here is that comrade'. That means that ... you give them a certain impression; so we're having a problem as the members of MK you see. The way they look at us, we feel uncomfortable, we feel like we are dissociated from the community ... It is difficult to even try another life because we are staying in the location, unemployed. [MK/SDU]

Community perceptions of ex-MK combatants cover a broad range of attitudes. For example, a minority of community members sympathise with the ex-combatants, some respondents say. Then there are those that used to see them as heroes but don't any longer, and others – many of whom were effectively schooled in the discourses promoted by the apartheid order – who always regarded them in a negative light and continue to do so. The following respondents explain how some former enemies of MK fall into the latter category: [25]

> Those who understood them politically from the beginning ... are still understanding. Those who were former apartheid instruments, as informers and other political parties, yes, of course, they use that negative attitude towards cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Because of the influ-

> ence that they received from the apartheid system [they believe], 'These people look like animals, terrorists, this person is not good, he's too dangerous'. You look like a baboon or whatever to those people. [MK/SDU]

> The way we look at it, there is a lot of difference between us and the community because some of them do not see us as people. They see animals, and we cannot sit with them ... – some of whom we were fighting against ... Even now, the way things are ... it is difficult, they do not welcome us. [MK/SDU]

While some MK/SDU respondents expressly state that their former enemies are the ones who regard them as 'terrorists' and 'animals', others suggest that other people in their communities have also come to view ex-combatants in this way.

> They say that we are only criminals and we belong in jail. They say that we are a danger to the community, that we kill our wives and ourselves. [MK/SDU]

Although there are clear similarities, Thokoza SDU respondents speak about community perceptions of them differently than do MK/SDU respondents in other communities. They too say that some people see them in a purely negative light and refer to them as 'killers' and 'animals'. But others – the majority, according to the following respondent, – look upon former SDUs more positively. Respondents say that those who had closer proximity to the violence or war that the SDUs were involved in are more likely to have a deeper understanding of who the SDUs are, and the conditions in which they had to operate. They also appreciate that SDU members risked their lives to defend the community. Others, who did not share that experience, are quick to label them as 'killers'.

> To [some] people we are like other people of course, and to others we look like dangerous people ... There are also the older people who [were] in this place since [the] violence started. So in our community, half of the // we could just say 30%, talk about us badly. They didn't know us at the times of violence. A lot of them say, 'These guys have no understanding, they are killers' – all these things. But [the ones] who lived with us, they know our lives and the things that affected us ... Those who like us are those who were present during the times of violence. They still want to live with us [now] ... as we are continuing with life. [MK/SDU]

These young men (who were boys when in combat) were involved in a much more intense and geographically concentrated form of violence than that to which other MK/SDU respondents were exposed. Their neighbourhood was a war zone, with the main road as the frontline. [26] The conflict was, therefore, of a fundamentally local nature, as opposed to the more dispersed and disparate action between internal members of MK/SDUs and the apartheid state's security forces. Furthermore, the violence was, to a significant degree, of a territorial nature and entire East Rand communities were intensely affected. In contrast, violence in which other MK/SDU respondents were involved tended to target people according to either their association with the liberation movement, or the state. Perhaps the difference in the nature of the violence on the East Rand goes some way to explain the reported community perceptions of ex-SDUs in Thokoza. Several hundred young boys, without any training or prior military experience were mobilised en masse to fight the enemy and protect their families and communities from a war situation.

> There was no training or time to study that you must use the guns like this. We just used things and suddenly we became soldiers because we did everything maybe [that] soldiers have to do. [Thokoza SDU]

The relationships between SDUs and community residents during the conflict were complex and often symbiotic. Indeed, communities can be considered to have frequently been direct and real beneficiaries of SDU actions. In large part, they were reliant on the SDUs for protection of themselves and their property. The support and co-operation from communities that some SDUs benefited from during the violence is indicated in

the words of the following respondent: [27]

> Any mother or anyone who I could find in the house [would help]. I could come with an AK[47] to her and [say], 'Hide this AK', and I [would] jump the fence [because] the police [would be] chasing me. She would take the AK and hide it, and she would not give anyone [information] ... All the community were supporting us. When the police were there, most of the mothers were out and helping us, doing funny things there so that the focus could be changed [and] you [would] get a chance to run. Even financially they helped us. [MK/SDU]

Moreover, Thokoza SDUs took up arms primarily in response to the rapidly deteriorating security situation and not for any political ideals, as was the case for many other MK/SDU respondents. Of the SDU respondents from this area, only two had a history of political activism (and were also members of MK). Others explain that they joined in response to the very violent context and that they knew nothing about politics at that time. Some SDU members were even press-ganged into the structures, say some respondents. Certainly, political relations were generated in the process of conflict, but many did not enter it in pursuit of a political ideal. Unlike MK and other liberation fighters who are now questioned as to why 'their ANC' is not providing for them, Thokoza SDU respondents do not raise this as a concern, and appear to have escaped the derision and fall-out of inflated expectations experienced by others. Despite this, they also face considerable pressure to provide materially in contexts of high unemployment.

The intention here is by no means to diminish the severity of the violence that took place in other areas at the height of apartheid repression, or in the early years of transition, but rather to suggest the different dynamics at play in different conflicts and possible ways in which these differences may impact on ex-combatant experiences. The significance of the Thokoza SDUs for their communities is reflected in the words of the mother of a former SDU. She herself was thoroughly involved during the violence, cooking for and sheltering 'the boys'. As well as praising the protection they provided, she situates responsibility for their deeds firmly with the communities that, in this case, supported and financed their actions. [28]

> They protected us a lot these children ... You must remember that these children had no money. The person who had money was a parent who was able to take out R50.00 a week for the bullets. So if we look carefully, a Thokoza child has not killed a person. It was parents because it was the money of Thokoza parents ... but a child is the one who was using that gun. The money mainly came from the parents and we should not run away from that. Your child was able to save you with your R50.00 a week. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

On the other hand, because of the localised nature of the fighting and the nature of the roles SDU members performed, they continue to encounter the victims of their actions and vice versa. While some have managed to mend relations, in other cases this has not happened. One woman, for example, explained that she is taunted on a daily basis by the ex-SDU who killed her daughter and who continues to live next door to her.

An ex-SDU member tells how the SDU's previous actions impact on their current relationships with community members:

> Some of them we are not on good terms [with]. Like some have lost their parents because we killed them and when they look at us they remember those things. Some have forgiven us, some still hate. Even with girls and so on, some are supportive but it's depending on the history ... Some were members of Inkatha, some were spies or sell-outs and some were witches and such things ... The other girls like us a lot because they thought that, politically [we were] good and that we were sort of liberating them. The others, who happened to be victims of actions see us in negative light. [Thokoza SDU]

These issues remain very much the 'unfinished business' of the pre-election conflict, and the complex set of relationships described are closely intertwined with issues of reconciliation. To some extent, the words of Thokoza SDUs resonate with those of MK respondents who claim their former enemies still see them as 'terrorists'. As such, social relations and discourses generated during the conflict continue in the present. However, an important difference is that Thokoza SDUs are the only respondents who refer to 'victims' at all. For other respondents 'victims' are subsumed under and hidden within the term 'enemy'. Indeed, in general and for very particular reasons, the word 'victim' is absent from militarised discourses.[29] Thokoza SDUs' use of the word is perhaps related to the less formalised and extensive nature of these particular paramilitary structures. It may also reflect the SDU members' closer proximity to 'victims' in the conflict. Thokoza SDU respondents certainly spoke about 'enemies' during interviews, but seldom in relation to questions about community perceptions. Their words also suggest a level of randomness in relation to who became their victims, as well as acknowledgement that their actions were sometimes ill-conceived.

> Maybe sometimes we had a complaint that someone is raping, then we [would] go and beat him. The hatred [for us] came from that ... Or maybe I did a wrong thing before, I was in a [state of] high emotion then ... so that's where the hatred comes [from]. [Thokoza SDU]

Fear generated by the Thokoza SDUs during the violence remains. However, as with other respondents, negative perceptions of them are said to emanate not only from those whose lives have been adversely affected by their action. They are also reportedly stereotyped by those who know little of them.

> Parents accept them because they know where everything came from. [People] were there when the fighting started, so they are clear. Except a person who is from another section has that thing of saying, 'Phenduka children are naughty, they kill people, you must be afraid of those children'. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

> They will talk about us [saying], 'Those are killers, they smoke drugs, they are crazy', those things. But another person, just like you sitting here with us right now, if another person tell[s] you that the SDUs from Thokoza are radical, are like this and that, then you at least know something different. You [would] be able to tell them that they are speaking lies. Because there are other people who talk without knowing the people he or she is talking about. [Thokoza SDU]

One interviewee who has worked extensively with former members of SDUs in other East Rand townships says that fear of former SDUs remains powerful. He highlights the extent to which the considerable respect some ex-SDU members command is underpinned by fear.

> But there's that respect for them, that, 'Oh, so-and-so is a former SDU, you don't go fuck around with him' or something like that, 'because he can get all his connections to come and deal with you.' So it's fear and respect. You can mix fear and respect together, because you don't know which one is which. One would say it's respect, but there's a strong point about fear. Fear tending to respect. [East Rand key informant]

In contrast to what Thokoza respondents have said, this interviewee pointed out that while misperceptions and excessive generalisations regarding SDUs abound, they are often based on real experiences and incidents. Some former SDUs, he claims, do sometimes manipulate fear to get what they want, and it is as much the potential for action as the actions themselves that continue to influence these perceptions.

"The heroes of yesterday are now the villains ..."

Former combatants from across the political spectrum complain that they are targets of criminalising stereotypes. For different categories of ex-combatants, however, the problem is located in different sectors of society.

In the ranks of the former SADF, for example, it is ex-Special Forces members in particular who raise this problem. They maintain that they are targeted in this way because of their former Special Forces status.

A few of these respondents mention antagonism in social situations as a consequence of their military histories.

> If you are at a *braaivleis* and the people say, 'What did you do in the army?' [You] say, 'I shot gooks and terrs'. And they will say, 'What's wrong with you?!' But in those days you were actually defending your country and it was accepted. Now the roles have changed: the heroes of yesterday are now the villains. [Recce]

But the media seems to be the main source of their frustration regarding criminalising stereotypes.

> That security guard somewhere in the Cape that shot his wife and sisters and whatever, ex-soldier ... The fact that he was a soldier has got nothing to do with the point. He's a security guard, he's got a gun. Other security guards do exactly the same, they were never in the military but because he was a soldier they put it in the media ... This military thing is a bit out of context I think. [Recce]

Several state that their greatest fear, stemming from their militarised pasts, is that people in government or elsewhere may misuse the media to stigmatise and discredit them.

> If somebody doesn't like you, and I'm just saying it could happen – say for instance in the government, somebody believes these ex-Special Forces hanging around could be a threat to society and become violent and so on, it is very easy to target a few of them to [see] who are their true leaders ... and you take Pieter and Kosie and you just put something in a newspaper which is so far from the truth. But you make the country understand in the Sunday newspaper that Pieter was involved in a car-theft syndicate – and he might have been a sheep farmer in the Karoo – but this week they're going to have another article in the newspaper, small little block somewhere in the back page, 'Sorry, Pieter was not involved'. That's what they do, it's all part of an ... irregular warfare type of strategy. It's happening, it has happened and it's still going to happen to many guys. Yes, that's what I'm personally afraid of, that it could happen to me. And with your family and your friends: like you just put my name in the newspaper, say somebody heard that I raped a black woman in South West Africa in 1991 or whatever. Who's going to believe me that I didn't do it? And ... the law say[s] I've got to prove it's not so. So *ja*, that's the only fear I really have. [Recce]

According to MK respondents, the key agents of their criminalisation are the police. This alleged stigmatisation of ex-MK members is one crucial facet of their complex relationships with the police – relationships that are often fraught with tension and sometimes violent.

> We have tried to live in peace in our community but the only problem we have is the police ... Because we are MK soldiers, the police would make sure that we die. That problem won't change because it's still going on, even today. [MK/SDU]

> If they arrest you, you won't come out easily because they know that you are an MK member and will tell you exactly that they know that you are a MK member. [MK/SDU]

Their analysis of this situation locates the reasons for their treatment both in the past and the present. The apartheid past generated negative attitudes of liberation fighters by police that, respondents say, continue to inform police practices.

> They still have the same negative attitude towards the people who came from exile ... They are still implementing the same system [in] which they come and search my house looking for AK47s ... It sounds like the apartheid system is still in power in this country. [MK/SDU]

> They come [to my] home searching for weapons ... They tell my mother that I'm a terrorist. [They tell me] I must bring all those AK47s [to the] police station ... If you were in exile, you are in shit because they'll harass you, they'll ask you about weapons [and] if you haven't got weapons they will charge you for nothing or arrest you for nothing ... They're still going on [with] that thing. [MK/SDU]

Other factors also contribute to negative perceptions of ex-combatants. On the one hand, for example, several respondents maintain that police deliberately criminalise ex-combatants because they tend to expose the police's own criminal activity. On the other hand, cases and allegations of ex-MK cadres' involvement in burglaries and cash-in-transit heists make them targets of suspicion, they say.

> The police harass us and say that we MK members do crime and kill people because we have AKs and grenades, and that we mug people. [MK/SDU]

> One day the police came to my house ... looking for me ... They told me that they were looking for AKs and hand grenades because they heard that I came from exile and that I was a member of MK ... I told them that they can search the house because I didn't have guns or anything and that I forgot about those things after I came back from exile. They beat me up and I was bleeding and I had arm fractures and [they] told me ... to tell my friends that they were looking for those guns and that if I didn't bring those guns to the police station they were going to kill us because they knew all of us. [MK/SDU]

Respondents speak of this treatment from police members in their own localities. However, although the views they express about the police may not be representative of the views of ex-combatants more generally, the fact that similar allegations surfaced during different focus groups suggests that the targeting of former soldiers by the police is not uncommon. Importantly though, the tensions between ex-combatants and police are located within a wider set of complex relationships. These are discussed in section, Violence and Crime.

Although SADF Special Forces respondents situate the bulk of the criminalizing stereotype problem in the media rather than policing, there are references to the latter. The words of a former recce, for example, echo sentiments expressed by his MK counterparts.

> All moves we are trying to make or [things] we are trying to do [are considered with suspicion]. If we try to make more money, then we are suddenly illegal, we are dealing in drugs and whatever else ... I can bring you hundreds of cases. [Recce]

One respondent said he fears suffering the same fate as some former Special Force operators who have been arrested, wrongfully in his view. This respondent stated that his current employment situation renders him a specific target of policing interest. He runs a security company owned by a high-profile former CCB and Special Forces operator who has been under investigation for alleged involvement in various destabilising activities. The respondent's analysis of the motives of some of those involved in monitoring his activities relates to the earlier point regarding expedient and exploitative behaviour on the part of some people previously associated with the apartheid regime. (See section, Betrayal). He maintains, for example, that one factor at play is that former members of the apartheid state's security structures, who are now in the present structures, use situations like this to gain kudos and solidify their positions in the new order.

"The moment the boss finds out …"

Closely related to, and one consequence of issues pertaining to criminalisation of ex-combatants, is their marginalisation in the labour market. Both MK and SADF respondents consider their backgrounds in the military to count against them in their pursuit of employment opportunities. Some MK respondents say they are

shunned simply because of their association with the ANC's military wing, and remark at the success of the broader processes of stigmatisation in branding them as violent, untrustworthy, terrorist beings.

> Most MK cadres are untrustable to all other people. We were regarded as terrorists, as people who are terrible, who can terrorise everybody else. So now, if [somebody] has knowledge that this is an MK cadre he won't take you to come and work with him, because he doesn't trust you. [MK/SDU]

> You'll notice that when they are going to look for the jobs, they won't find jobs. Because they are soldiers, many firms won't take them. [MK/SDU]

Although many ex-combatants have sought employment in the security industry, they are not always welcome.

> Recently I was working for a certain security company. They discovered after five months that I was a member of MK, so I was dismissed. [MK/SDU]

In a similar vein, an ex-Thokoza SDU told of the frustration experienced when, following the end of the violence, SDU members were refused admission to local schools. They had dropped out of school during the violence but, when they later attempted to resume their educations were excluded, reportedly because of their reputation as being disruptive.

Former members of the SADF Special Forces also claim that they are discriminated against in the employment market. While for MK respondents, it is their military background in general that is the problem, ex-Special Forces soldiers understand the discrimination as resulting from their specific and 'special' military backgrounds and reputations.

> I can give you names of highly qualified South African soldiers who can't find work because the corporate world doesn't want their names or ... their companies [to be] connected to anybody of a high profile coming from the previous era ... I've got a degree ... but they are not interested because my name is high profile like, and directly coupled to the past. If I tell people, 'But it was the old government who betrayed us, who fucked us in that way', they just don't believe it. [Recce]

> If you were in a crack unit like the CCB, you cannot tell anybody about it, you're just pushed out of society, you're this baddy. The media makes you this baddy, everybody makes you this bad guy. You go and work in a place [and] the moment the boss finds out you were involved in the CCB, he fires you without asking questions: zjoo! you're out. It's happened to so many of my friends. [Recce]

It is largely for these reasons, say several respondents, that the security industry and mercenary outfits become an important alternative for many former SADF soldiers.

> I should have done it a long time ago because security is very closely related to what we did in the past so it's more in my field of expertise and I should stay away from trying to do something else, to go into a corporate, which actually doesn't want you. [Recce]

> There're a lot of guys with security companies running them on military lines, very successfully. But yes, so if you can't support your family one option was to join Executive Outcomes and a lot of people did. But that was just a way to get bread on the table. EO paid well and there was no work here so they were actually forced to do it ... Lot of guys, especially the specialists, went overseas with their skills, like the air-force guys ... Those guys are earning big money doing the same there. [Recce]

> Nobody in South Africa wants them to work here, so they've got no option ... [Executive Outcomes gave them] a financial income. Because if you can't get a job in South Africa, what must you do? [SADF]

As one of these respondents points out, the security sector is a rapidly growing one and some former Special Forces members are purportedly doing very well in it. Others, however, say that their involvement in these enterprises is, in turn, called into question and surrounded by similar distrust. One respondent relates a string of, what are in his opinion, malicious misrepresentations of the company he runs.

> Now we started the security company so immediately they say this is a private army. It's not a private army ... But what we are doing is that we are effectively preventing crime in this area ... So unfortunately [with] this camouflage uniform, people say it's AWB.[30] That's not AWB, it's the American Desert Storm camo pattern. It was the cheapest material I could find ... It's so easy to discredit a person; it's so, so, so easy, it's unbelievable. [Recce]

This particular company's association with a high profile former CCB and Special Forces operator clearly impacts on the allegations and perceptions surrounding it, and makes it an extreme example. Similar concerns, however, were raised by others also working in the security industry.

> What's going on in the security industry – everybody thinks the moment you've set up something like that, it's for a different reason than you pretend it to be. And that's the story of my life. [Recce]

One organisation that has contributed to the negative public image of former soldiers is the mercenary organisation, Executive Outcomes (EO). The organisation was the subject of controversy, and recent legislation aimed at curtailing its activities is a source of bitterness for SADF Special Forces respondents who perceive it as yet another attempt to marginalise them out of one of their few viable employment opportunities. Many are disgruntled with the mercenary image that is associated with the organisation, but are even more perturbed at what they perceive to be deliberate discrimination against former combatants. In respondents' argument for the legalisation of mercenary outfits, they make comparisons with other professionals who, unlike mercenary personnel, are entitled to use their skills outside South Africa's boundaries.

> If you have to survive, you have to survive. What does government prefer us to do: to go and do proper structured professional training or rob a bank? How can the government allow a qualified electrician to work in the Arab Emirates? I'm a qualified Special Forces soldier, I'm not allowed to work there, why not? It's bulldust! I mean if the guys do go and start rebel movements and so on, *ja*, I think then clamp down on them and sort it out. [Recce]

> Cash flow was the problem so ... I joined Executive Outcomes. I went back to Angola because they [were] the only guys paying a decent salary to the ex-combatants ... On the subject of being a mercenary, if a doctor is allowed to fly to Canada ... to sell his knowledge, or a civil engineer [to] go to Swaziland to build a dam - he's selling his knowledge. It's the same: we are selling our knowledge. But we were not allowed to do that ... I mean you know what a sore point it became ... And eh, we all led very comfortable lives ... the company was well established until this load of politicians start[ed] interfering and later works through United Nations to get rid of us. And then the Americans also did not like it because they were lobbying to get their own people in for training there, to get their influence inside Angola. [Recce]

The above respondent maintains that the legal manoeuvres to effectively close EO down are a further example of manipulation to score political points on the part of previous proponents of apartheid. For him, this is just another aspect of his sense of having been betrayed.

> The government actually never wanted to legislate [EO] out. It's in fact, once again, the older parties that remain from the previous government and New National Party, those people.

They actually forced the government to accept legislation against the activities of organisations like Executive Outcomes. The same people who organised that the guys lost their jobs, etcetera, are now preventing them [from] continu[ing to] make a living. [Recce]

"It's such a good story to say, 'here's another military guy that went cookies' ..."

SADF interviewees also raise another facet of stigmatisation to which ex-combatants may fall victim, that of being traumatised. They express frustration at the tendency to stereotype ex-soldiers, and particularly Special Forces as 'off the rails' or 'bossies' as a result of their military experience.

People have this amazingly weird image of Special Forces, but they're very, very normal people. They're not brain-dead, lost-it types, Vietnam style. [Recce]

It's very popular nowadays for people to write books about ex-military guys going haywire, and they normally want to emphasise the character by telling that he was in the Special Forces or the recces. And in fact they are very wrong about that because the people that went cuckoo because they couldn't handle the situation [were] normally the military servicemen guys who did not want to be there. [Recce]

We wanted to go and get into contact, getting into combat [was] all we wanted to do. That's what we were trained for. Now all of a sudden you've done that and it's, 'Oh no, I'm gonna have a wobbly and big traumatic stress' [*mimics*]. [SADF]

You know the other day they had a situation in the Cape: a guy killed his wife and I believe his sister-in-law, seven people he shot on the farm. And they claim that he was in the military. Then the investigating officers came back and said they can't find any military records of the guy ... It came out that that guy was actually in a security company, he was never in the military in his life. But it's now such a good story to say, 'Here's another military guy that went cookies' or whatever you want to call [it]. [Recce]

While most of these expressions of frustration are of a general nature and are intertwined with concerns regarding popular culture, one former soldier tells of his personal experience of being discredited in this way. He claims that in various work situations he has been 'fobbed off' as someone who is 'bossies' and therefore not to be taken seriously. But this has occurred in very specific circumstances. He alleges that it was a strategy of his employers to preserve the cover of their own illegal activities, which he was on the point of revealing.

Too many people in the corporate situation try to fob things off as if I'm maybe not all there because of my army experiences, to discredit me because I'm onto some things that are happening, involving sometimes senior management, and they've tried to sort of say: 'Hell, he's gone bossies. He's got post-traumatic stress because of his army days'... There's a stigma attached to me because of my military experience, and particularly because I was in Special Forces. It's, 'He's not all there'. [SADF]

Violence and Crime

A violent context

"It was safer for me to go into Angola on a military operation than it is for you to travel back to Johannesburg this afternoon ..."

One might assume that the environments to which most ex-combatants return as civilians would be less violent than those they found themselves in as combatants. This is not necessarily the case.

The extreme levels of violence that are part of contemporary life in South Africa impact on most people, including those whose lives were linked directly to the violence of the past. Many respondents say they have experienced violent encounters since the fighting ceased. Others consider violence, or at least the potential for violence to be pervasive. For some respondents, there is a strong perception that life, in general, is more violent than it was when they were combatants. This appears to be connected to their intense feelings of insecurity and the related fear of becoming victims of violence. Respondents who did not raise this issue spontaneously were specifically asked whether the contexts in which they now find themselves are experienced as more or less violent than when they were combatants. What emerges is a powerful sense of insecurity and impotence in the current context.

> I have seen more death and violence in my own town in the past few weeks than I experienced during my whole two years in the army! ["AT"]
>
> I do not go to the taverns to relax, I do not have that time. I sit waiting for war ... Like a soldier, I am on guard at night and during the day, waiting to see the thugs. [MK/SDU]
>
> At any time somebody is not safe, he may be attacked by criminals. We need a solution. [MK/SDU]

Former members of Thokoza SDUs constitute an important exception to this trend. They stress that, in comparison to the time when they were active SDUs, there is a marked reduction of violence in their environment. Their increased freedom of movement and a decline in the number of violent deaths taking place around them are indicative of this.

> It's not like before. Each and every day we had a funeral during that time. Each and every day we had a funeral. [Thokoza SDU]
>
> Even at home there is a difference. There used to be policemen looking for me and that does not happen anymore. [Thokoza SDU]
>
> You were not free when walking in the streets ... Life in general was terrible. There was fighting and there were no cars in the township, life was like in a war ... My life has changed dramatically. I am now able to go where I want to go, unlike before, even to the hostel if I want to. This means that there is now peace. [Thokoza SDU]

According to most of these respondents, the violence that engulfed Thokoza during the early 1990s is better described as full-scale warfare. Compared with the situation elsewhere on the Witwatersrand and other parts of the country (with the exception of some areas in KwaZulu-Natal), the violence here was more pervasive and unremitting than that to which other MK/SDU respondents were exposed. Furthermore, unlike former members of the SADF who participated in high-intensity combat situations, the war took place in the SDUs' own living space and intruded on all aspects of their daily lives. In contrast, the combat situations in which SADF recces were involved, for example, were far removed from their home environments. A clear separation

existed between the war space and the home space. As the following SADF respondent points out, after his stints in the war he returned to an environment he considered secure. This is, however, no longer the case.

> [I] definitely [experience life as] more [violent now]. Look, the violence there was isolated in the bush so when you come back to civvy street, you didn't lock your house, you'd leave your keys in [your car] when you stop at the café. Now it's hijacking and rape and all of that ... A friend of mine had that shop [*respondent is pointing to the building from his garden*]. About two months ago they just walk in and kill him. That didn't happen when I was a soldier! [Recce]

Similar sentiments are expressed by former conscripts who point to the loss of physical security in their civilian lives – a security for which many considered themselves to be fighting – as a crucial element in their sense of betrayal. [31]

Several SADF respondents draw a distinction between the violence associated with combat and the current violence that is largely associated with criminality.

> I wouldn't call combat 'violence'. It's more an art or a skill, a capability, it's not violence ... The guy on the other side is doing his job; you are doing your job. The one who is doing it the best is the one who is going to survive. [Recce]

Combat, they claim, was orderly, structured and framed by broad objectives. Moreover, ex-SADF recces point out that they were well equipped and highly trained to function in combat situations. By comparison, violent crime appears indiscriminate, unpredictable, meaningless, pervasive and, consequently, more dangerous.

> It was safer for me to go into Angola on a military operation than it is for you to travel back to Johannesburg this afternoon. It's definitely a violent society ... I feel sorry for a guy who has to steal to make a living, but you do not kill people to make a living. [Recce]

The experiences of these SADF operators were very different from those of liberation fighters and SDU members who operated inside South Africa within the context of violence and intimidation that accompanied the period of intensified counter-insurgency during the late 1980s, and the internecine violence that characterised the early 1990s. This violence (or the potential for it) was also pervasive and, especially in the early 1990s, seemingly indiscriminate.

Furthermore, not all SADF respondents share the views expressed by the recce interviewees above. A former conscript, for example, who considers himself to have been badly affected by his army duty in Namibia and Angola, did not experience war as orderly, justifiable or something for which he was equipped. [See section, Trauma and Distress]

"Violence is harder now ..."

MK/SDU respondents received substantially less formal training than their SADF counterparts (and sometimes none at all). In addition, they functioned within dissimilar operational parameters. For example, their activities were framed to a much greater degree by their own initiative, and according to situations as they arose. The combatant roles of many internal operatives also incorporated a 'crime-fighting' brief, which contributed to the blurring of the distinction between political and criminal violence.

For many of these combatants, the violence took place in their own communities – communities where they remain today. This presence provides them with particular insight into the changing nature of the violence. Respondents from a notoriously violent part of Soweto, for example, point to these changes as they manifest in criminal violence. They say that guns are more prevalent now and that they are feeling the (more deadly) effects of this.

> *Ja*, pertaining to violence in the location, criminal violence, we still have a problem ... Now [the thugs] are coming in a different way, they come with their guns. There are too many guns. Violence is harder now. [MK/SDU]

The following respondent also links a geographical shift in crime to the increased availability of guns. With guns, he says, criminals are more likely to do crime in their own neighbourhoods whereas before, they travelled to 'town'.

> Especially nowadays, because guns are so many, many thugs don't want to go and rob in town like in the beginning. They just want to rob in the location. They want to see the comrades who were beating them in the past. [MK/SDU]

In addition, ex-combatants are no longer able to play an effective 'crime-fighting' role within communities, and consequently provide less of a deterrent to criminal elements, say respondents. At the same time, this situation renders former combatants vulnerable to reprisals from these criminal elements.

"The comrades have lost their teeth ..."

Like many other South Africans, ex-combatant respondents believe the government is not doing enough to address crime, and view South Africa's current systems of law enforcement and security as inadequate. The difference perhaps, for ex-combatants, is that they themselves were part and parcel of policing and defence structures in the old order, and feel that they did a better job of meeting the country's security requirements.

Integral to the sense of insecurity of former MK/SDUs in the face of criminal violence is that their own role in fighting it has been rendered illegitimate. Before the democratic transition, their 'crime-fighting' role was, to an extent, sanctioned by the communities.[32] The new dispensation however, has reduced their role as 'crime fighters' vis-à-vis the new legitimacy of the criminal justice system.

> Here in the locations, we were the ones who were applying law and order – the comrades, the members of MK. But after the suspension of everything [our former colleagues] went into parliament, eh! They disempowered us! ... So this whole thing is really frustrating us ... These men talk from high positions, but here on the ground, we were the ones who were controlling crime. [MK/SDU]

> Things are no longer operating like before. They even have the slogan that 'comrades no longer have teeth': they can't bite anymore. So violence is still there in the location, it is too much. [MK/SDU]

There is a perception that the new laws and governing constitutional principles have effectively empowered and emboldened criminals. Many MK/SDU respondents feel they are more vulnerable to criminal violence than they were under the old order.

> The law has turned against us and favours the thugs ... The government has no concern for us, about our safety ... That is what I cry about. [MK/SDU]

Ironically, some look back to the apartheid era as 'better times' for dealing with crime and criminals.

> It's difficult because it is no longer like in the past. In the past we used to catch [the thugs] and give them a hiding, and that was not an issue. Now if you catch him and want to beat him, he will go to the police station. He will come back with the very same former Security Branch [member] to fetch you again ... So now thugs have more power than we do, you see. If you shoot or point him with a gun, that's a very serious case. He lays charges against you, and the police will come. [MK/SDU]

"Nothing to cover your backside ..."

In a similar vein, several SADF respondents regard the current state agencies of law enforcement and security with scepticism, anger and frustration.

Many, for example, see the police service as an institution in decay. The following SADF respondent makes comparisons with the policing situation as it was prior to democracy.

> I cannot believe the police cannot do something about it ... If you have a murder in this area, they follow the track to Diepsloot. The moment they get to the perimeter of Diepsloot, the police stop, they turn around and they go. They do not have the guts to go in because they're either going to be killed or the BBC is going to take a video of police brutality. [Recce]

Most conscript focus-group participants also hold the SANDF in contempt, and do not believe it is capable of conducting itself professionally. This, they argue, is in stark contrast to the military of which they were part.

> Guys, make no mistake, when the South African army wore brown uniforms, we were a great army. By God we were good! [The SANDF] is not an army; they sit there and then they go AWOL ... 17% of all vehicles in the brigade are serviceable. God help this country if we get into a war! In the days that we were in the army, I knew that if I got into a situation I had somebody that would cover me. Do you think they would cover you today? You'll be the only one standing there. They'll go on strike! [Conscript group]

This intensifies their sense of insecurity, and the belief that if they do not defend themselves, no-one will.

> Today this country has got nothing to cover your backside but yourself and whatever you carry. That's it. [Conscript group]

While many former Special Forces operators are no longer situated in the state security apparatus, some have moved into the private security industry, which continues to grow rapidly. Respondents who are now working in the industry complain that the industry's hands are tied by legislation, and that, while it has the capacity to address the crime problem, it is not empowered to do so.

> I think it is time maybe where they [should] allow security companies to put heavy machine-guns on their armoured vehicles so if you are ambushed you shoot who the hell might be ambushing; you take him out ... It's not nice to do, but it's part of the game ... We cannot do anything! We cannot do anything and it's getting worse and worse. [Recce]

This resonates with MK/SDUs' frustration at their sense that their own actions could improve the situation, but they have been outlawed from doing so.

Special Forces respondents do acknowledge that both the police and military are in a vulnerable transitional phase. However, they argue, the time for teething problems is rapidly passing, and crime requires immediate and effective attention.

> There've been 43 murders in the past year in this area alone. People have been shot and battered to death, just in this small area ... I understand why there are, to a certain extent, untrained or unqualified [people] in senior police and military positions. They've got to do that otherwise they are sitting with masses on their hands, so it's reasonable to understand. But somewhere along the road this whole thing is going to collide. [Recce]

"I am the big man ..."

The language employed by former SADF respondents suggests that there is a gendered dimension to their fear, anger and sense of marginalisation. Central to their rationale for participation in the SADF was an under-

standing that this was intrinsic to the security of their womenfolk and families. Indeed, a key aspect of their sense of having been betrayed, as one respondent's wife puts it, is that 'if they'd known what would happen, they wouldn't have bothered' (see section, Betrayal). Despite their efforts, they live in a violent society. Their sense of responsibility to protect those close to them, who have not been trained (women and children), remains intact, but in very different circumstances.

> He says he is scared. And he is scared and he is scared and he is scared [*nodding to other participants sitting around the table]*. We are all scared. It doesn't matter what you have got inside yourself, you are still scared. You are not scared for yourself because you know how to handle yourself; you know how to handle your weapons. You are scared ... for your children and your wife because they can't defend themselves ... And I haven't got the patience ... or the time to sit and teach them what I know - to defend. [Conscript group]

> See [having a gun] as a basic human right. I am a male. I am the big man ... Come and try and rape and pillage, I am going to blow your head off. [Conscript group]

This sense of responsibility is reinforced by their lack of faith in the state security structures. They no longer have support, previously provided by the army, in fulfilling this protector role. Moreover, the requirements of the role are no longer delineated or structured, but increasingly difficult to manage in the face of heightened feelings of insecurity and fear of violent crime.

> I'm living on a plot. Often I'm not here. I have to leave my family ... I don't know if when I come back they're going to be alive. [Recce]

Surrounded by violence – factors contributing to ex-combatants' potential for violence

"He who hesitates is lost ..."

A number of respondents in all the ex-combatant categories link the issue of physical security to possibilities of their own (or their former colleagues') involvement in violence. Their potential for using force is most often described as arising from the requirement that they defend themselves or family members in the event of attack. Those respondents that carry guns explain why they do so in this context. A significant difference between SADF and MK/SDU respondents, however, is that while the former mainly consider using violence in self defence as a future possibility, many MK/SDU respondents have already had such experiences. These similarities as well as differences are illustrated in the following extracts:

> I carry a 9 mil', and believe me, every second shot of mine is going to blow the back away from him because as far as I am concerned there is no rule in this country any more but the zog rules, and it's either you or him! ... I will not put up with it! [If] a guy comes towards me, I am going to kill him first and then I will take the consequences. [Conscript group]

> I have a 9mm 21 shooter. I've used it sure. I was using my firearm as protection. They were trying to rob me so I was protecting myself. [MK/SDU]

For some, the choice is understood to be simply between carrying a gun or becoming a victim.

> In my situation now with the security company, I would not hesitate to kill a guy who's got a gun and I won't feel anything about it. You must go and look at crime situations in South Africa and you must realise that the saying is very apt, 'He who hesitates is lost'. The one who shoots first is the one that is surviving. Unfortunately that is how it is. [Recce]

"At least if you die like a brave man ..."

While the philosophy of 'he who hesitates is lost' is prevalent in explanations of their need to carry guns, a number of respondents talk about their guns, or their desire for a gun, less in terms of the protection these might offer, and more in terms of ways of dying. Often they suggest resignation to the possibility they will probably be the ones to die in a violent attack, but they do not want to die without having put up a fight. Individuals from all force categories indicate this view.

> I sleep with a gun under my head because these chaps may come anytime. Anytime! I was forced to do so by circumstances. When I came [back from exile] I was living in Soweto and we got mugged several times, and I realized, 'No', we had to defend ourselves. The only way is to die with something rather than to die like a chicken. [APLA]

> Oh my Lord, I do want a gun! I really want a gun because I can't walk freely ... When you come across your enemies it's difficult. When they cock [the gun] you have to raise your hands, and die like a coward. At least if you died like a brave man it would be better. I do want a gun. [MK/SDU]

'He who hesitates is lost' is also used by respondents to explain war situations. But death in combat is portrayed as automatically noble. In contrast, violent crime creates 'victims'. By having a gun, and intending to put up a fight in the event of attack, they hope to maintain a degree of their own agency in the situation – to reduce the 'victim' aspect, and 'to die a brave man'. In this sense, fighting continues to be synonymous with dignity and manhood. The words of the following respondent, a former conscript (who equates the perpetrators of criminal violence with his former enemies) also suggest that he fears the mode of potential attack – 'stabbing in the back', more than the realization of an attack itself. Death by stabbing in the back precludes the possibility of putting up a fight.

> If you have a beef with me, come and fight me face to face. If you haven't got the balls to do that, shut your mouth! If this [recording] is going to go to those MK guys, you are welcome to come for me any day of the week. Do me a favour, 20 or 30 of you against me, but just let me // Don't stab me in the back! [Conscript group]

"A white man in Africa without a weapon is a victim ..."

Moves to tighten gun control in South Africa are rejected by many respondents, especially former SADF combatants, and are seen as a further component of their disempowerment in the face of violent crime. As they see it, their ability to defend themselves, when no-one else will, is now being curtailed. The Firearms Control Act (1999) was introduced as a crime-prevention tool aimed at curbing the proliferation of illegal firearms through improved controls over legal firearms. These improved controls include, for example, limiting the numbers and types of firearms that individuals may own, and the requirement of a competency certificate before firearm licences are issued.

Several SADF respondents equate violent crime with a war fought by the black population against the white population, in what they see as an undeclared continuation of the preceding liberation struggle. Gun control initiatives are read as one strategy in this war.[33] By disarming Whites (who are perceived as the primary targets of the strategy), Blacks are weakening their enemy to facilitate their war aims.

> 'We are taking from the white man who has policed our land for 100 or 300 years' [they say] ... Every night you are getting some white *okes* murdered in their beds. It's a slow moving war, they are stealing – but it's just the pillaging of war ... They rape your wives, murder your children, murder you, and they really enjoy it. They are torturing you with irons and everything. I reckon most Whites will agree that crime is war and war is crime ... Now they disarm us, doing this, doing that, so they can have everything. Then they want the war, which is really something that is pissing me off and everyone is allowing it. [conscript group]

For some, the retention of private firearms is seen as the last line of defence. The following respondent also claims that he remains a target of the black man's unfinished war business.

> If we allow white people to be disarmed, the white people become open prey to everybody that wants to do crime ... If the white people are disarmed, it's the end. Because, if you have a black person [who] you trust and you can have a nice confidential chat with him, he will tell you in your face 'We are still coming for you guys. We are still coming ...' It's not that the guy is angry or we are angry but he is saying, that's the policy, they will still come for you. [Recce]

The imagery of an ongoing racialised conflict is also presented by one respondent to explain the phenomenon of farm killings. Despite the introduction of a Rural Protection Plan and other measures, continued killings are interpreted as a failure by government to provide adequate protection. In this context, gun controls are seen as a conscious effort aimed at making Whites vulnerable to victimisation.

Ex-SADF members and their potential for violence

"And if the government doesn't do anything about it ..."

While most SADF Special Forces respondents say that this category of former combatants is unlikely to become involved in future conflict or violence, those who view this as a possibility connect it to the government's failure to adequately address crime. The new 'resistance', as they see it, could most likely mobilise around this issue. They simultaneously stress, however, that the stigmatisation – that amounts to an expectation of a threat from this quarter – is unjustified and that by misrepresenting the motives of ex-Special Forces operators or making false accusations and arrests, more anger is aroused and the likelihood of destructive reactions, increased.

> Resistance-wise there is a threat ... But the solution is not to throw people in prison. The solution is to better the circumstances under which they are living. And they can do that by clamping down on crime, and leav[ing] the people in peace ... But they are not doing that and that's causing more and more aggravating circumstances because there [are] people saying, 'Well if the government can't contain crime at this stage, then we must do it ourselves'. Your vigilante groups are going to [be]come more and more. [Recce]

Government's apparent failure to deal with crime is seen as a potential source of confrontation. Unlike some of their former conscript counterparts, these respondents do not completely reject the new government but rather its track record in relation to crime.

> I'm one of those objective type of people who says well let's give it a go and see what happens, but somewhere along the line [crime and violence] has got to stop. [Recce]

> I'm not enjoying this life whatsoever, but ... we must make the best of it. It's not good to now start shooting every guy you see in the street and that sort of thing. But somewhere, somebody's got to something about it and there's only one organisation that can do it, and that is the government of the day. As an old soldier I will still support the government of the day whether it's the ANC, the PAC or whatever, but violence and criminal activities must stop. [Recce]

Other angers and frustrations, according to a few respondents, also inform the potential of a 'new resistance'. The betrayal of former soldiers is at times presented as feeding the conflict potential.

> The anger can be created because of the dissatisfaction of ex-soldiers afterwards ... Look at Willem Ratte[34] who occupied Fort Schanskop ... He was actually trying to make a statement there. I mean he knew when he went in there that he could never keep that place ... but out of anger he did that - to make a statement: 'Look, you are not looking after us. Don't throw us

> to the wolves because we can and will do something about it.' So *ja*, anger eventually can develop into certain aspects of violence. [Recce]

Contributing to the sense of being 'thrown to the wolves', they say, is the demonisation of ex-SADF combatants, most notably through the TRC process. [For an examination of this issue, see section, Revenge Violence, Former Enemies and Reconciliation].

Most Special Forces respondents consider the possibility of a new resistance from ex-SADF quarters to be remote. Others were silent on the issue. Those who regard it as a remote possibility say that for them personally, their preoccupation with earning a living keeps them too busy to entertain such thoughts.

> I couldn't be bothered with politics. I have to make a living. I'm not interested [in] taking up armed struggle like that Afrikaner in Time [magazine]. I don't know any of my army colleagues who would be interested in anything like that, Afrikaners as well. [Parabat]

> There is a potential [for some sort of uprising], but I think ... everybody is too busy trying to make a living – that's where I direct my energies. [Selous scout/SADF]

Conscript respondents had little to say on the issue of organised resistance. Indeed, while feelings of consistent marginalisation are prominent, and anger is sometimes aggressively expressed as racial hatred, these feelings are intertwined with a sense of isolation: that there is no structure or fellow-feeling on which they can depend. The white population in general, as with the previous ruling party, has become a 'lame duck' and has lost all sense of unity.

> What gets me about white *okes*: I get into a lot of street battles with these [black] *okes* because I travel. Another white *oke* will ride past you, he won't help ... There is no brotherhood; there is no like mutual feeling like you had in the army. It's like 'Oh well, the poor little arse ... is on his own'. Whether there are three *okes* in this car and there is only two *moering* him, they are not going to stop. [Conscript group]

It follows that these respondents consider the chances of people unifying in a new resistance as slim. Nevertheless, on an individual level, several say that current circumstances are turning them 'violent'. Interestingly, some SADF respondents reject the question of whether they think that their military experience might sometimes lead them to react to situations in a more violent manner. [35] Instead, these respondents say, it is the current circumstances alone that bring out violent behaviour.

> We had our contact, we shot up people ... We have been through it at that time, personally, but it's not that bad. We are all violent today because of the life now. [Conscript group]

Living with violence – experiences of ex-MK members

Unlike most SADF respondents, many MK/SDU respondents base their understanding of contemporary violence on actual experiences of violence and alleged maltreatment. While ex-SADF personnel speak more of the feelings and fears associated with their perceptions of the violent context in which they live, MK/SDU members provide anecdotal information to illustrate the various ways in which they have been personally targeted.

Many MK/SDU respondents say they are targeted in the context of contemporary violence precisely because of their ex-combatant status. During the apartheid era and in response to the policing vacuum that existed in black townships, many of those involved in the armed struggle or self-defence structures took on policing and adjudicating roles to address criminal activities in their localities. At the same time, criminal activity became politicised in that it was perceived to be weakening the base of the liberation movement. The situation was complicated however, by political turf struggles and the involvement of some combatants themselves in crime.

These MK/SDU members are angry because their previous 'crime-fighting' role has been outlawed. As a result, they say, criminal elements have now gained the upper hand in the communities MK/SDUs previously policed. They believe they have the capacity to deal with the contemporary perpetrators of crime, but are not empowered to do so. Rather, they are aware that they could end up in trouble should they react. Over and above the detrimental effects they see this as having on communities, respondents allege that the criminals who bore the brunt of the ex-combatants' crime-fighting campaigns during the apartheid era, are now, in more conducive circumstances, attempting to exact revenge.

> Those thugs whom we were arresting when we were comrades – when they mugged people, raped, and took people's TV – they are the ones who are looking for me, who want to kill me. [MK/SDU]

> There are people who still have grudges here in the location ... We were people who were against crime, doing anti-crime campaigns. So many people want to pay revenges. You see [it's like], 'This one has done this to me. He beat me at a certain time so now I must pay my revenge.' [MK/SDU]

Former MK/SDU members, therefore explain that the conflicts of their pasts involve them in current violence. Their ex-combatant status, they say, renders them more likely targets of contemporary violence than other South Africans. In contrast, while SADF respondents' perceptions of contemporary violence appear to be informed by their military experiences[36], the threat of violence comes, in several of their views, from being white rather than from being former soldiers.

"The worst thing is that the police didn't charge them, but us ..."

An important aspect of MK/SDU respondents' frustration is that in the new order, the consequences of using violence have changed. As one respondent complains, 'it is now a very serious case if you beat or shoot a criminal'. Criminal suspects have the protections of due process under the criminal justice system.

Despite existing constraints, a number of MK/SDU respondents claim that they continue to perform various 'crime-fighting' roles. In these roles they are exposed to yet more violence:

> Even now I'm not on good terms with thugs because I will not leave you when you take someone's earrings, or when you take someone's car. [MK/SDU]

> We are still operating now in the community. You cannot mug a person when we are here. There are many people I've defended in the evening. [MK/SDU]

> We were the ones who were controlling crime. Even now, ... people [will] approach a member of the ANC [to tell them] that something has happened to them. [MK/SDU]

It appears, however, that to some extent those former MK/SDU members that remain involved in community crime fighting have adapted their methods in accordance with the new dispensation. In contrast to the past, they are more willing to work with the authorities.

> I am a person who's fighting on, courageous ... I go out and arrest [the thugs]. We are bringing back our land into the right way. We must cooperate with the police. [MK/SDU].

Still, relations with the police are far from harmonious. MK/SDU respondents have substantial complaints to make about the police that are generally more complex than those raised by other respondents. Some ex-SADF members also argue that crime is not being addressed complaining, for example, of 'political appointments' to leadership positions in security structures, and regarding the legal framework in which the police must work as 'soft' on perpetrators. But MK respondents level the majority of their policing grievances at the

police on the ground – those they encounter in their own localities. They provide a range of diverse explanations for the tension in their relationships with police. One factor is the way in which the police interact with them on the crime-fighting front.

A common complaint is that the police arrest the wrong people, namely those ex-combatants who are 'fighting crime'. This contributes to a keenly felt perception that they are 'targeted' by the police.

> I found myself a job as security. One day I found out that my friend had been shot by people who were trying to rob the place [where we worked]. I fought with those gangsters and I took some of them to the police station and I also took their guns. I took my gun, so that I can defend myself, and later I got arrested! I don't know how I'm going to make a living because [now] I have a criminal record. [MK/SDU]

Although these respondents provide limited detail about the incidents and charges that are laid against them, a pattern of allegations emerges in which they claim that they are arrested and that the criminals are let off lightly. Their anecdotes reveal that the methods used to reprimand the 'thugs' before they are delivered to the police are, at times, unlawful. Subsequent action taken against them by the authorities is however construed as wrongfully targeting them.

> Just to clarify that the police are negative for the guys – the members of MK – after 1994 until now ... If it happens that you beat a person and you were beating that person in self-defence, they will come to you making as if they are coming to fetch people who were robbing a bank. But if ... a thug has a gun ... [and he] wants to mug you, the police just look at you. The police do not have mercy; mercy they do not have for the MK guys. [MK/SDU]

> In January [the ex-combatants] caught a certain boy who was mugging a certain lady and beat him. But now it is my colleagues who were arrested, [the ones] that caught that person who had a gun and took a woman's bag [when she was] walking from work. So it means we are targets [of the police] as my colleagues have been saying. [MK/SDU]

Vigilante-type actions, as well as the illegal use of firearms are referred to by some respondents as methods in 'crime fighting'.

> There was a situation where I was defending people who were being mugged. I was with a friend who had a licensed firearm. He was a bit drunk and I used his gun to defend those people. We took the perpetrators to the police station and the police wanted to arrest me. I was just defending these people and the thugs were under the influence of alcohol, I shot up in the air to scare them and I took their guns. [MK/SDU]

A lack of understanding of and/or support for the requirements of due process contributes to the problem. One area where this frequently arises is in relation to the issue of bail. Many arrested suspects are released on bail, fuelling suspicions that the police may have been paid off.

> We try to work hand in hand with the community to minimise crime and when they arrest these *tsotsis*, they all get released quickly and we don't know if they pay [the police] or not. [MK/SDU]

The reported quick release of criminal suspects places those still involved in 'anti-crime' activities under additional strain. A further layer of revenge relations is formed when 'new' criminals develop 'new' grudges. These respondents say that criminals seek them (ex-combatants who effected the arrests) out as soon as they are free. In addition to their fears of being targeted in this way, ensuing violent conflicts again put the ex-combatants at risk of arrest. The following extract illustrates the cycle of these problems.

> One day there were boys who came to the township to do criminal things. We were there, and decided to catch [them] and send them to the police. They broke into a house and we

> found a video machine from that house. We took them to the police and they were released within a month. When they came back from jail they were fighting with us. The problem was that they couldn't kill us, so we shot them and took them back to the police. The worst thing is that the police didn't charge them, but us. We tried to explain to them that these boys came back from jail after such and such a case and they wanted to fight back, so we shot them. But they arrested us. [MK/SDU]

For one respondent, the fear of revenge violence together with the likelihood of his own arrest should he attempt to pre-empt it, is such that he is considering leaving the township.

> I've got a problem. I was fighting against crime [and] I ended up having a criminal record because I got arrested. Now I'm moving out of the township. I want to know something: ... If you were in my situation, where you didn't mean to do any crime, but you were defending and ... you get arrested and you get a criminal record and then you meet those criminals and they try to shoot you, but they miss, what must I do? [Must I] come back and fight with them again? If I fight with these people and the police find out ... they will come and arrest me again ... I was not doing any crime ... The criminals were robbing someone and I decided to ... defend that person. After that I heard all sorts of stories about these thugs. Apparently I crossed paths with the wrong people ... People told me that they will try and do something bad to me. [MK/SDU]

What was regarded as legitimate action in the past can now carry heavy penalties, feeding perceptions of alienation and victimisation. But even when procedure is followed, these respondents claim that they are not trusted and remain under suspicion.

> This soldier was shot in the township. We know the people who were responsible and they are out on bail ... We were so surprised when we were called to the police station and told things such as, 'You have to know that if anything happens [to the criminals], we'll come for you because we have information that you said you will pay revenge' ... There are people who are framing us at the Police Station ... The [criminals] see that the best thing is to go to the police station and bad name us about things we did not say. If we [had] wanted to pay revenge [we would have done it before because] those people were not [arrested] by the police, but by us ... We did not even assault them, we did nothing to them. We took them to the police station ... Whatever [might] happen [to them] it is you, [the ex-MK that will be blamed]. [MK/SDU]

"The police can see that we are blowing their cover ..."

Respondents allege that the police employ double standards when dealing with former MK/SDU members.

> We catch people and take them to the police. They are arrested for a few days and they come back and [are] doing the very same things again. If they arrest you, you won't come out easily because they know that you are an MK member and will tell you exactly that they know that you are a MK member. [MK/SDU]

While some respondents' perceptions of maltreatment by the police may rest more on a misunderstanding of how the criminal justice system is supposed to work, other stories complicate the picture. Some ex-combatants claim, for example, that the police are threatened by the ex-combatants' 'crime-fighting' role because it can lead to the exposure of criminal activity perpetrated by elements within the police service.

> Another thing that makes the police after us is because when we came back [from exile], we resolved to work with the community in combating crime and fighting against vigilantes so that we can get the freedom that we fought for all along. We worked with the community and arrested a lot of criminals and took them to the police. We catch the very same criminals that police use to get stolen cars and goods and some of them blow the whistle against the

police. [They] confess that they work with certain policemen. Now, the police can see that we are getting in their way – we are blowing their cover. That's why they are against us. [MK/SDU]

The following respondent uses police alleged criminal involvement to argue for locally based police personnel. He links the criminal tendencies of some members of the service to their 'outsider' status.

In our police stations there are people fetched from Witbank, to be Station Commander in [area of Soweto]; this is something that will not work. There is a need for our children from here to work in the police stations and then crime will be eradicated because those policemen are shareholders in these scrap-yards. [MK/SDU]

These respondents allege that the police use their position to inform 'gangsters' about elements in the community (such as ex-combatants) who are trying to curb their activities, thereby protecting the gangsters and rendering the ex-combatants vulnerable to attack.

If you take the police at [our] police station, they tell these gangsters that so-and-so has told us [about you, they are onto you]. [MK/SDU]

My fight with the criminals is not over yet because the police use them against us. They get information and give it to the police, our enemies. The [police] will tell them that if you are looking for such a person, you will find him at such a place and it's true that they will find us there. And because we are MK soldiers, the police would make sure that we die. [MK/SDU]

"The police are still looking for us ..."

Relations between former MK/SDUs and the police emerge as a pressing problem and, according to respondents, one that is much larger than its relation to 'crime-fighting' activities. The majority of MK/SDU respondents, including those who do not speak of crime fighting, highlight difficulties in their interactions with the police. Grudges from the past, or the social relations generated in the past, are one element at play in these difficult relationships. Several respondents complain that for the police, the 'war is not over' as far as MK is concerned, and that 'they still have the same negative attitude'. Particularly in the early 1990s, when many were returning from exile, the violent harassment by police of MK members was rife. Since 1994, some respondents say, this type of harassment, typical in the early years of transition, has lessened. Nevertheless, many of them continue to feel harassed, claiming that their homes are raided by the police in search of weapons, and that they are profiled as criminal suspects because of their ex-combatant status.

When we left the country the police were harassing us, the very same police who are working now ... They know that we've been trained to use guns and that's what makes them to be against us. The leadership told us to leave the past behind, to abandon armed struggle because the war is over, but to [the police] it's not yet over. They still see us as dangerous [MK/SDU].

Moreover, some argue that events in neighbouring Zimbabwe, where war veterans have been implicated in farm invasions and pre-election violence, have exacerbated the situation by fuelling perceptions that South African ex-combatants are a potentially destabilising force.

We are hit by something from National Intelligence.[37] We are being watched ... They are worried about what is happening outside the country. Things like rebellions are not on our minds, but Intelligence is not leaving us alone [MK/SDU].

Recent convictions and allegations of ex-MK cadres' involvement in burglaries and cash-in-transit heists have heightened these suspicions.

The police are targeting MK and APLA members because there are a lot of bank robberies

> and SBV robberies. They have arrested a guy like Chauke who was a former MK member. That is why they are looking for us, they think that a lot of MK members are involved in criminal activities and ... that we don't do any good things. They don't know that some of us are working with the government to unite South Africa and that we are part and parcel of the government's will to stop the crime. The police are still looking for us. [MK/SDU]

In a few extreme cases, the police are accused of murdering, or threatening to murder, former combatants.

> Even today, our comrades who were in exile are dying one by one. And we can't try to investigate because they will come and shoot you at night. The enemy is the police because they told me that if we don't bring those guns [that they're harassing us for since we came back from exile] they are going to kill us one by one. [MK/SDU].

> This year a former colleague who was in the Defence Force and also an MK soldier ... was found dead ... still in his uniform. We don't really know what happened because the people who last saw him said the police took him ... Later, he was found under the bridge dead, with no eyes ... We heard [that it was the police who picked him up] from people who were with him when the police allegedly took him. The police investigated but I don't know where it ended up. Three weeks back, his brother who was also a former MK soldier, was found dead in Pretoria outside the [military] camp in full uniform. They found him dead ... just like his brother. I don't know, maybe tomorrow it's going to be me or one of us ... And it's not only these ones that we've mentioned, some of them were shot right inside the police station. They were all killed brutally. [MK/SDU]

In all MK/SDU focus groups a number of respondents expressed varying degrees of anger at their alleged bad treatment at the hands of police. However, other facets of police-ex-combatant relationships are also hinted at and point to their complexity. One respondent, for example, said that the police attempt to get the co-operation of ex-combatants in identifying criminals, but that ex-combatants are reluctant to do so if they are not paid for this work. Another who had previously complained about police behaviour, revealed, in a follow-up meeting, that he is employed as a police informer. The ways in which these apparently contradictory situations interact, where ex-combatants are allegedly targeted by the police, and simultaneously called upon to assist them, requires further investigation. It could be, for example, that allegations made of 'the police' generally, refer only to particular elements in the police; or that different approaches to ex-combatants emanate from different structures within the South African Police Service.

Ex-MKs and 'disarmament'

Many MK/SDU respondents feel the need to carry guns for reasons that are very similar to those given by their SADF counterparts. The proportion of respondents who say they do not have a gun is greater among former MK respondents than former SADF members. While a few are of the opinion that gun possession is likely to exacerbate problems both at a personal level, and generally for ex-combatants, most ex-MK members without weapons say they want one. Unlike former SADF respondents, they do not comment on the gun control legislation process. Several however, refer to being 'disarmed', and do so in terms similar to those used by SADF respondents: they are left vulnerable, as easy prey for criminals.

> The government told us to put our guns away and now the [criminals] have the opportunity to take advantage of us. It really gets to me! [MK/SDU]

Such feelings are closely intertwined with the curtailment of their former crime-fighting status, and it is the police rather than firearm legislation that they hold responsible for their disarmament. Indeed, as discussed above, the alleged possession of firearms by former cadres is central to the police's reported criminalisation of ex-combatants. Additional examples provided below illustrate the multifaceted nature of their fears and frustrations, which

contribute to a general sense of victimisation, and of which disarmament is an important element.

> [The thug who you were attempting to reprimand] lays charges against you, and the police will come to raid you. They disarm you [of] a gun and release you. When you get to the location [the thug] beats you and hurts you. You are now defenceless. [MK/SDU]

The following respondent's story is not focused on the increased potential for violent victimisation. Rather, he claims, his disarmament was part of a concerted effort on the part of a policeman, to incarcerate him. In addition to broader concerns about disarmament, this extract illustrates many of the other issues discussed thus far. These include allegations of wrongful arrest, the shortcomings of the Criminal Justice System, police criminal behaviour, and the targeting and maltreatment of ex-combatants by members of the police service.

> I was arrested and I had my firearm. The police told me that I pointed someone with a gun and I don't even know who that person is. I've never seen him before ... They took my gun and I went to court [in] '98 and it only ended this year. The case was dismissed because the police couldn't investigate it. I did nothing, but they searched my house saying that I have AKs and grenades. After the case I went [to the police station] to get my gun ... When this guy arrested me, he didn't give me anything to prove that he has my gun. Now he was avoiding me and didn't want to give me my gun. I [would] go to the police station all the time to check if he has my gun and every time he tells me that it's in Pretoria. One day he took me inside [the police station] and said he was going to look for [it]. He had told me that my gun was in Pretoria but now he's taking me inside to look for it ... He didn't find it. He took another gun that is not mine and gave it to me saying that I must take it as a consolation for my one that's in Pretoria ... Earlier [while we were in the police station] I picked up my firearm license [which had dropped] on the floor and when he saw that, he asked me if that was my license. I told him that it was and [I think] he got scared ... But now I was scared that this cop would kill me inside there because his expression [had] changed completely. I was so scared I took [the gun]. ... And he knows that I am an MK member and the police hate MK members. I took [the gun] to the Intelligence. Intelligence is now investigating the gun and now, they've found out that he gave it to me because he thought he was [framing] me, a member of MK, so that I would go to jail. So they try by all means to kill us or send us to jail. Unfortunately [for him] he gave the gun to an intelligent person and now they are investigating him. [MK/SDU]

"Must we go back to square one? ..."

The lack of confidence that these respondents have in the police, combined with frustration at pervasive crime and experiences of victimisation, has led some of them to think about taking up arms again.

> We don't know, because we had declared the peace in our country, what to do now. Must we go back to square one and use those weapons [the police] are talking about when they come and harass our people - AKs and hand-grenades, etc. etc.? [MK/SDU]

> The members of MK were the ones who were applying law and order ... but they dis-empowered us, you see ... Today there are many guns, they are all over. And [from] the time when we were the activists of the ANC, we are targets. And now it happens that you end up tempted because you are forced to take out those guns, maybe those you were using that time ... So this whole thing is really frustrating us. [MK/SDU]

This suggestion can be compared to the utterances of some ex-SADF Special Forces operators who say that if crime is not addressed, ex-combatants may decide to address it themselves.

Ex-Thokoza SDUs – crime fighting and relationships with state security agencies

"They do not like bad things ..."

Thokoza SDU respondents did not speak of their own current crime-fighting activities. However, relatives of former SDUs in one section of the township praise some ex-SDU members for their role in addressing crime in the area. Descriptions of their activities include guarding the streets of the section, investigating thefts and unlicensed weapons, returning stolen items to their owners and 'reprimanding' rapists. [38]

> What's pleasing in this section [is that] even at night, we don't lock our cars ... These guys, the ones who were fighting, are the ones who are guarding our cars and houses ... Women in this section walk during the night, [there's] no rape. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

> They do not like bad things. If you [were to] find a boy being naughty and you told them, they would get him. If he has stolen, they get what he has stolen and bring it back. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

Respondents say that unlike in the past, these particular ex-SDUs now work in cooperation with the police, and no longer take responsibility for adjudicating on all types of cases. The ex-SDUs also work with other community members in their attempt to control crime. 'Easy' criminal cases are investigated before the police are contacted (if this is thought to be necessary at all). As with other MK/SDU respondents, however, the apprehension of alleged offenders may involve the use of excessive force.

> They are stubborn; they want [the culprit] to tell the truth. They beat them up so that they may speak truth and show them where they [have] put the stolen goods. They take them to the police after they have pointed out the goods ... They do not make a court case, they do not make kangaroo courts, they don't do that [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

> If they find a boy beating up a girl, that boy is in trouble, they'll beat him up. They know in this area, that if they rape they are calling trouble. They don't have a chance. If he rapes, it's better if he hangs himself ... because if these boys could find him, they would kill him. They are trying to make it safe for even the children [so that] you do not have to be scared that if a child plays outside, he [will] be taken [away] ... The children play till very late ... and they are safe. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

In more difficult cases, the police are immediately notified, they say.

> When the children see that they are in a case they cannot solve, they come to us, the parents – they have the parents that they choose because they trusted them during the time of war. It's then that we unite with these children and investigate where this thing originated, and when we see that this thing is for the police, ... we call the police. This happens many times – that the case is for the police. If someone has died, or is injured, we give it to the police. It's the ones that are easy to solve, [that we resolve] with us. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

The reportedly more productive relationship between ex-SDU combatants from Thokoza and the police contrasts sharply with the strained relationships described elsewhere by other respondents. In this regard the implementation of the Kathorus Police Reservist Programme appears, to some extent, to have alleviated potential tensions. Under this programme, a number of former SDU and SPU members in the East Rand were brought into the local police service structure as paid reservists, also known as 'community constables'. [39]

> The project of the community constables was one of the things which made us proud: having police which came [from being] under our command [in the SDUs] ... It even helped the police to identify the culprits. [Thokoza SDU]

Several others express sentiments similar to those of the respondent cited above. Importantly however, another interviewee draws attention to less favourable responses to the programme from other East Rand SDUs. In some cases, commanders of Self Defence Units saw the assimilation of defence structure members into SAPS as undermining their own power base, and wanted nothing to do with the process. Their former col-

leagues, now police reservists, also represented a potential threat because of their knowledge of the illegal activities of those outside the process. These tensions at times resulted in violent attacks on police reservists.

> The period when there was the assimilation into the police services, [it was decided] that those that were in favour of the process should disarm, and be put under proper structures. And there are those who said, 'Fuck this process, we are commanders in our own right' ... Those who were assimilated into the police were constantly attacked by those who refused to disarm and be assimilated into the legal structure. [East Rand key informant]

"Soldiers are giving us a problem ..."

Although respondents do not report tensions between Thokoza SDUs and the police, some portray current members of the SANDF in a very negative light. Again, with a few exceptions, former SDUs themselves do not speak of this issue, but their relatives do. Community harassment by soldiers, including violent and bullying behaviour, is considered to be a common problem. Interestingly, respondents point to the problematic behaviour of soldiers who have been integrated into the SANDF from the ranks of the liberation movement.

> The guys that have joined the SANDF have caused problems ... What this guy told me is, like grudges that they had from beforehand; when they come home with their big rifle and what-have-you, they go around sorting out their grudges. So that has been a particular problem ... Even now, under the new army with like 'our guys' lets say, integrated, the behaviour is just the same as before. They go around saying [things like] there's a curfew in Thokoza when there isn't. [NGO key informant]

Soldiers exercise a certain amount of unregulated power within the community.

> If they come to your place and [say], 'Show us his room; tell him that we will collect his TV [to take] to our army place', you will not even dare put your feet there. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

Their intervention in domestic and other personal disputes, although often in response to requests from community members for assistance, has in instances contributed to tension with former SDUs.

> Soldiers are giving us a problem, especially when coming to the issue of guys and girls, girls and boys ... If you have a problem with your own girlfriend, she will just run to the base and then half of the army will be looking for you ... and then one of the army guys will just have a relationship with that girl. [Thokoza SDU]

Failure on the part of some community members to apply appropriate procedures and include the appropriate agencies in dealing with disputes feeds the problem, say respondents. Inviting the soldiers to 'sort out' problems is preferred because of its immediate impact.

> The soldiers are controlling [things]. People report [to] the soldiers because the soldiers beat and kill. [If you make] a slight mistake, like you step on my corn, I would say, 'Mpho you are stepping on me'. She would say, '*Ekskuus* Thandi, I thought you are used to it'. But [if I was like some other people] I run to the soldiers and report. I don't talk to her or tell the police. [It's] the soldiers [that I call] and the soldiers do not behave when they come. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

This tendency of 'running to the soldiers' suggests that the culture of community justice borne of the past lives on in an altered form. The agents of 'justice' implementation have changed in as much as they are now, somewhat ironically, contained within the state's security structures. These roles however certainly do not constitute an official function. Although the backgrounds of the offending soldiers are unknown, it is likely that a proportion of them joined the SANDF through the process of armed forces integration. They may well then, have been protagonists in the community justice systems of the past. In addition, respondents imply that the soldiers' new-found status in the army also plays a part in their assuming these powers. The gun and uniform that go with the position are potent tools that they employ both in the community justice function and for

personal benefit.

> During their off time they go [in] their private [clothing] to the *shebeens*. If you have a query with them, they will just go to [put on] their uniform and come for you. [Thokoza SDU]

It is significant to note especially in relation to the suggested continuities from the past in the dynamics of community justice systems, that current complaints directed at SANDF elements often mirror those made of some SDUs themselves during the conflict in the early 1990s. An ex-SDU explains:

> The SDUs were also involved in things like disciplin[ing] the community but that was not the main objective ... There were cases like that and that's where the situation became nasty because some were gaining like individually, as SDU members [because] some people would buy them ... Some of the people gave them excessive power. But once people and community leaders realised that there was some kind of anarchy going on, they actually brought that to the attention of the people, that they should not take advantage of the SDU's abilities to achieve their own goals. So that gradually diminished – also with [SDUs] realising that it was wrong to involve themselves in personal matters. [Thokoza SDU]

Another key grievance of some Thokoza respondents is that certain soldiers are involved in criminal networks.

> These soldiers are in [the] company of those who were in jail during the time of war ... [The ex-convicts] have opened taverns which do not have licences ... We have a problem of a tavern here. It has guns [and] ... the soldiers rule that tavern ... We are surprised: how does a person who comes from jail mix with the soldiers? This is a long chain that you could never understand. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

Consequently, ex-SDUs involved in fighting crime represent a potential danger for military members mixed up in criminal endeavours. Some of the SDUs have been specifically targeted as a result.

> The soldiers do not want these children ... [around because] the [children] do not want the soldiers to do what [they] want. We have a child who died, who was killed by the soldiers. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

The mother of a former SDU relates one example of a situation that was unfolding at the time the focus group met:

> The soldiers are looking for [the ex-SDUs] again ... Yesterday there was a problem of a gun. The [ex-SDUs] went to a certain tavern; they searched and found the gun which is wanted [by the police] ... They are waiting for [the alleged owner] to bring a licence for the gun ... The children know that if a gun is not legal, it must be returned to the police station and a case must be opened. That's why they are running away because the soldiers want this gun [so] that they must drop this case ... The soldiers are friends with people who carry the guns which are not right ... Ever since the soldiers, there are now many guns. The guns have come back in a certain way. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

These reports echo allegations made by MK/SDU respondents that ex-MK cadres are targeted by members of the police because they threaten to blow the cover on criminality happening within SAPS.

Ex-combatants and criminal involvement

There is a clear distinction in the way the two broad categories of former soldiers respond to questions about ex-combatants' involvement in crime. While MK and SDU respondents speak at length about the pull factors of crime, SADF respondents do not.

All respondents were asked whether they were aware of any of their former colleagues being currently involved in crime. Increased depth to the issue was sought in interviews with Thokoza SDUs who were also asked whether they had participated in criminal activities prior to and during their SDU days. This was an attempt to trace potential continuities and shifts in crime, from the past to the present: to locate current crime activities in their historical context. In other respondent categories, ex-combatants frequently refer to their past military experiences in their explanations of current criminal activity. For instance, many MK respondents understand criminal behaviour amongst some ex-combatants to be informed by the sacrifices that they made, and the betrayal many of them now feel.

Most of the respondents depict crime as a response to immediate economic pressures. Although ex-combatants see these pressures as largely resulting from their past involvement in the conflict, with the exception of the Thokoza SDUs, respondents' representations of these histories rarely include reference to criminal activity. A minority, however, draw attention to militarised strategies and discourses employed in previous armed conflict in their explications of current crime.

For example, some liberation movement members explain that these discourses and strategies included the sanctioning of armed robbery, theft and other criminal activities for the purposes of resourcing the struggle. It is clear however, that such sanctioning was sometimes abused. In some cases it is difficult to determine whether or not criminal activities were politically motivated. The TRC was forced to examine some of these cases, and to make decisions about the political content of actions that might have appeared to be purely criminal. This examination revealed the complexity of the relationship between crime and politics during the conflict.

What is evident is that during the conflict, some combatants participated in what would ordinarily be defined as criminal activity. The following respondent points out that some ex-combatants, schooled in these strategies, now marginalised from legal income-generating opportunities, and perceiving themselves as having been dumped by their leaders, are utilising this experience 'to take their personal lives forward'.

> [Those ex-combatants who are doing crime] are people who have found themselves marginalised and sidelined and they think [of] all these millions. Over and above that, when we were busy with this struggle, many things were said and many things were justified. Like for instance we talk[ed] of 'liberating the wealth'; when cadres were inside the country and they had no means [of supporting the struggle] they were told to use their training to the maximum effort. 'Go out and make a stake, sweep a bank or something, get that money, keep the Movement going'. Now, if the Movement is not going to cater for them, they can still resort to that, but to take their personal life forward. [MK/SDU]

An APLA respondent refers to the potential transmutation of the PAC slogans of the past into the present context, and points to how these might be used to justify criminal behaviour.

> Perhaps one can put it this way. Not [that the criminals are] necessarily members of any political parties but [they are] being blessed by its ideology. For instance, PAC talks of self-determination, repossessing the land. The wealth of this country, we say, belongs to us. Now some take it literally: that if you run a café I could simply walk in there and eat free. 'It's also mine', you see. Now you find such people ... an admirer of the PAC [who is a criminal] but not necessarily a member of PAC. So he's simply a criminal who believes the philosophy of the PAC [that] repossessing the economy is the right one. Therefore he goes on his own crusade, and does the same thing ... The money is theirs as far as they're concerned. They are not stealing, they're taking it. 'It's just that those chaps were refusing, hence we had to kill them.' [APLA]

Another interesting connection between political slogans and crime justifications emerges in allegations made by some farmers' groups that former combatants are involved in contemporary farm killings. These

allegations have their roots in the political sloganeering of both the PAC's APLA and the ANC. The former coined the phrase, 'One settler, one bullet', and before it suspended its armed struggle in early 1994, supported attacks against white civilians, especially in the farming community. This was in part because of the association with land, a central pillar of PAC political interest. The ANC's Youth League also promoted the chant, 'Kill the Farmer, Kill the Boer' during the early 1990s. Despite ongoing killings of farmers and their families, and allegations that these are politically motivated, no evidence of any co-ordinated or systematic political targeting has emerged. Rather, it has been argued that, 'in depressed rural areas, farms are logical targets of relative wealth'.[40]

According to the APLA interviewee (cited above) some of his former colleagues had criminal histories prior to joining the ANC and PAC, and only escaped into exile to avoid criminal conviction (for non-politically motivated action) in South Africa. The PAC, he explains, welcomed all, regardless of their histories, because of the necessity to augment their force levels. Under the circumstances, any recruit was an asset to the organisation. Hence, some criminals became combatants and, subsequently, ex-combatants.

> There are others who are demobilised and are struggling [who are doing crime] ... [but] some of them joined the Liberation Movement running away from crime. At that time they had this opportunity of skipping the country and getting involved in the Liberation Movement. I mean we wouldn't ask you whether you are a member of PAC back home. You are an asset to us, ... we are not going to question your background as to what happened [laughs] ... At that time, a desperate time, we also got people with criminal records who took cover ... You kill somebody, you hear that you can jump to Botswana ... 'Well I want to join PAC, I want to join ANC'. So coming back [from exile] they still had that thing, 'We fought for this country, this is ours'. We had quite a number of this type of thing. [APLA]

Moreover, within the country, as insurgency and counter insurgency activities intensified, a blurring of crime genuinely perpetrated for political purposes with that merely taking place under this guise, complicated the situation further. The extent to which elements within the apartheid security forces were involved in criminal activity both to further military objectives and for personal gain is increasingly being revealed. SADF respondents were largely silent on the issue. One former Citizen Force soldier, however, constitutes an important exception. Ironically, his story stems from his civilian experiences during the war. As a member of the Citizen Force he was following a civilian career, as well as a military one. It was in his civilian life that he accidentally became involved with military front companies, which he believed held serious potential consequences for him and his family. Interestingly, he related this story in response to a question on traumatic stress as a result of his military experience: 'I think if anything has placed me in a traumatic position or under stress it's what happened in the corporate scenario as opposed to the army'. But, in fact, as he explains, these traumatic situations, at the core of which were attempts to involve him in the state's criminal activity, are thoroughly associated with his military history, something of which he was unaware at the time.

> I've had many death threats subsequently, in the line of my civilian occupations. ... There was a funny transaction involving a substantial amount [of money] which I felt was a scam [and] I was being urged on by management to go ahead with these [transactions] and they went totally against the company's policy, my own rationale and everything ... I effectively torpedoed it and then there were these threats ... The guy graphically explained how they would eliminate my whole family. [SADF]

He has since come to believe that this situation, as well as subsequent requests made of him, were part of the security establishment's war strategy.

> Only now, with the benefit of hindsight, do I believe I know that that's what it was about. Subsequently it appears that in its official capacity it was a means to money laundering or getting money out of the country ... [Several of] the names being mentioned in the media now [in relation to dirty tricks and the state's unconventional war strategies] are the persons

who I believe were behind the scenes string-pulling on the part of the state security establishment. [SADF]

Similarly, a former conscript also came across criminal activities involving members of the state security forces in his civilian life. However, unlike the above respondent, these encounters were in no way connected to his own military experience. In the area where he lived prior to and following his national service, he explained, he became aware of the activities of some members of the South African Police who later joined the CCB - the 'on the ground guys, the guys who were pulling the trigger', as he refers to them. Friends of his were allegedly 'set up' and murdered by some of these policemen in a bid to cover up their own drug-related criminal activities. Furthermore, he claims that he has been approached by connections of the same people to assist them with a particular 'job'. He refused to help, fearing that if he did, he too would end up dead. While a number of these people have since been incarcerated, this respondent points out that others are still serving as police officers. Consequently, he was not prepared to discuss in more detail what he knows about their past and present activities: 'I might get killed ... What about the other ones, they're not locked up?' Both these former soldiers say they are able to substantiate their claims, but still fear the possible consequences of this information being revealed.

Thokoza SDUs and criminal activity prior to the war

Thokoza SDU respondents were specifically questioned as to whether they had been involved in crime both before and during their combatant days. The rare instances of Thokoza SDU respondents who report criminal activity prior to their SDU involvement converge in their emphasis on the fact that at the same time, they were living 'normal' lives. School attendance and being 'under the command' of their parents are perceived as indexes of this 'normality'.

Maybe others were going to [do] house-breaking. Then they came with things and we [would] sell them. So I didn't go there [to do the burglary]. I'd sell things which [were] stolen ... but I was not involved too much ... Before [the violence started] I was living a normal life. I was under the command of my parents: ... everyday I'd wake up and go to school and I was doing the things that must be done in the house. [Thokoza SDU]

The violence brought these experiences to a halt for the majority of Thokoza SDU respondents. Certainly their declaration of normality prior to the violence indicates the havoc that the conflict wreaked on their lives. This is common in the words of all Thokoza SDUs. In addition though, it is suggestive of an environment where criminal activity is, to an extent, normalised.

Relevant reports diverge however, on the nature of pre-SDU crime. Unlike the above respondent, who partook in non-violent crime, the following respondent was involved in violence.

I was driven by poverty. I was involved in crime but at the same time still going to school ... Other things, we did them because we saw other people doing them, ... older people [who were] doing them ... Maybe it happens that we [would] point [a gun at] you ... Maybe [we would] hit you with a gun on the head and [you] start bleeding or [we might] hold you down and kick you, things like that ... until you agree with what we wanted. [Thokoza SDU]

Thokoza SDUs and criminal activity during the war

In contrast to the above respondents, most claim they were not involved in criminal activities before their participation in the SDUs, and attribute this primarily to the relative safety and security of their home lives.

During the past, before [the] violence, crime wasn't something we expected because we were able to live safely with our parents and get everything. [Thokoza SDU]

Crime became part of SDU activities, and respondents admit that when they themselves were not involved, their friends often were. They emphasise, however, that their involvement was out of necessity, in order to run and finance the SDU. Crime was the methodology employed to gain food, guns and bullets.

> They wouldn't commit crime for their own [selfish reasons]. They committed crime for people of the SDU, in order to be able [to] look after us. [Thokoza SDU]

> We had ladies who cooked for us during those days you see, with that money from my friends who committed crime. [These SDU members were also] buying us guns and rounds with that money. [Thokoza SDU]

> We didn't have money, or the ANC to give us guns. No one came to give us guns. We had to give ourselves the money so that's whereby we [would] go and steal things. [Thokoza SDU]

> There was a shortage of guns and no money. Then maybe we would go to Soweto to hijack a minibus [and] come back with it to this side. When we arrived [we would] sell it and buy something ... All the things I have done, I did them for the SDU. [Thokoza SDU]

According to their reports, SDUs in some sections of the township were more reliant on crime than others. The necessity for members to use crime for financing SDU activities largely depended on the composition of the respective community during the violence. In some sections community members were able to finance SDUs through donations. In others, SDU members were left on their own to defend the properties when others had fled the violence. Especially in the latter scenario, SDUs resorted to crime to feed and arm themselves. Those who remained behind when others left the affected sections of the township were the SDUs themselves, and often, the elderly. The old people, according to the following respondent, could not be expected to keep providing for the SDUs.

> Most of the time the ones that were left behind were the older people, so to go ... house to house for R10.00 to [get] money to buy food or the bullets [was difficult]. Some of our friends, those who were involved in crime, were avoiding that in the community we should request a lot of things ... Like maybe request money for buying bullets this week, next week we will request money for buying food. Because a lot of people had run away and those that remained [in our section] were too old. [Thokoza SDU]

Other circumstances also contributed to involvement in crime. One respondent explains that he started doing crime when, during the violence, his house was burnt down and all his possessions were destroyed.

> The other thing that turned me around was the house. [The IFP] burned everything. They burned the house and I got out with nothing ... – only wearing trousers and sneakers. Everyday I [had to] wear those things and they [would] get dirty and I had to wash them at night like I am a widower, you see. That's what made me change. [Thokoza SDU]

Over and above their own involvement, criminals who were not officially part of the SDU were also contracted by the SDU to secure weaponry. Alternatively, some of these individuals also loaned their guns to members of the SDU in-between their own activities. This apparently led to clashes with other SDU structures that disapproved of the involvement of criminals.

> We allowed the criminals because in my area we ... didn't have guns. So some of the other sections were against us [because of this]. The criminal could go and rob and come with the money and give us the money for food. They could go and rob the police station and come with the guns and sell the guns ... cheaper ... So that is why we did allow them. They had guns before we had guns so they support[ed] us ... They were not members of the SDU but they would sponsor [us] with weapons. They would also require those guns back if they want[ed] to go and do their own activity. [Thokoza SDU]

In other areas, there was no such understanding towards criminal elements. The particular SDU structure referred to above, for example, that was financed by community donations, played a 'crime-fighting' role. Crime within the SDU itself was not tolerated, and members caught doing crime were punished.

> In this place ... the criminal element was not tolerated at all. If I was caught doing criminal offences it would have meant that I would be flogged and all arms taken away from me and given to someone else. [Thokoza SDU]

> The room for the criminals during that time was too slim. It was not yet open as it is [now] because you could deal with the enemy and the criminals at the same time. We are not saying that we were totally perfect, [that] we didn't have criminals around ourselves. We had some ... criminals that were [busy] with their own things ... If you caught them, then you ...[would] give them ... command words and some duties ... [They'd] get the punishment of cleaning the guns for a period ... and then after that [we'd] be keeping an eye on them. Being under watch cut your criminal activities. [Thokoza SDU]

One reason for treating crime and criminals harshly was the additional danger it could mean for the SDU. It brought police into the area.

> When I was a member of the SDU *tsotsis* were not wanted in this extension because ... They would bring those [stolen] cars [into our area where] we soldiers were sitting ... When the police came chasing them, they would run and jump into the yard and the police would come into the house and find the ammunition which we used. That's why we did not want *tsotsis* around us. [Thokoza SDU].

Although criminal activities in this particular SDU were limited, some individuals were involved with crime 'on the side'.

> We cannot deny that we ... had criminal activity during the violence, there was. Because some of the people ... would go and steal ... things [and] come back with them. Some of the people were doing their own business during the SDU activity. Some ... decided not even to join the SDU, just to do their own things. That's where the criminal element came because we don't know, if that person is not part of us, what he is up to. [Thokoza SDU]

One respondent tells of an entire SDU, led by its commander, that abandoned SDU defence functions in favour of robberies.

> He was a commander then he resigned because he want[ed] to rob. Then suddenly, with his group he goes and robs cars.[41] [Thokoza SDU]

A defining characteristic of SDUs in Thokoza was that the majority of members were very young, relative to members of defence structures in other areas. Many of them terminated their schooling to join the SDU in the early 1990s. In contrast, in the broader East Rand, for example, it was often the unemployed who reportedly constituted the SDUs. An East Rand commentator draws attention to the difficulty in making distinctions between SDUs that were never involved in crime during the SDU activity, and those that were.

> The unemployed were the core of the Self Defence Units because they didn't have any activity to do except to engage the security forces. So at the end of the day, when we look at the criminal element, you wouldn't specifically pin point [some over others]. It was a general trend that even the guy who was politically active would do some petty crime because of the opportunities available to him, and because he's in a certain group – the peer pressure thing. [East Rand key informant]

The blurring between purely criminal and purely political activity makes distinctions difficult and has, accord-

ing to this interviewee, impacted on current crime levels. Because of the merging of different scenarios under the label of political activity, many 'ex-combatants' who should have been sentenced have escaped conviction, and continue with their illegal activities instead.

> You find that there are those guys who have serious criminal records; they deserve to be behind bars. But because of the political set up, they are still around and they have the criminal connections around the township, and now they are unemployed. One would automatically go back to where you feel that you have your backside organised in terms of survival in the township, whether it's crime or whatever. [East Rand key informant]

The more recent conflict in some parts of the East Rand has continued to play out along broadly political lines, and has largely been depicted as such by the media. According to this respondent however, the conflict is more criminal than political. Furthermore, he links it to former SDU members' sense of betrayal, and the (aggressive) power to which they have become accustomed to wielding in their communities. The primary motive is crime, but crime is simultaneously a method of revenge for betrayal.

> You see the Greenfields, Mandela, Tambo, Holomisa conflict, although people report it as sort of a political conflict, it's not a political conflict. It's former members of the self defence units – a group of former commanders – [who] are terrorising the community, but using a political platform. [They say], 'We are representing this organisation'. But if we go deep into the conflict people are just being killed and intimidated under a political disguise, when the motive is criminal activity ... The commanders there claim that local government betrayed them and now local government [is being] killed. Councillors cannot operate in the area ... It's like a big process of revenge. [East Rand key informant]

Ex-combatants and current crime

> As time goes by, even now I still do that thing [crime] because now it's difficult. Even now, you see, I don't have anything. I'm talking about present things. [Thokoza SDU]

The vast majority of MK/SDU respondents live in close proximity to crime. The 'crime-fighting' role of former combatants and revenge sought by criminals comprise one aspect of the ex-combatants' relationship to crime. The most reported element of this relationship, however, is ex-combatants' own involvement in current crime. Importantly, this is not to say that the majority of respondents are involved in crime. Rather, they have knowledge of the involvement of former colleagues in crime, and have opinions on why this is the case. Many have themselves considered turning to crime, or are experiencing considerable pressures to do so. A small number admit that they are presently 'doing' crime. Others are attempting to develop initiatives to lessen the pull towards crime.

Sometimes, the potential for criminal involvement is linked with the specific situation of an ex-combatant. At other times the crime-pull is articulated in more general terms. Unemployment, with its many consequences, is the most commonly cited reason for criminal involvement.

> Some of our parents are not working and some of us have lost parents. We've got to support our siblings and children - they must eat. That's why you find them doing crime because they don't have jobs. [MK/SDU]

"Your life is on a thin line ..."

The justification for crime is that joblessness leaves no alternatives. This point arose frequently during interviews. Those who are not involved in crime say they find it difficult to watch their friends following this path, but do not distance themselves from the criminals among their former colleagues. They speak of them with understanding and empathy, saying they are unable to judge people whose options remain so limited.

> If you ask them, 'Okay man, we were with you in the struggle to free the land, [so why are you doing this]?' He tells you, 'What am I supposed to eat, I'm not employed?' That is a question, and what he tells you is the truth. He says, 'Man, I am hungry. I have no money.' Now if I could say give him R200.00 [he wouldn't do crime but] you do not have it yourself, to feed your family. That is why ... we say there are some who are involved in crime. We do not want to say their names but if you ask him humbly, he will tell you, 'If I could just get a job, I would leave this whole thing. I would come back to being a human being'. [MK/SDU]

The reluctance to engage in crime, and the desire for an alternative are echoed in interviews with ex-combatants in Kwa Mashu, KwaZulu Natal. One ex-combatant, for example, noted a trend whereby individuals felt it necessary to tell other ex-combatants of their decisions to take the crime option. When doing so they used utterances such as, 'if I had another option'. This need to notify other ex-combatants he perceived as a plea for an alternative, a desire to show that entry into criminal activity is contemplated with reluctance.

Articulations of the path into crime sometimes contain a sense of resignation. The following Thokoza SDU expresses an understanding of the world in which crime is inevitable because there will never be enough work for everyone.

> There are a lot of people on earth and we can't all be hired and we can't all be educated on earth. That is what I can say [about why our friends do crime]. [Thokoza SDU]

For many Thokoza SDUs, the journey into crime is presented as closely related to their recent experience in the violence of the early 1990s. During this time, many suffered substantial losses, both at a human and material level. Those who lost their parents are believed to be particularly vulnerable to criminal involvement.

> Some people [amongst] us do go [into crime because] they don't have parents. I mean when you are 22 years old you are already old and if you have already lost your parents and there is no one looking after you and, even the [extended] families don't have time for you – so there is nothing. You don't have a choice to do anything. [Thokoza SDU]

Some of those who were orphaned are not only responsible for supporting themselves, but also their siblings.

> There are our younger brothers and sisters behind us. We want them to live a better life than the one we were living at the age they are now ... If there is something you can do, you would stop doing crime just like that. [Thokoza SDU]

But circumstances remain unfavourable for many.

> You are 21 or 22 years – whatever. Eh! Your parents passed away and you are left with the house and you have younger brothers and sisters and you are not working. You left school and maybe you could go back to school, but education is money. And now if you finish standard 10, they need money [at] like college [or] technikon, you see ... There has to be something that you can do at home for that present moment. [Thokoza SDU]

All Thokoza respondents consider the premature termination of schooling to be one of their most fundamental losses. And as the above respondent makes clear, the obstacles to securing access to education can appear to be insurmountable. In addition, some believe that their 'time for that is long gone', and that they are too old to go back to school.

It is not only orphaned combatants that face pressure to support their families.

> There are also those who have parents. You will find that no one is working at home and you

> look around [and] you are the oldest one at home ... You would never [let them] stay with empty stomachs [while] you are there ... The time you were supposed to be learning [at school], you were looking at matters. It means that now your time is long gone to go to school. That's why now you find that you are doing wrong things. You are doing it being aware that it's wrong. You are doing it so that at home, they survive. [Thokoza SDU]

> At home, you are the one they are looking at. They are not working and ... others are learning, like your brothers and sisters. Even on your side, you have a child. And now you see that your life is on the thin line. You no longer know what to do. It's whereby you say ... 'I have to look after my family ... I will go for it'. It's not that it's an aim that thing [crime] or that you were prepared [for it]. No, it's because of certain reasons that forced you to be in that situation. [Thokoza SDU]

"I am tired of handouts ..."

Other former Thokoza SDUs who are not the sole breadwinners in their homes, and whose basic socio-economic needs are being met, may also be lured into crime. They are no longer children, they say, and they struggle with boredom, lack of financial independence and with having only their most basis requirements met.

> You would sit and see that your sneakers are getting old. You're not working; you're doing nothing. When you look for a job you are not hired and now you also have to look after yourself and find something. Not that when you do crime, you are doing it because you are naughty: you are driven by reason ... Like maybe you don't have R50.00 for two months. You live with people [and] all the time you come to them [because] you don't have money. A person can change his mind, 'I am tired of handouts. Let me do what is being done [by others]'. [Thokoza SDU]

As the parent of an ex-SDU put it,

> Really, if these children could work there would be problems, but they would be less. Because now these children are older [and] they want money, they want to dress, they want everything, they like beautiful things. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

The situation is compounded by the former independence of these ex-combatants. They were operating independently at a very young age but are now attempting to build an independent existence in a context of very limited opportunities.

> You must understand that this child, during that time of fighting, was taking care of himself. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

"Latest BMW, nice clothes and changing girlfriends like pairs of shoes ..."

Moves into crime cannot therefore simply be reduced to unmet basic needs. The immense power of the materialist youth culture in which these youth find themselves also feeds criminal involvement today. This culture effects youth more generally and is not restricted to militarised youth. It is also not a new phenomenon. According to some SDU respondents such peer pressures existed in the 1980s.

> I was involved [in crime] just to get money to match with friends when they had fancy things and my mother didn't afford [them]. [Thokoza SDU]

But, the current situation appears to be far more complex, and the lure of contemporary youth culture, extremely attractive. The increasing predominance of this culture has, in the view of a key informant, coin-

cided with the combatant/ex-combatant transition for many young men.

> If you look at unemployed youth, the culture has changed ... [to] fast cars, young beautiful women. You look at the militarised youth that were politically, in a way, knowledgeable (never mind some were never that politically knowledgeable but) most were politically knowledgeable, but now they tend to be quite ignorant. And then [they are] also pissed off with government. It's, 'You know what has happened to us [but] we're left out of the process.' So the best thing is just to live your own life, being part and parcel of this new youth culture ... The guys that were active in the defence structures ... have gone different ways. [Many] that are remaining [in the townships] are in this new mainstream culture and are also involved directly and indirectly with crime. [East Rand key-informant]

Money, designer clothing, expensive cars and guns are apparently central to contemporary youth culture and its accompanying notions of masculinity. The material objects are what is important and not the means of acquisition. Crime pays for status and respect and not only material goods: it is the means to a powerful identity.

> The thing that's most confusing the youth, is this: if you can differentiate between the criminal, and then people who are at varsity and schools // [there're those] who are directed, looking for the survival of their dear life in a proper manner [and then the] criminals who are earning like nobody's business. They're driving fancy cars, doing nice things, without sweating for it. It's, 'Look at this one, he never went further at school, but he's driving Z3 or the latest BMW, having nice clothes, cellular phones, changing girlfriends like pairs of shoes.' During the weekend the criminals are just stopped on the street in the car [with] the [music at] high volume. They are 'nice' and they are role models to these youngsters. Whereas yourself, you're still struggling to get your education ... You are not being recognised. The people who are recognised are the ones [who] have evidence: evidence of cars and money, and then totally, the township is looking at them. [Thokoza SDU]

Attracting the 'girls' is cited as a reason for crime. 'Girls', some respondents say, are attracted to 'evidence' of money.

> Let me say, you're buying a T-shirt and it costs R700.00 and when I'm moving with you, all the girls are looking at you and I'm wearing an overall. It's whereby it can lead you [to] go and rob. [Thokoza SDU]

> Mostly girls can make you go and do robbery ... If she asks you for R50.00 [and] you don't have it, then she goes to the other one and asks R50.00 [and] he has it . That's whereby now I can say, 'No, if I can get that R50.00 then I can have my girl ... definitely my girl will be attracted and go for the money ... It will depend on which girl or how that girl understand[s] you or your life. [Thokoza SDU]

The hold of this culture in an environment of poverty presents a range of dilemmas for individuals who have not achieved the financial status of their role models. The above respondent goes on to highlight the tension between attracting the girls and supporting the family.

> But it's not rare that you must go and rob someone so that you can go and watch a movie with [a girlfriend] and do a nice thing ... only to find [after the movie] that ... we should have taken that money and spent it in the house. We should have done more things or good things [with that money]. So it's always here [that need for money]. That's whereby [some of the former SDU members] are in jail. [Thokoza SDU]

In one section of Thokoza, virtually the entire membership of the SDU is in prison for crimes such as armed robbery, cash-in-transit heists, and murder, explained one respondent. He attributes this situation to the pres-

sures of pervasive materialism and the negative role played by 'heroes', whom he regards as the 'biggest crooks that ever walked this earth'. This particular unit is unlike most others in terms of the pervasiveness of its involvement in crime. Several contributory factors are proffered for the dramatic level of criminality in this group. These range from the specific historical methods of leadership and command (which deviated from those of other SDUs), the ineffectiveness of demilitarisation efforts in the area, and the absence of the type of leadership needed to provide adequate and relevant guidance.

Ex-MKs and the crime pull

The socio-economic explanation for crime also emerges in responses from former MK combatants. Unlike Thokoza SDUs, however, MK/SDU respondents emphasise the role of dashed expectations in this explanation.

> I would like to plead and request the government to pay attention to ensure that ... certain changes will take place so that even those who committed themselves in crime turn and become normal. I cannot blame people for find[ing] themselves involved in crime. The crime is caused by poverty and hunger. The people committed themselves [to the struggle] with the objectives that after the liberation, they won't suffer like now. But now it is sounds like it is [there] more than ever, ever before. [MK/SDU]

Some suggest that up to a certain point there was hope that the expected changes to their material circumstances would be realised. The point at which the hope dies is the point at which they enter crime. They have 'given up'. The words of the following respondent illustrate this process. In addition, he draws attention to some of the sacrifices made by many ex-combatants, and the implications of these sacrifices in the present. However, he also includes the factor of choice of work: people cannot get the type of work they desire. In this he deviates from many other respondents who imply that any job would suffice. This point qualifies the 'pure' economic motivation for criminal involvement.

> [Those doing crime] have given up. If I arrived here [from exile] I was trying everything to survive but nothing is going alright ... At last I see that there is no way out ... Nowadays without skills or experience in a particular field you will never get a job. If you are a human being there are kinds of jobs you like and if you don't have qualifications you won't get the job you like ... Their families are poor ... A person thinks about things such as: 'Maybe if I did not go to exile I would have finished my education and be able to help my family. Now I am from outside but there is no difference, I am still suffering. It is better to do something in order to survive, even if it is crime.' [MK/SDU]

Motivations provided for involvement in crime are frequently intertwined with respondents' sense of betrayal and unmet expectations. In contrast to those who stress their reluctance to become involved in crime, some respondents employ the anger of betrayal as a justification for the move to crime.

> It's useless to hide it because we know very well [that MK guys are doing crime]. We know the motive behind it. There're people within [our ranks] who are highly, highly committed in crime. For instance, a person like Colin Chauke, I cannot blame him for what he has done. It is [affecting him] terribly deep down [in] the bottom of his heart that he isn't taken into high consideration by the government of the ANC. So therefore he ended committing himself in crime. [MK/SDU]

These ex-combatants are keenly aware, it appears, of the threat they are conventionally considered to pose, particularly if they are disillusioned and unemployed. Some warn of the dangers of not addressing their needs. Curiously, such expressions often co-exist with declarations of continuing loyalty to the ANC.

> The employment issue is the main problem. Let's take for example, I was trained in exile to use a gun. Outside, they promised us a lot of things. When I came inside the country there was nothing that they [had] promised. I found myself doing nothing. I will end up thinking

about wrong things because my children are starving, my mother is also starving. I am trying to find piece jobs but nothing is going right ... I will end up robbing because I am unemployed. If only the government can give us jobs we won't violate it. It would not even hear bad remarks from its people ... We don't care about [any] other things but jobs. [MK/SDU]

Experiences in the SANDF, especially having been dismissed, or involuntarily demobilised, also contribute to levels of anger and frustration.

Some of our comrades are doing crime and some have been arrested. They do crime because they are frustrated because they were dismissed from the army and they don't have jobs and they have children and families to support. [MK/SDU]

It was APLA and MK people [that] were demobilised. That is what shows that ... they want to drive us into crime, because if we just sit doing nothing with just a gun as a skill, we will suffer. If we do not join the police or security companies, it is then we form gangsters or such groups. [MK/SDU]

Involvement in crime is sometimes depicted as revenge for the way that ex-combatants have been treated.

Some of our comrades, like me, have been dismissed unfairly from the army and they went to sit at home – they don't even want to do the three months course for skills. So, they've decided that they want to do crime and I agree with them because they were in the army, they fought for this country and today they are in the streets like a bag of rubbish. I support them. I think they must do crime until they get tired of it. [MK/SDU]

"Tsotsis, they know me ..."

Many MK/SDU respondents say they are often approached to provide their services in criminal activities. Interviews with ex-combatants in KwaZulu Natal reveal that criminals are frequently aware of who has received military training, and attempt to exploit their disillusionment and desperation to criminal ends. Although many have resisted becoming involved, those who have not, find that once they are involved, it is difficult to extricate themselves.

There is a lot of frustration among ex-combatants that have been demobilised. What contributes to this frustration is that they sit around all day doing nothing and when they compare their situation to that of others, they feel angry. Gangs and criminals will know who has been militarily trained. These criminals will target these people and convince these guys by playing on their disillusionment. Once you get drawn in, you become trapped and there is no way out. [MK, KZN]

Similarly, relatives of ex-Thokoza SDUs claim that ex-SDUs, because of their militarised histories[42], are sought out by criminals and sometimes manipulated into working for them.

There was a man ... [who] was always coming to these children and I was always [saying], 'What does this Corolla car want in this street?' [The ex-SDUs] said, 'This brother is giving us money, he does everything for us'... But [then] he took those children to do robbery ... They got 25 years ... [and] are in jail. They were taken by an older person who was not even in [the] war here, but because he wanted to do his things, he took them from here ... – the children that he knew were once fighting [and] who know about guns. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

In one MK/SDU focus group every participant said that they have been, and continue to be, approached in this way. They attribute these requests to their military training, and to the fact that criminals think they have access to arms and ammunition.[43] Responses to these approaches vary: some are very clear that they will not become involved.

> [The area where I grew up] has lots of *tsotsis* and they know me. A lot of them have approached me to help them out and I tell them that I wasn't born a thug. They want me to help them with car hijacking and bank robberies. I tell them that the only thing I know is politics. [MK/SDU]

> There are such people [who approach me] but I [refused] because I know what I will earn for doing crime. Doing crime is something that would take back my life ... I will come back [from jail] old ... At some point my project [which I want to develop to help ex-combatants] will also include fighting crime. [MK/SDU]

Opposition to becoming involved in crime is sometimes explained in terms of loyalty to the ANC government.

> I fought for this government to reach where it is today. I did not even want the crime I am seeing now in this country ... I would be betraying my government [if I did crime]. [MK/SDU]

Some respondents also raise concerns regarding the possible consequences of crime. It is fear of punishment under 'our' new government that serves as a deterrent.

> A lot of guys have approached me looking for bullets because they were going to rob a jewellery store and they need my help because I was trained. I tell them ... I can't go out there and do crime because this is our government. This new government is very firm on criminals and they sentence you to up to 20 years especially if you come from exile. [MK/SDU]

The notion that punishment for crime is harsh contradicts the frequently expressed sentiments of other MK/SDU respondents who believe that the government is 'soft' on criminals. This particular respondent, however, shares the commonly held view that ex-combatants are targeted and prejudiced by the police and the criminal justice system. This reinforces his concerns about the treatment he would receive if he were ever apprehended. Despite this, the same respondent says he might yet succumb to the criminals' requests for assistance.

> Yes, I'm scared [of the punishment] and I'm scared that it's my government and they know that I'm from exile and that I fought for this country. Now if I turn around and do crime, it's another story. Maybe next time I won't be afraid – especially if I'm hungry. [MK/SDU]

Another respondent expresses similar views:

> Criminals approach me looking for bullets or grenades or AKs, pistol or magazines. The only thing that scares me is that this is our government and if they arrest us they make an example of us. [MK/SDU]

Along with the fear of punishment, their words suggest that a sense of loyalty to the reputation of other ex-combatants also keeps them from participating in crime.

> I could make robberies and I could be a 'wanted' on TV and they would say, 'Here is another former MK doing crime.' [MK/SDU]

Several respondents have fewer reservations about responding positively to criminals' approaches:

> Some guys approached me and told me that I should help them ... because I don't have money and I'm suffering. I said, 'Yes, we can go'. I'm ready anytime because I can't sit around when I don't have money. [MK/SDU]

> I [was] approached last week but I don't trust some of the guys [so] I won't go with them. If they were people I trusted, I would go. [MK/SDU]

Although the majority of SADF respondents said they were unaware of any of their former colleagues being

involved in crime, a former Special Forces operator said he knows of one who is currently serving time for having carried out a contract murder. A former policeman also recounted how he had received several anonymous phone-calls shortly after having left the service. These, he said were an attempt to recruit him into contract killings to be conducted outside South Africa.

Similarly, an ex MK respondent explains how recruitment into crime might well include contract killings.

> Some people [are hungry and] if the taxi men came with R1000.00 [and say] 'This person is a problem to me, would you kill that man?' So because of anger, the person will take R1000.00 and go to kill the person. That thing is existing. [MK/SDU]

One former MK cadre was arrested and convicted for a series of killings related to conflict in the transport industry in the Western Cape during 2000.[44] He was contracted by elements in the taxi industry to assassinate bus drivers working for the Golden Arrow bus company, which provided a rival source of transportation for local commuters.

"If you can't beat them, you better join them ..."

Requests made to ex-combatants to become involved in crime may emanate from criminals who are not necessarily themselves ex-combatants. Another possibility is that ex-combatants involved in crime may pressurise their former colleagues to assist them. One interviewee specifically points to some of the SDUs on the East Rand in this regard. In cases, he says, ex-SDU members impose substantial pressure on their former colleagues to do crime.[45] Former SDU leadership may continue to issue orders and demand participation in criminal activity.

> Most of the guys are seeking employment, they are going for training, ... trying to join security companies. The rest, you find that [there is a] core element that is there: very powerful, very intimidating [and] giving orders, even if you're no longer part of the structure. But if they want to utilise your skills, it's, 'Come and join us on this mission'. If you say, 'No', it's a sign of betrayal and a sign that you are a spy; you might sell them out to the police. They'll do away with you. [East Rand key informant]

The potential seriousness of not cooperating with demands by other SDUs to join them in their illegal missions is illustrated in an incident referred to by two Thokoza SDUs whose friend was murdered, allegedly because he resisted these pressures.

> One group is criminal and some groups chose to be ordinary citizens [when the peace was realised]. Now the criminal group start[ed] to undermine this [other] group ... In 1994 [our friend] was done under at the hands of the criminals – because the criminal group would say [he is] stupid for not joining. You know the name of the word? The word says: 'If you can't beat them you better join them'. [Thokoza SDU]

Their account of the incident also underscores how past relationships and behaviours may manifest in the present. Because some defence unit members perpetrated crime for personal gain during their 'combatant' days, the peace agreement had little impact on their activities. Moreover, grudges, personal resentments and revenge may continue to play out. The death of the respondents' friend is perceived both as a revenge killing for the past (when he represented an obstacle to the particular SDUs criminal activity) and punishment for not co-operating after the war.

> [During the war] the [the criminal group] said: 'You make yourselves clever, you don't want criminals in your area'... On our side we did not have a grudge, but they still had a grudge. He died in vain because he did nothing, he never killed anyone. [Thokoza SDU]

"You are a time bomb really, you are just ticking away ..."

Several respondents say that ex-combatants may contemplate becoming involved in violent crime with less ambivalence than others who have no military/conflict experience because ex-combatants are 'not afraid'.

One SDU interviewee, for example, reports being told by former colleagues, who are involved in criminal actions, that the cash-in-transit heist operations in which they participate are easier to execute than the combat missions they were previously engaged in.

> To attack a person who is not alert [is much easier] than attacking a person who is already waiting for you. It's a different [situation]. The [ones doing crime] say to me: 'I have attacked IFP and IFP were 24 hours [on] alert, waiting for ANC people to attack. But when I go for the Fidelity Guard[s] they are not thinking that they can be robbed [in] this way or at that stop sign.' [Thokoza SDU]

An ex-MK cadre makes a similar point in his account of the government's response to a demonstration conducted by soldiers who were being demobilised from the SANDF. He marvels at what he perceives as the short-sightedness of the leaders in treating their fighters 'who are not scared' in this way:

> In the SANDF, they just protest[ed] which is their democratic right ... but the government's reaction was terrible ... Nelson Mandela himself, said ... 'Let them dismiss themselves, they'll never be accepted anymore within the SANDF'. He couldn't realise that the crime will come to such an extent that nobody will stop it, because these are soldiers. Soldiers are not scared. They will just do things ... as they did before ... They're not scared. [MK/ SDU]

Ex-combatants trained in guerrilla warfare are especially well equipped for criminal activity, says another MK/ SDU respondent. The individual initiative, deception, dodging capabilities, and underground networks required in this type of warfare are equally necessary to crime activities. These skills, combined with the increasing sophistication of criminal networks, make such criminals exceptionally difficult to apprehend. Like other respondents, he regards these attributes, when combined with a sense of betrayal, as particularly dangerous.

> I have personal knowledge of people in crime who haven't been caught. You know, we were trained for such things as guerrilla warfare and [now,] being left there at the ledge - you are a time bomb really, you are just ticking away because all the skills and all the suffering that you had to go through and how you [were] made to develop yourself under those conditions, you utilise that tool to [the] maximum. It's unlike people who have been trained ... You were trained to be devious, [to] do things and not get caught ... You know, some even go to court and get acquitted because [of] how they do this: they think, they plan. [MK/SDU]

Processes of armed force integration – compounding problems of militarisation?

One unusual variation on the view that disillusioned militarised people pose a potential security threat is that armed-force integration processes can militarise people further. Several respondents argue that when these processes do not result in the long-term employment of combatants, the result is potentially more dangerous than it would have been had the ex-combatants not been integrated into these structures in the first place.

For example, allegations challenging the combatant status of some of the non-statutory force members on the Certified Personnel Register have led to questions being raised about the dangers of providing military training to personnel, who are subsequently demobilised.

> I've seen these guys coming in [to the Defence Force] that [are] supposed to be combatants and did not know the difference between a rifle and a pistol ... All your military forces where you get integration, you will always find that many of these guys were never soldiers. Now [with the integration process] he's taught to be a soldier. You give him a rifle, teach him to shoot and everything and demobilise him. What's this bugger going to do now? He's worse

off than before you integrated him. Now, you start getting crime and violence. [Recce]

This respondent argues that the armed-forces integration processes that frequently follow the termination of civil wars, are problematic in that they often include people who were not combatants in the conflict or, alternatively, only had very tenuous links to the status.

Another interviewee raises similar concerns in relation to the integration of former SDU and SPU members into Kathorus SAPS as paid reservists. Here, the issue is not about the previous combatant status of those that were integrated. Instead, the focus is on the potential consequences of providing people with additional skills and knowledge of the security structures, when they do not necessarily have a future in these structures. This particular initiative could not sustain the numbers of reservists who had originally participated in the programme, and significant numbers have recently been discharged with severance packages. However, as the contents of the packages dwindle, he says, their frustration at being unemployed and their intimate knowledge, by now, of the workings of the police service, make them a potential security risk.

> So most of them were keen to take a package, and now they've burned it in a week and it's finished. So they are now ... unemployed, and they are the most dangerous part of the unemployed because they know what happens within the security forces, in terms of investigations, ... arresting people, ... of where the red spots are, and who's doing what within the police. So you have a large group of ex-community constables sitting unemployed. [East Rand key informant]

The dangers of this situation are compounded, he says, by the criminal histories of some of the affected people.

> Although they haven't shown the capacity to be a time bomb, one would always think of looking after those characters. Because never mind [that] whilst they were still employed by the state [as community constables], most of them were involved in crime. So you can imagine now, they are no longer [working] in the police, they're going to increase the crime scenario that we are in now. [East Rand key informant]

These concerns can be considered to be equally applicable to soldiers who have been integrated into the SANDF. Although many ex-combatants were demobilised without SANDF training having been provided to them, all of those who were successfully integrated were given additional training, aimed at standardising levels of competence in conventional military practice. Successful integration provides no assurance of a career in the military. Many have subsequently left the SANDF for a variety of reasons, including resignations, medical discharges, and dismissal. This has contributed to increasing levels of unhappiness, especially among those soldiers who feel they have been unfairly treated. The situation is likely to deteriorate further as the SANDF embarks on a rationalisation process that will see thousands more soldiers lose their jobs. A possible outcome of this, according to the same interviewee is that:

> The environment is going to develop bigger, more effective, and brutal [crime] syndicates ... because [these men] will have the logistics, and much more capacity to organise their logistics, taking from their experience in the army. [East Rand key informant]

Parents and caregivers of ex-Thokoza SDUs also consider the retrenched police reservists of Kathorus to represent a significant threat.

> Those boys found jobs at the police station and they lost the jobs. They are troublesome now because there is no money coming in. Such children are dangerous now. That's why we were saying it seems like this thing could erupt in a certain way. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

While the 'time bomb' may not yet have exploded, these respondents say they have already encountered criminal manifestations of the problem and predict that these will increase.

> There are more than ten [SDUs] who I know who were in the project of the policemen. Now [since they have lost their jobs] eish! That's why we say that [there is the] disappearance of cell [phones] and ... people are mugged ... We [parents] investigated [these things] ourselves and found that it involves the children ... We got the cells and took them back to the owners. [But] now, it's a risk ... because tomorrow the children [may] point out [to each other], 'That particular house is the one where we are able to find things [to steal]'. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

They emphasise the basic problem of unemployment (rather than the skills that the ex-SDUs gleaned during their employment) and explain how many of the retrenched reservists are now in debt, as well as being without income.

> Many are left with instalments [that they have to pay every month], and now you can see that they are worried. You meet them at the corners, sitting uncomfortably ... That's why we say if it was possible that in Thokoza there could be another project urgently so that they could ... finish up their instalments because they are deep in instalments. All the houses, about 600 houses in Thokoza, did not have furniture; they had nothing ... We are assisted by these children that buy furniture for the houses. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

The anxiety of these respondents at what the discharged reservists might resort to in the circumstances is great, and compounded by their own sense of helplessness in the situation.

> So when they are unemployed again, there is trouble. Poverty sets in again ... You will never know today, what have they planned. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

"Without beating about the bushes ..."

The most commonly provided explanation for criminal activity is unemployment. Yet some ex-SDUs who were integrated into the South African Police Service as paid reservists (known as 'community constables') have, at the same time, been involved in crime.

> I mean the [community constables] also do [crime]. Those reservists, truly speaking, without beating about the bushes, they also do crime with those legal guns. [Thokoza SDU]

Some former colleagues think that the paid reservists do crime to augment their incomes because these do not cover their needs.

> [They] are not satisfied with the money that they receive ... You find that a person is earning R1000.00 a month ... [and that] money doesn't satisfy. You have problems bigger than that ... and you find that you need some other money ... A person needs a lot of money, sure. Money is a problem. [Thokoza SDU]

In these cases too, peer group pressure and aspirations to status in a materialist youth culture are, reportedly, motivating factors.

> There are other [reservists] also who commit crime for fun, just because they see maybe the lifestyle of people who commit crime as if, it's different to that of others. So they need that fame in order to be known that he is also there ... He also knows how to do that job [crime] that others are doing. It means it's like just a competition. [Some] take it as a competition.

[Thokoza SDU]

As one interviewee points out, criminality within the ranks of the police service in the East Rand (and elsewhere) is not restricted to the former SDU and SPU community constables. The difference between the community constables and regular police criminality, he claims, is that crime involving community constables was a continuity of those members' criminal activities from the past, which they subsequently brought into the service.

> Some of [the police] were also involved in their own crime, so it doesn't make them better than the community constables. But the issue with the community constables [is that] they were a sensitive issue and brought into the police, and now the police would say, 'No, we don't want this dirty structure coming to make our dirty linen even more dirty'. So crime within the police – it's just the same whether it's community constables or not. The thing with the community constable is that he was never a policeman before. He was involved in crime so he continues whilst he's in the police. [East Rand key informant]

Criminality within the ranks of the community constables was at its height during the early years of the project. Although the problem has not been eradicated, attempts by the non-criminal and disciplined community constables to address the activities of their colleagues, combined with community members taking on more active roles (such as lodging complaints against reservists) have gone some way to diminish the problem (East Rand key informant).

Criminal activity on the part of some community constables also accounts for a proportion of the many reported deaths, not in the line of duty, among community constables. [46]

> You find that they had made deals with certain syndicates and the deal didn't go well [so he] 'happened to be' shot while off-duty. [East Rand key informant]

Employment is, therefore, not necessarily an antidote to crime, and even those who secure employment may be frustrated by the piecemeal opportunities that it presents, and the low wages that are on offer.

> Sometimes I am working with my friends at the RDP [projects] ... but the money is very little ... Even now we are still involved in criminal activities – some of my friends and I. Maybe we would go there, the three of us, to hijack [and] sell it and get those cents ... so that we could be like the other guys [and] dress nicely. At home it's my younger brother and my sister ... My sister has to go to school. My younger brother is in jail, I have to go and see him ... It's Christmas now, [my sister] should get clothes like other kids. That is why sometimes I am doing criminal activities. [Thokoza SDU]

Preventing crime through building alternative identities

"We need them to be engaged in something ..."

Overall, unemployment, although certainly not the sole reason, is the most emphasised reason provided for criminal involvement. Not surprisingly, it is the financial consequences of unemployment that are most prominent in respondents' articulations. But unemployment is not only about not having an income. It is often also about humiliation, feelings of helplessness, dependency, boredom and a loss or lack of status. As one respondent says regarding the impact of the curtailed schooling on some former Thokoza SDUs:

> It leads to a dumb mind – that we don't even think of doing anything. [You] just wake up in the morning, wash yourself [and] get to the streets. No motivation. [Thokoza SDU]

These are the consequences of not having anything to do, as distinct from not having an income. Juxtaposed with many ex-combatants' prior expectations as well as the powerful identities and roles that they lived in the

past, their current situation potentially intensifies these particular consequences of unemployment.

"They love soccer, they love the team ..."

In an effort to address these concerns, former SDU commanders in one section of Thokoza have formed a soccer team to support their fellow ex-combatants and help them to avoid becoming embroiled in crime. According to one of the ex-SDU project leaders, the initiative has been relatively successful because of the ways in which it responds to the non-financial consequences of unemployment and marginalisation. Members of the team do not get an income, but their participation provides a number of alternative benefits that are powerful disincentives to criminal involvement.

The initiative includes all who wish to participate and membership is not restricted to the soccer-playing team members but involves others in departments such as finance, marketing, supporters and transport. Each member has a role to perform. They do not have time to do crime when they are busy with the team.

> Most of the SDU's are involved in the team playing football [or] some of us are in the management, official-wise. I'm in the marketing department ... We even have memberships cards ... Like this guy who was here ... he changed from the SDU to be a criminal. Now he's involved in the team ... in the finance department. So the crime rate has gone down because people who [were doing] crime, all of them are now committed to football. We have to go and check [the players] at training sessions so [there's] no time to go around [doing crime]. [At the] weekends we have to go and support them. [Thokoza SDU]

In addition, members are proud of their team. Even in its early stages, it has achieved a number of successes. He suggests that the pride is, in itself, a deterrent to crime. The team also provides members with an alternative style and status in the community. Team T-shirts, with which all members are provided, are given particular emphasis.

> We had a tournament [where] we beat 32 teams ... so at least we've success and we have T-shirts [and] we have support. If you come when we are playing you can see that maybe Mabaleng [is] playing with the results of Kaizer Chiefs or Cosmos ... We have a truck and people with cars ... [so] everyone who wants to go [to the match, can go]. You can see [our] red and white T-shirts, flags, everything ... So you cannot be a criminal and on the other side [be] playing football. So now ...you are playing nice football ... and I'm giving you this T-shirt. It's a nice T-shirt – on Sunday you can [dress] nice. [Thokoza SDU]

The team has altered the way that ex-SDUs are received in the community. Because they are involved in this initiative, says this respondent, people are keen to encourage them. He emphasises the importance for these youth of being engaged in an activity to which they are committed. While it does not furnish them with an income, they own a project in which they are all productive, valuable members. Furthermore the project begins to substantially address the community's marginalisation. It has, for example reactivated the limited recreational facilities available in the township: the soccer ground had not been operational since before the onset of the violence in the early 1990s.

> What is great is they love soccer, they love the team, they love the people [who] are running the team because [before] they withdrew too many things from the young boys around the township ... So now we want to go as Thokoza, representing East Rand because it seems that there is no football in East Rand. [Thokoza SDU]

It has literally broadened their horizons. For the first time, the East Rand is featuring on the soccer map, and the team is playing against other teams from all over Gauteng.

> We [are] show[ing] them there is football in East Rand ... You know why [the team has impacted on crime even when they are not getting paid]? It's because we have conquered [and] we are moving around [to other places]. [Thokoza SDU]

Perhaps most importantly, he claims, it has instilled a previously lost sense of hope.

> We have ... two players from Thokoza who are playing for Jomo Cosmos ... so we have chances: most of the guys who are playing now can go to national level ... [Soon] we are going to play with the reserve of Cosmos ... If you have good football and if we are going to Soweto, Jomo Sono ... [and] the scouts of the big teams are always there ... So it's whereby [these guys] can get a chance. [Thokoza SDU]

Outbursts of aggression and violence

> It does happen sometimes that I get violent. I sometimes feel it is part of life or these things are supposed to happen. I don't know. [Thokoza SDU]

In all armed force categories, a number of respondents speak of a past or continuing tendency to respond aggressively to certain situations, although this does not necessarily result in violence. Many attribute this to their military or militarised experiences.

Questions of violence are sensitive in the context of the stigmatisation faced by many ex-combatants. A few respondents were clearly irritated by questions attempting to explore the potential relationship between militarisation and violence at the individual level.

> Most of us are normal human beings with normal lives. We are not all bent and warped individuals with the continuous desire to kill. The smell of napalm in the morning can become quite boring afterwards. (By the way we never used napalm on the border just in case the TRC might want to know!) ["AT"]

There is some danger that discussion of these issues can contribute further to destructive stereotypes despite intentions to the contrary. Some respondents say they have never used violence in their civilian lives. Several others admit to tending towards violent reactions. Our intention here is to better understand some of the factors at play in these tendencies and their possible relation to militarised experiences.

"He became another thing ..."

Several SADF Citizen Force respondents speak of the changes that occurred in them as a result of their military training:

> The training really does change you. The army was a traumatic experience for me, but I was sensible enough to 'monitor' – with some discomfort and alarm – the internal changes. In the first three months one goes from shatteringly tired from the new routine (lack of sleep, fast weight loss, physical training etc.) to aggressive against your platoon members that are not carrying their weight or are constantly getting the platoon corrective action by failing. The system was of course designed to turn aggression onto one 'failure' in the platoon – one guy that was not making it. By the time our training was over we were a bomb waiting to explode: lots of young men with stacks of testosterone convinced in their own immortality and fairly convinced (except for a few guys like me) that the Red Threat was waiting to roll over us. ["AT"]

The training evoked a wide range of emotions and responses, from aggression and a 'strong desire for danger', to tension and anxiety.

> You're bloody nervous of course [before an operation]. The situation is very tense. It's not a

> laugh or a giggle ... [But] one thing that was quite incredible [was when] ... the senior officer announced that this was now the real thing – the cheer that went up from the guys. It sounds crazy but the roar of approval, sort of thing ... Once the army is in you – it's difficult to describe – although it's wrong etc., but there is that sort of adrenaline rush. You know you almost become a junky. [Parabat]

The stresses of warfare itself were profound, and some, like the following respondent did not endorse what they were purportedly fighting for. And yet in his case, aggression and the desire to kill were evoked in him all the same. After a stint in the townships – which he describes as a 'very deadly hide and seek with the 'comrades' ... lots of young men shot down. A hard stamp of white authority on the townships' – he was sent to Angola.

> As an ops medic I dealt with the bloody, broken and cooked results of this [hide and seek] 'game' from both sides. I tried to send some letters to my parents about the horror of it all and the injustice of our behaviour ... My father destroyed these letters and actually flew down ... and took me out for a few nights to chill out. By the time I got to Angola, I was really more stressed and ready to revel in the feeling of it all – the excitement of the hunt and the results were like wine to me. The adrenaline rush was incredible – this is something that even today is difficult to control. ["AT"]

Although these respondents frame their experiences as 'crazy' and in a sense dehumanising, they also illustrate the potentially addictive quality of violence and danger. They suggest that the desire for danger can continue into later life. However, such a desire need not be equated with 'danger to society'. One respondent, for example, satisfies his desire through his ongoing work in a military reserve unit.

> The strong desire for danger still continues today in that I enjoy the aspects of tradition in my Reserve Unit ... I don't know why, but I feel fitter and stronger and happier ... [on operations there] than when I am sitting in my suit and tie being an IT consultant. Go figure. ["AT"]

Though relatively few respondents speak of an 'addiction' to danger, a tendency to aggressive behaviour or fearsome tempers, sometimes resulting in violence, and affected by military experiences, is more widely reported.

> Now it might happen that a person would be angry very easily and maybe end up hitting [another person], maybe hurt him. At the beginning, before being an SDU, these things were not there. [Thokoza SDU]

> Before the army, I wouldn't have thought about stabbing somebody or shooting somebody, no. Basically I went into the army as a sports kind of guy [and] came out something else ... There's no going back to what you were. [Conscript group, follow-up interview]

The passage of time has had varied impacts on these respondents' propensity for aggressive behaviour and anger, which may remain unchanged, be increasingly controlled, or become more intense. Respondents commenting on aggression and violence amongst both conscripts and Thokoza SDUs highlight the period of conflict itself, and that immediately following it, as particularly notable in this regard.

Former Citizen Force members emphasise the difficulty in the multiple transitions they had to make from a war situation to a civilian situation, as punctuated by their leave periods, the ending of their two-year military service, and then the periodically enforced camps.

> When I came back from Angola, I was very aggressive ... I left the army in July 1987 and went back to being a little bank clerk – a huge change and struggle to adapt to the boring routine of married and working life. I was terribly unhappy and battled to adapt to this new civilian life. Then six months after finishing I was back in Angola for an Ops – called up by telegram ... three months of hell and shit. Suddenly back to civilian life again. I had just started to adapt

> after National Service then, just when things were settling down, everything was turned upside-down. The second time adapting was worse than ever, I suffered many flashbacks – almost LSD type experiences – where almost every sense is convinced you're back in the bush even though your body is lying flat in SA. ["AT"]

The aggression and vigilance instilled through military experience frequently remained with the individual on his return to civilian life. When they themselves did not register this, those around them did.

> After coming back [from an operation] ... my girlfriend at the time (who since became my wife) said I've become very, very belligerent, aggressive ... and I didn't perceive it in myself. [Parabat]

For some respondents, this aggression manifested in violence:

> The adjustment one has to go through afterwards is really hard to deal with. Also the 'knowledge' inside yourself that despite having a Christian, civilised upbringing, the animal lurks just underneath the surface. I still remember very vividly my first 'hunt'. The almost intoxicating desire to kill (despite the incredible feeling of fear) was frightening. It made me very aggressive when I came back to the 'real' world. My wife was nearly killed by me on two occasions ... after a really bad stretch in Angola. ["AT"]

Female family members of former conscripts also describe the aggression with which their conscript relatives returned from the war.

> He was an ordinary little boy when he went in the army. And when he came out he was totally different: rude and aggressive and ungrateful. [Wife/sister of conscript]

> They became aggressive to their own parents, which made it very hard ... they were not themselves. [Wife/sister of conscript]

These respondents speak of the soldiers' aggression on return from the army as being directed towards family members. Others say it would also manifest racially, and in relation to black people specifically, who for many of these men continued to represent the 'enemy'. As the former conscripts explain, they were trained to fight 'them' and when they got back on home turf, they were surrounded by 'them'.

> When you walk in the shopping centre or you walk down ... the street, and you check this gang of Blacks coming towards you, you like actually go cold. You are unarmed so you feel like naked. You like just want to try and kill the *oke*. [Conscript group]

> You are trained there to react immediately. Immediately react, blow 'em away. Get back into civvie world [and] ... the reactions are still there because you're on edge. It doesn't matter who you are, you are on edge because you were fighting the Blacks up there. [If] a Black didn't step out your path, you wanted to kill him. [Conscript group]

Other conscript respondents refer to their aggression as more general and indiscriminate.

> When I was in the army I had gone on pass. They locked me up for assault, which is a good thing, otherwise I would have killed someone ... [The army] made me a worse person. I will do things, which I didn't do, aggression, you know. [Conscript group]

Similarly, Thokoza respondents say that violent behaviour off the battleground was common during the conflict in the early 1990s, as many SDUs took out their distress on the people in their personal lives.

> The time when there was war, he was very wild. He behaved like a beast. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

This situation was especially difficult for these combatants' girlfriends. All the participants in the focus group of SDU girlfriends, who were with their SDU partners during the conflict itself, say they were frequently beaten up by their boyfriends in this period.

> When he became an SDU, he became another thing. In the beginning ... there was no problem ... But when the violence erupted, I was scared of him, even looking at him ... Maybe it is caused by the fact that there was fighting, their hearts were changed ... They were always saying that everything has changed. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

> I could see that this person can eat me and finish me up, you see. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

> The SDU guy I was [going out with] was just a person. We were [on] good terms. But there was a time [during the violence] when he would just change, and I wouldn't even know what has happened ... He would beat me ... There were always misunderstandings. But now it is better ... It is not like in the beginning. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

"A temper that is so hard to resist ..."

The periods of combatant activity themselves, and the periods immediately following them, receive most emphasis with regard to the affected individuals' potential for aggressive and violent behaviour. However, several individuals in each respondent category report a continued, and even increased, tendency to such behaviour.

The following former conscript describes some of the painful and dangerous long-term consequences of having had to adapt and re-adapt to civilian life in between periods in combat while simultaneously struggling with the psychological effects of his combat experiences.

> These types of experiences bring about a type of rage – a temper that is so hard to resist. I am sometimes faced with situations and have to physically walk away with hands and arms rigid in case I let go and hurt someone. It took me three years or so (with help from other mates that have been in the same situation) to cool down the aggression and nightmares ... My wife tells me that I get a 'look' and she knows that she is now dicing with death – that if she pushes a few more buttons, the consequences may be serious. On a few occasions she ended up against the wall with a pistol in her mouth, once on the floor, bleeding. There are no excuses for this type of behaviour. My wife being an ex-PF has seen this before and understood that it wasn't the loving man that she married but another person. That is why I do not drink in excess, ... because of the possible explosion that lack of control caused by alcohol brings. I cannot risk that I lose control. The blow-out that could occur may be terrible. Hence I always must watch my temper, a temper that I never had before the army. ["AT"]

Some MK and SDU respondents also describe difficulties controlling their anger.

> I'll react more impatiently to any situation ... I wouldn't hurt anybody but my emotions will boil very quickly. [MK/SDU]

> Sometimes it's anger, your anger that leads you to fighting. Perhaps you try to talk to a person, but he does not want to understand. You get into a situation that I do [get violent]. It's after the SDU [that this anger came] ... Many of us have changed a lot because of this violence thing. [Thokoza SDU]

> These things [violence in the home] happen because you have parents and they are sober minded, but your mind is always racing. So it happens because you are always thinking even if you don't mean to. [MK/SDU]

As in the above explanation provided by the former SADF conscript, alcohol is often a contributory and compounding factor in violent behaviour.

> *Ja*, this thing happens ... Maybe we would sit at a *shebeen* and drink, and we would drink and drink. When we are drunk maybe you talk to me badly. It means what would solve [it would be] if we talk about it verbally, but now eish! I would grab him. It just happens. I would take a bottle and hit him with it, things like that. [Thokoza SDU]

> There are parents who are scared of their children today. Like [someone we know] is not safe with her child. She runs away [from him]. He is a bully, he is troublesome too much ... As for us, you go to check if he is sober. If he is not sober, you are scared to go near. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

This seeming inability to predict how one might react to certain situations, as well as the possibility of a violent reaction, is also raised by former SADF conscripts. The following conversation took place during the conscript focus group.

> **R1:** I was four years out of the army. I was travelling down the road. Next minute I stopped ... and I saw this bloke coming up behind me, in a car. Screeching brakes, and I know he is going to [hit me]. So I move slightly forward, and he stops this far away [*indicates small distance*] from my back bumper. [My] reaction: out the car, I punched him through his window. His window was still closed. I snapped. I wasn't there, I was on the border. Punched him through his window right to the other side of his car. He came back and I punched him again. I got back in my car and I disappeared.
>
> **R3:** That wouldn't have happened if you never went to the army.
>
> **R1:** Correct.
>
> **R3:** Most *okes* here, we have all got short tempers, such a short fuse.

Some respondents suggest that, over time, they have fewer outbursts of sudden, uncontrolled violence. Instead, they become increasingly conscious of how their anger builds up, and when they are aware of anger developing, they are able to pre-empt aggressive or violent reactions by removing themselves from the situation.

> I felt that I was going to kill my girlfriend, that's why I decided to go far away, so that I can think clearly. [MK/SDU]

> Sometimes if I get angry I have to adjust myself. I know myself and what I know is that I'm not scared of anything. But I know if I'm sitting with other people [and] if they can't understand what my problem is, I'll just leave them. [Thokoza SDU]

> I don't really live in one place too long because I'll think, 'This okes irritating me now' ... It's like you get angry with them, and then I'll go and disappear for two days ... [I] go let some steam off and then come back . [Conscript group, follow-up interview]

Other coping strategies reported are the restricted use of alcohol and not carrying weapons. Several former SADF respondents say that their tendency to aggression has reduced as they have got older. Although many respondents have reportedly struggled with aggression and its consequences, some have found ways to deal with it, as have their families. According to family members of Thokoza SDUs, for example, trauma counselling has had dramatic results in reducing aggression and violence among participating ex-combatants. Their behaviour contrasts, say respondents, with that of ex-combatants who have not received counselling.

> There is a problem of some boys who did not go to counselling ... Like at home, there is one boy who did not go ... I think his mind has not changed well because he is still violent. When

> there is an argument, a small misunderstanding, ... he blows up. He thinks that he is still in the war ... We can assume that perhaps he thinks that it is that time when there was fighting. He has not calmed down. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

On the other hand, some respondents say that their anger, aggression and propensity for violence have worsened over time. This increase is most frequently described as an effect, or potential effect, of the violence of their current environments and frustration at their circumstances. A few former conscripts say, for example, that they are more violent now because of 'the life now' – one that they experience as threatening and marginalising. While the external social environment is the main focus of these discussions, and may provide the key reported impetus for potential violence, in some cases, responses are clearly intertwined with lingering trauma. A former conscript, for instance, who says his propensity for violence has increased, provides the following in explanation of why he is forbidden to carry a firearm:

> I feel [the danger of behaving violently] it's got worse hey, because the country is going down. I would love to [carry a gun] but I am not allowed to. If I had one I would probably be in jail now. I would just kill: left, right and centre. It's from the army. I got a bit *bosbefok*. That's what you call it ... Everyone around this table got *bosbefok*, I promise you that. [Conscript group]

Similarly, an ex-MK cadre said that if he carried a gun he would 'shoot a lot of people'.

Aggression and violence in the home

"You learnt after a while, if something struck you as odd, just to keep quiet ..."

Ongoing aggression and violence play out in a variety of social environments. Bars and taverns, for example, are mentioned especially by Thokoza SDUs, and descriptions of these situations typically make reference to excessive alcohol consumption. But as has already begun to emerge, the most commonly reported site of this aggression is the home or personal environment. This may partly be a result of the interview methodology as respondents were specifically questioned on violence in the home. While some ex-combatants refer to aggression in the home, it is relatives and partners of ex-combatants that provide the bulk of information regarding apparently trauma-linked aggression in this environment.

> The anger that they had or still have – that anger because of the violence – they take out on their parents, their sisters and their brothers. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

> My son is very, very aggressive; he's got moods and things you know. [Mother of conscript]

In the focus group with female partners/relatives of former conscripts two of the five women who are, or were, married to former conscripts, say that they have regularly been beaten by their husbands. In both cases, they directly attribute this abuse to their husbands' experiences 'on the border'. For one of these women, the beatings stopped when her husband sought psychological help, but re-erupted when he became involved with drugs. The abuse continued until he found support in religion.

> In the beginning you [would] say something and he will turn around and hit you. [You think] 'What the hell did I say now?' Meanwhile he is seeing it in a totally different way. And then you repeat it and he hits you again. When you try and sort it out [you discover] he has taken it in the wrong context. My husband went for psychological treatment, which helped for a couple of years and then he went onto drugs and what-have-you [and it started again]. Then God picked him up and now he is on a totally different road. [Wife of conscript]

For the other woman, the beatings only recently stopped when her husband was murdered.

> My husband was violent all the time from the army experience. He was on the border. He

> wasn't always violent ... You learnt after a while if something struck you as odd, just to keep quiet, so as not to provoke ... The smallest thing triggers them off. You eventually learn which topics it is, but in the beginning, it's hard to know ... There was no question of psychological help for him. I was the mad one; he was the totally sane one. But I think that's just a general man thing. [Wife of conscript]

Several girlfriends or ex-girlfriends of Thokoza SDUs continue to live with the brutal effects of their boyfriends' distress. One of them, echoing the words of other respondents, states that alcohol increases the likelihood of a violent outburst: 'When he is drunk, he gets more mad'. She ensures that she only spends limited periods of time with him, and believes that if she did not control their interaction in this way, he would kill her. The following extract highlights some of the brutal experiences she has suffered at his hands during and since the war.

> When my boyfriend was an SDU, he was a person who used to lose his mind. When I was sleeping with him, he [would] see people who are dead whom I don't know. He would scream at night, he would beat me, and he stabbed me in the back with a knife. When I ask[ed] him why, he did not want to understand. He beat me every day ... Maybe those [dead] people were strangling him at night, and it was like he was going mad ... One day he took me to the graveyard and said that he wanted to dig me a hole ... I cried and begged him, 'My Lord, please do not do that'. He had mercy. [But] one day he took me to the graveyard again and tied me [up] and tied my mouth. He left me there and he came to release me at 6 o'clock in the morning, saying that he wanted to kill me. And I'm sure he can kill me ... Even now ... he easily loses his mind ... He does get well but perhaps we can get along for only two weeks ... before I am beaten ... [Recently] he wanted to bite my ear, he wanted to remove it. His mind come[s] back but [then] once again, go[es]. I believe he can kill me. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

In the same focus group another participant recounted how she was regularly beaten and threatened, and once shot by her SDU boyfriend in the period between the cessation of hostilities in the township and his arrest. In contrast to these respondents' accounts, others say that since the end of the conflict, there has been a marked reduction in the violence they experience at the hands of their boyfriends. This, however, does not mean that the violence has stopped, although this is the case for one of the focus-group participants. For others, it is the nature and intensity of the violence that has changed. During the conflict, they say, SDU members beat them excessively, often for no apparent reason. It was the indiscriminate, irrational and brutal nature of their boyfriends' violence that terrified them most. In the present, the beatings are less severe and more 'reasoned' – it is possible to 'understand' the behaviour. For these respondents, this constitutes a significant step forward.

> [During the violence] he would hit his girlfriend with whatever he could lay his hands on – a brick or anything. Others were shooting their girlfriends with guns. But now they are no longer shooting their girlfriends, they just beat them *kahle* [more gently, appropriately], not hurting them. [**I: They beat them appropriately?**] They just beat them so that [she] must leave what she is doing if she did something wrong. There are reasons for them to beat them [now]. [Girlfriend of Thokoza SDU]

Such explanations of the 'changing' nature of their partners' abusive behaviour raise a number of other important issues. For many of these young women, domestic violence does not represent anything out of the ordinary but has, to a significant degree, become 'normal'. Related to this, as various respondents point out, ex-combatants are by no means necessarily perpetrators of domestic violence, nor are they the sole perpetrators. These respondents know many other women who are also beaten by partners who are not ex-combatants.

Domestic violence, which is so prevalent in South Africa, has a variety of complex causes, and a militarised

background should be considered but one, potentially important, contributing factor. Even within this militarised context however, respondents provide different reasons for violence in the home.

"He used to be something; now he's nothing ..."

In addition to reports that domestic violence can be related to war trauma, respondents also explain domestic violence as a response to the stresses and frustrations of adapting and 'making it' in civilian life. These pressures do not necessarily result in violence, but the potential for it is mentioned by a number of respondents.

To differing degrees, all ex-combatant respondents refer to the impact that their combatant histories have had on their families. For example, many of the families of MK/SDU respondents suffered various forms of harassment and trauma as a result of their relatives' association with the banned liberation movement. Families of combatants who spent long periods in exile or in prison often lost the support of breadwinners, and lived with constant uncertainty about the well being of family members. It was not unusual for families to completely lose touch with their loved ones.

Former Thokoza SDUs speak of the difficulty their parents had, watching their children taking up arms in the context of terrifying and indiscriminate attacks on the community. Their proximity to the violence gave them a more detailed insight into the dangers involved, as well as the kind of practices their children were likely to be engaged in.

Former conscripts and other Citizen Force members stress the detrimental effects that call-ups have had on their personal relationships. The multiple transitions; the secrecy which shrouded their involvement in the war and the resultant sense of alienation; the long periods for which they were removed from their loved ones and that hindered their ability to put down civilian roots, have all taken their toll.

Former SADF recces speak about the effects of their work on their families in a slightly different way. Their permanent status in the military meant that they were seldom at home. Their partners, however, were considerably more involved or supported by the military than the partners of Citizen Force soldiers.[47]

> You saw your wife in that two months, say for about a week – maybe two if you were very lucky. But the guys were quite happy and the women accepted it. The unit was looking after the women when the men were away, and they had this women's club going. [Recce].

According to recce interviewees, the problems emerged when they returned to their homes and their wives. In their absence their wives ran the household, often taking on many of the roles conventionally ascribed to men. The return of the men required a negotiation of roles as well as simply getting re-accustomed to each other's company. This role negotiation, say several respondents, was present on each return. It was the transition to a permanent home life, however, that has been most difficult for these respondents and their families.

> But when the war stopped, suddenly this guy is faced with he's at home all the time. He doesn't want to mow the lawn. He's not used to this, it's not in his nature. And that's only when the divorces really started getting going. He was not used to being with a woman all the time. [Recce]

Transition: a recce wife's experience

The following extract comes from the wife of a former recce, and describes the considerable change and difficulties wrought in her family by the need to adapt from a military life organised around her husband's employment in the Permanent Force, to a civilian life.

> **[Before when] they came home [on leave] everything was ready and right for them because the time that you could spend together was the main focus. Then, you didn't want him to put in [light] bulbs or whatever. So the wife at home managed everything. But, when the husband is back again [having left the military], I don't think they adapt very well because they want it to be the same like it was before [when they came home on leave]. I think we spoilt them a lot then ... Now, the men also want to feel in charge, [and] you can't be in charge anymore. So if you start cutting the lawn, doing this, organising that, they don't feel secure anymore. The husband wants to be in control but he also doesn't want to be in control of certain things. Army women ... must almost act like light switch[es]. When the husband puts the switch on they must be on, but if they want the switch to be off, the switch must be off. I don't think it's a personal thing from the man's side, it was circumstances that has brought this into our path ...**
>
> **Misunderstandings also [surface] because the husband was used to his military surroundings, and when something happened, your comrade knows what to do because he sort of reads your mind. But, for us [women] at home, we had only two months in a year to learn this mind reading and that isn't quite enough to get the skills ... Outside of the military environment it's very difficult because everything has changed. You don't have that safe environment ... It was very difficult in the beginning to cope because out of the military you have to stand fully on your own feet. It's as if there is a missing link because you're not on the same level [as everyone else]. You don't have the same support groups ... I can't remember when we spent time with friends because there isn't any time, and your friends are now living far away ...**
>
> **You have to rely on your husband a lot more than before. And I don't know if the husbands are really accepting that kind of behaviour from the women ... It's as if they can't realise that the women don't have that support group anymore, and now they have [to] actually be more involved in his life. I don't think the men want it that way. They want to do as they did before: when they want to go, they want to go. They don't want to tell anybody where they are going because that is what they were used to. I am struggling with that because I know that now, when he's going away, it's not about secrecy anymore. I mean if they can perhaps involve us more in their lives then we will be more certain about where we are standing. I think for the women, there are a lot of things to cope with personally, to survive in a new environment.**

Divorce rates amongst former permanent members of the SADF Special Forces are believed to be high. In part, respondents attribute this to their previous lengthy absences from home. In other instances, some venture, divorce could be a consequence of violence. Generally however, they distance themselves from the potential for domestic abuse, saying they are aware of no, or very few, cases amongst their former colleagues where this is taking place. Instead, without exception, recce respondents point to civilians they know, who do not have military experience and who abuse their wives. Nonetheless, they do provide some suggestions for ex-combatants' potential perpetration of domestic abuse. One Special Forces respondent, for example, thinks that the military culture of discipline, aggression, and 'shouting and screaming' may find its way into the private sphere. Another says that some individuals may be less able to control a habituation to the use of force. Traumatic combat experience is again occasionally mentioned as a potential contributing factor.[48]

But SADF Special Force respondents talk about the period of transition (from combatant to ex-combatant) as most relevant to divorce rates and conflict in the home. Many relationships do not survive the turmoil of

transition, according to these respondents. Domestic conflict and violence may be an outcome of the frustrations and insecurities of their transition to a different life, they say. In effect, they are suffering a loss of identity and purpose, with no immediate alternative.

> I believe that [domestic violence] does happen to a certain extent but that's caused out of frustration. Every soldier ... [had] rank: a sergeant, staff sergeant, sergeant major, captain or major or a colonel. All of a sudden now, he is nothing. He used to be somebody and something; now he's nothing. And that creates a lot of frustration. Unfortunately in all people's lives, the easiest way to let it go is in the house, so then it goes through to your family, yes. You will find the percentage of divorces of ex-Special Forces soldiers is extremely high. And that's a direct result of it. I will say family violence which results in divorces and things can be a direct result of the war. We can say it contributed, but if you look at the normal civilian ... what is that guy using as a reason [for] why he's divorced. Is he also using the military's excuse? It's very difficult [to say] but [my wife and I] have seen it, we have talked about it. [Recce]

The above respondent articulates the difficulties of his transition mainly in terms of the losses it has effected: the way of life, securities and status. The following respondent places more emphasis on another fundamental aspect of the transition: the uncertainty of his economic future. His frustrations have been amplified by the fact that he has still not received his voluntary severance package from the SANDF.

> Every individual and his family might experience problems to a certain extent which they would like to point fingers to 'my military days' [but] which has got nothing to do with their military days ... I mean, I'm often frustrated and I start kicking the dogs and what have you, but it's because the army didn't give me my bloody money! And yes, that influences the family, of course, because I have to tell the kids, 'I can't buy you ice-cream, I can't do this and can't do that'. But I know just as many guys who were never in the army who're living with their third wives. [Recce]

In a similar vein, several MK/SDU respondents locate ex-combatants' potential for domestic abuse in the frustrations accompanying transition. The most significant aspect of this, for many of them, is unemployment. Combined with this, as the following extract illustrates, is a related frustration at not being able to fulfil the expected gender role. It is not only the anxiety of providing for self and family, but also the erosion of one's sense of man-hood that accompanies unemployment. As well as perceiving themselves as victims in their home, these respondents also perceive themselves as victims of their broader contexts.

> When we get home, it is difficult to tolerate each other, especially your family [who are] hungry, and there is nothing. Because your family looks up to the father, the father must make a plan so that we can eat before we go to bed. But you do not know where to make plans. You find that when the mother speaks in front of the children, she says, 'Even your father cannot find something for you to eat'. Then you feel bad that she does not think that you are also a human being, and there are no jobs, and you are also suffering. So now you find that you even beat her and when you beat the mother, they now have a bad tendency to run and lay charges against you, 'You do not want to maintain me' ... The law does not favour us, that we are also not employed. How are we going to maintain them? You have nothing ... You are still holding a thought that you're head of the house, but you are unable to satisfy their needs. They don't understand how difficult your situation is. [MK/SDU]

Several respondents say that ex-combatants' inability to support their families results in their partners leaving them or threatening to leave them if they do not find work. In these situations they say, wife or partner beatings are likely to occur.

To differing degrees, those MK/SDU respondents who contributed to this discussion associate the potential for domestic violence with the betrayal of the expectation that they would be able to provide for their families once the conflict ended.

> Maybe if the ANC did not exist at all, I would be praising Jesus Christ. But now it's difficult because if I think about the frustration of unemployment and poverty ... So you get home and there are hungry children – it makes you impatient. Hey, I do not know how to explain, because what happens [is] sometimes you find that somebody replies [to] you harshly, [and] sometimes you end up beating your wife [because of] the way frustration plays with us. So sometimes I find I have beaten my wife. I realise that [I have done it] after it [has] happened. It happened and children have seen it. [MK/SDU]

Betrayal is at the core of the following respondent's description of his former colleague's conflictual domestic situation. Profound disillusionment and helplessness, he says, have led his friend to engage in a range of self-destructive activities, the brunt of which is felt by the family.

> Sometimes you feel like you want to cry. The other day I had a sister of one of the comrades I was arrested with. She was hysterical, telling me that she is finding it difficult to live with him because, what happens is, the poor fellow is so demoralised that he is no longer thinking straight and all he wants to do is to party. He's becoming a party animal. He doesn't care anymore because he believes that no one cares for him so why the hell should he care? He is trying to find some kind of consolation and he is doing a lot of wrong things. He becomes so aggressive that they have to leave the house. And I thought to myself [that] one day the poor fellow is going to [get the] gun and put [it] into his mouth and decide to end it because it's very difficult. A lot of people are looking to you. People will ... say, 'You are ANC, it's not delivering, what the hell is the problem? Look we don't have a problem, we did nothing, so we deserve nothing, but what about you, the sacrifices you paid? You abandoned school, you didn't have a career, you went to sit in prison.' [MK/SDU]

Similarly, another ex-MK/SDU cadre says he often behaves violently both outside and inside the home. He emphasises his treatment in the SANDF as contributing to this behaviour. His anger at the way he was treated is compounded by the pressures placed on him by his family members.

> When I was at the National Defence Force, I was very violent. Even now, I'm still violent especially when I'm drunk. I think about things like, 'I was in the army, unfairly dismissed and never got my money' ... Sometimes I would think about robbing somewhere or killing someone. People made me violent because at home they complain that they gave me money and now I don't give them any money, that I'm just a criminal and, 'He does nothing'. When I'm drunk I become violent ... I go home and tell them that I'm not working for the army anymore. They don't care about me because I don't work. They make [me] violent and I also become violent. [MK/SDU]

Interestingly, one factor he describes as perpetuating his tendency to violence, is the training that was provided by the SANDF to integrating soldiers.

> I can say [my violent behaviour] was related to that training. Because the training that I got from the National Defence Force was not good at all. It made me become more violent and corrupt. [MK/SDU]

His assertion of this link between violence and SANDF training could be understood more in terms of his anger as a consequence of his treatment in the military. It could be that his anger has in fact provided the impetus to his violent behaviour, or alternatively that it is a projected link in response to this anger. On the other hand, the link may be more literal. The conventional dehumanisation of troops in training can in itself lead to both aggression and trauma, which, in turn, may play out in violence as it did (and still does) for several former conscripts.

A minority of respondents refer to murder-suicides in the home – where an individual kills his partner and then himself - as one extreme violent manifestation of these transitional stresses.

> There are some comrades who were in the army and later dismissed ... Now, because he is not working, his wife will leave him and go for wealthier guys. They end up taking their licensed firearms and killing the wife and himself. These are the problems we face everyday because when we don't work we get frustrated and people know that we were MK members and we were in exile. And it's not the same government anymore and it's still quiet. So when you think of those things, you end up killing yourself and your wife because she has left you because you don't work anymore and you don't have any money. [MK/SDU]

Importantly though, the examples they provide sometimes include both suicides and partner killings by ex-combatants who remain in the SANDF. Those who have been integrated, as is suggested in the section on SANDF experiences, are themselves 'in transition' and face a variety of pressures and disappointments. The following interviewee, however, predicts that the rationalisation of the SANDF will see an increase in the number of these murder-suicides.

> If you look at the integration process, it didn't materialise the way it's supposed to ... All the pressure [in the SANDF] works on them ... But now, if you just tell them [that they're going to be retrenched], we're going to have a lot of cases where guys from the army [are] shooting their wives, girlfriends, their families. We should expect that. [East Rand key informant]

Trauma and Distress

All themes explored thus far inform understandings of ex-combatants psychological health. It is abundantly evident that many of them experience a wide range of stresses in their transition from military life to civilian life. It is beyond the scope of this study to assess the mental health of the ex-combatant respondents. Rather, this section outlines some of the views presented by respondents themselves on the matter.

Specific questions on the issue of psychological distress brought about by militarised experiences elicit diverse responses. Importantly, the line between manifestations of traumatic war experience and stressful transitional experiences is often blurred and the two may become intertwined. Understandably, more recent experiences of trauma can predominate. MK/SDU respondents, for example, tend to focus on the problems in their current lives as the main source of distress.

> Since the demob[ilisation], in the townships people provoke me and I try to keep my emotions under control. I ended up having asthma. I need counselling. When you think about all those things that happened to you and how you were treated, you can go mad ... Inside I am boiling ... It's killing my mind. [MK/SDU]

Generally, MK/SDU and Thokoza SDU respondents are less vocal than other respondents in response to questions about how their war experiences have impacted on them. Several are clear, however, that they, and/or their former colleagues, suffer as a result of these experiences.

> It affects me painfully. It is difficult to forget since you saw those things. [MK/SDU]

> Many of us have changed. They have changed a lot because of this violence thing. [Thokoza SDU]

There is a range of possible explanations for their often limited expressions on this matter. These likely include, for example, the fact that for many of these respondents, violent experiences continue to be a stressful feature of their lives, and one which in some respects has become 'normal'. Another factor, as the following respondent explains, is the lack of exposure to western concepts of trauma and depression. Linked to this is their marginalisation from services offered in this field. The majority of these respondents emphasise their

general lack of exposure to a variety of social processes, such as education, recreational activities, support, and employment.

> It was not within our culture [to] say a person is traumatised. It is a western thing which we never knew. Most of the youth were being traumatised ... but [we understood] 'traumatised' ... [as] talking about deep, deep, deep trauma where you miss your mind, you don't know what you are doing. But [people] like us, ... you can say we have effects on our mind which need to be counselled [so that] we can go to a normal stage. But we live with those kinds of things because we are not yet being exposed to that. [Thokoza SDU]

In contexts of poverty and marginalisation, psychological well-being is not often regarded as a priority. Nor is violence-related trauma necessarily recognisable as distinct from other stresses.

> I can say that maybe all the Thokoza youth maybe need the psychiatrists – maybe one by one attention. But those [other] kinds of things are going to be [seen] as the problem: 'Now I'm not surviving. I'm not working, I'm not going to school, I'm not doing this and this and this'. [Thokoza SDU]

Several respondents emphasise the necessity of putting their traumatic experiences behind them in one way or another, in order to 'carry on'.

> I have seen many things. There is nothing I can say. What I say is let's go on with life; these things have passed. [MK/SDU]

> I try to ignore those things and take them out of my mind and face the future. [MK/SDU]

> I can say that during that time when those things were happening, we sometimes became furious, furious of the heart, the angriness of the heart. There is a time that we remember that our friend passed away, but it is not something on our mind. Life goes on. [Thokoza SDU]

In addition, it is the nature of military experiences to generate a notion of manhood that disallows expressions of vulnerability. Masculine identities forged as combatants frequently militate against seeking help or support. To do so would erode the sense of 'manhood'.

> We were saying, 'I can stand by myself and carry a gun and make my own defence'. And then that kind of thing makes you to be more strong and not take in any words from other people ... One of the problems [stopping people from seeking assistance] is that the language we talk is ... 'I'm a man'. [Thokoza SDU]

Thokoza SDUs are certainly not alone in their understanding of trauma as equivalent to 'missing your mind'. Some SADF respondents resented questions on traumatic stress, appearing to assume that any acknowledgment of this would amount to an admission of having completely lost their minds. This is particularly the case with recce respondents, who claim that ex-Special Forces soldiers are stigmatised by being portrayed as having gone 'bossies', or 'cuckoo'. Furthermore, the equation of invulnerability with masculinity and being a successful soldier was equally applicable to dominant discourse among SADFsoldiers.

> The philosophy was a case of cowboys don't cry. You have to be tough. [Parabat]

Female relatives of former conscripts frequently point to their relatives' refusal to seek support, and raise concerns about the psychological needs of their family members in a society where psychological vulnerability is still largely treated as taboo.

"You're a trained specialist ... Your means of doing it is by fighting, shooting."

The psychological impact of military and combat experiences varies widely. Some respondents, for example, feel that these events have not had a negative impact on their mental health.

> When I take a look at myself right now, I tell myself that I am all right, I am not affected in any way. [Thokoza SDU]

> I never went for counselling and I think I don't have any problem. I don't know, maybe some can see me having a problem, but myself I don't have any problem. [Thokoza SDU]

Former recces maintain that post-traumatic stress is rare amongst this category of former soldiers. As highly trained military specialists, they say they were mentally prepared for the demands of the job.

> We underwent such a rigorous psychological selection it is almost impossible for a guy who didn't belong there to get there ... If you think [that] out of a selection of 800 people only 12 make it, then you must realise that the guys who eventually make it are psychologically very strong ... I mean we were prepared for [combat], we were trained for that. It's experience that happened, you just put it behind you, ... there's no side-effects ... I mean I don't have bad dreams or anything like that ... You have got your exceptions. [Recce]

They emphasise the issue of choice, and believe that national servicemen / conscripts and other Citizen Force soldiers are more likely to have experienced the military as traumatic because they were not participating voluntarily.

> We were properly trained, well disciplined and most of us had the choice of being there, and I think that made a big difference. If you go to our national servicemen, you might find [traumatic stress] amongst them, but in Special Forces there's a few individuals. [Recce]

> There are people that went cuckoo because they couldn't handle the situation but then it was normally military servicemen, guys who actually did not want to be there ... They were forced to be a soldier and many of them were indeed in situations which they did not like. It can be very traumatic for a guy of 18 years old who doesn't want to be there and the next day he's standing there between 50 or 100 bodies. He's never seen a dead guy in his life before [and] now he's participated in creating the dead. It did happen that those guys couldn't handle it. [Recce]

> The permanent guy is there out of free choice ... he feels very strongly about [the] army and he goes to be the elite ... But [for] the guy who works and is a family man [and] gets called up under the citizen force system and is sent to the border [it's different] ... If you're not a soldier in your heart it will be very difficult to kill somebody ... Those guys were not [there] out of free choice. It's that or jail. [Recce]

Interestingly, the experience of moving from the 'secure' and structured lifestyle of the military into the uncertainties of civilian life is depicted by recce respondents as much more traumatic than most combat experiences.

"Most of us don't know what debriefing is 'cos we never had it ..."

Conscripts and Citizen Force respondents point out that some people emerge from their army experiences apparently unscathed, or alternatively make relatively quick recoveries. In contrast to former Special Forces members, however, all of these respondents make reference to negative psychological consequences of their army experiences.

> Some people will get over it and some people can't. [Conscript group].

A central source of bitterness is the lack of psychological support they received. Their general sense is that the well being of national servicemen was of little or no concern to the military.

> The big incitement in my mind is against the SADF/State/SAMS, they really had bugger-all idea of how to support someone with PTSS ... The system was not set up to help people ... On Thursday [I was] holding a guy bleeding out his life all over my browns with my R5 [firearm] black and hot after an ambush. Friday [I was] on a *flossie*[49] back to *klaar out*[50] and Monday driving to work. No support, no debriefing. Once you are *klaared out* they owe you nothing. ["AT"]

> I always remember this *oke* scream because we were told not to get off the *raatel* ... This guy took about two steps. Katoong! And now his leg was off and he was lying there going 'Aaag, Aaag'. And then you can't help that guy. Now, I can still see that *oke* screaming ... You have to leave him to scream. You first must clear your own way to get to him and then get him out ... After we had casevaced[51] that guy, I saw the guy against the tree was my friend from Honeydew, then there was another guy crawling like this – he had been mowed in the back ... Two shot next to me ... One night you'll just hear, 'Brrrrrrrr' coming down the road and you don't know what it is. And then they came - kha-kha-kha-kha-kha-kha – full blast. We left all those dead just like that... (The next guys come and pick them up). So it's like endless. And you're supposed to be normal when you come out. It's crazy [*laughs*]. 'Okay everybody get on the truck, go to the airport, off you go'. Land in Bloemfontein ... About two days later, 'Sign here', had a little parade [and] 'Cheers'. Welcome to civvies street. [Conscript group, follow-up interview]

Respondents agree that the worst affected soldiers are those who experienced combat on the 'border'. Little reference is made to psychological effects of being deployed in South Africa's townships. While most respondents had spent time on the border, a few had also been deployed in the townships. One of these respondents says that he experienced this as more distressing than combat in Angola,

> I actually found that my stress levels were higher working in Kwasene from 1989-1994 than all the time in Angola. I would rather have three months in Angola than a month in the townships. ["AT"]

But experience of direct combat is not a precondition for trauma and distress. One respondent, for example, draws attention to the potentially traumatic impact of the military training programme.

> Some are/were just suffering from the way the training dehumanised them. Some of my flashbacks I used to get, and my most vivid memories, were those memories of training. Some guys just couldn't handle losing control of their lives for two years, and quite a few committed suicide just for that reason ... - not that the SADF gave a damn for PTSD, and I'm sure that they knew about it at the time. ["AT"]

It was not only soldiers who were exposed to these situations. Members of police units whom respondents encountered in the operational areas are also identified as a grouping vulnerable to traumatic stress.

> The police have never had any psychological training – never – not even the Koevoet units. Anybody could have got in there. They didn't have psychological training or selection. There's a lot of policemen who I believe are suffering. I saw a bloody ex-policeman the other night that I think is completely way out of his head [Recce]

> In South West the police force [and the SADF] were actually working closely together. And that's where a lot of those *okes* turned the table as well; they went through the same. [Conscript group, follow-up interview].

In contrast to these former SADF combatants, few MK/SDU respondents speak about psychological issues relating to their combatant days. Instead, they tend to focus on present hardships. One interviewee, a psychiatrist who has worked with liberation-movement cadres, outlines several sources of distress for MK fighters, and draws attention to the specific psychological problems arising from experiences in exile.

> I went over to the ANC camps to see all the patients who were already unwell there, who suffered from mental problems arising out of the military situation in exile. The problems they met often were that [when they left for exile] they were not soldiers but they had to traverse the wild, through Botswana, through Swaziland, through Mozambique, to go to the camps outside ... Some of the youngsters that I saw ... who were hoping to go to train, were just idealists – not really suited to the situation that they ended up in: an austere environment, in a camp. Some of them were used to the comforts of the home, but they had made this decision to go out. So that was the cause of psychological problems for some. Others would go out and meet the comrades ... and feel that they were not being received [well], they were not being trusted.
>
> I don't know, in the initial assessment before people were accepted into camps, whether there was some harshness involved ... Interviewing methods or whatever could have been difficult because there was always this threat that they were taking spies into the system. Some of them suffered as a result of that but accepted, 'Well it had to be done'. Yet others did actually get traumatised, get thrown into jail in Uganda or somewhere for a while, and they would come out and say, 'I had not done anything' and then became quite bitter – those were some of the ones I saw. The other thing was some were disappointed: they wanted to be in the army and they fell ill because of malaria and they were sort of bypassed. Others were hoping to be sent to study ... but they were not amongst those who got those opportunities ... And one other group are post-traumatic stress victims, either because of their exposure to combat situations in Angola [or] because of treatment by the ANC or by the opposition. [Psychiatrist key informant]

According to this interviewee, the ANC made some effort to provide psychological support to cadres returning from exile.

> I went over to the ANC camps to see the people who suffered from mental problems. The idea was to see them there, and then when they come into South Africa, to assist them in their resettling. [Psychiatrist key informant]

Unfortunately, however, these intentions were not realised.

> Unfortunately, once they came in, we were unable to check on them ... so they just disappeared into South Africa. Once in a while one of them is sent by the family, 'Here's one of your people who's suffering'. And I'll treat them as part of the Community Psychiatric Services. But the fact is, they have disappeared into South Africa and we suspect that they would be in need of help most of the time. [Psychiatrist key informant]

Efforts to address the psychological needs of ex-combatants across the political spectrum have been woefully inadequate. It is suspected that thousands of those caught up in the past conflict remain in need of psychological assistance.

Some additional manifestations of distress

The potential for traumatic stress to manifest in flashbacks to combat experiences, nightmares, short tempers, and aggressive behaviour has already been touched upon. Respondents report a number of other ways in which traumatic war experiences and transitional stresses continue to play out in their lives, or the lives of their ex-combatant relatives.

For example, exaggerated startled responses are commonly reported by SADF respondents.

> For many years I used to take cover due to cars backfiring ["AT"]

"A lot of them become loners ..."

There is a tendency among some ex-combatants to avoid contact and interaction with other people, and to withdraw into themselves instead. This is most frequently reported in relation to former conscripts.

> They can't socialise very easily. Up to today my brother hates going into a group of people. They do become very anti-sociable. They pull themselves away from people and society and they sort of go and hide in their little corner ... A lot of them become loners. [Wife/sister of conscript]

> Like you sort of lose your confidence ... [Before] I was like everybody else, I mean [I'd] go to parties, have a *jol* ... When I came back everyone said, 'You've gone so quiet now. You're not the same person' ... Everybody seemed so open about things and noisy. I just didn't feel that I fitted in anymore. I got old somehow, if that makes any sense ... If I had a choice I'd go and live in the mountains by myself ... You just don't feel happy within a crowd ... If you're looking for me, you'll see me in the corner. [Conscript group, follow-up interview]

In addition, this tendency to withdraw is sometimes accompanied by an inability to maintain personal relationships. A number of respondents report a difficulty in intimate relationships with women specifically, especially in the period immediately following national service.

> You can't trust somebody, you don't want to get too close to them because you're scared to trust. You sort of don't care too much about things. Since the army, you know, 'love' is a four-letter word. You don't know what it is. [Conscript group]

Some MK/SDU respondents also refer to the impact of conflict on their personalities and their ability to interact with others.

> I believe that even with those ex-combatants who are above water [employed] there's a commonality. Before the violence I used to be somebody who cheered up somebody else. But I'm no longer that person ... I realise I prefer to be very much on my own. I sit in the car and watch them partying ... I don't feel like laughing ... [We need] something to make those who are still alive to be like relaxed and happy and be able to integrate with the community nicely. [MK/SDU]

A number of respondents say they are regularly told they are 'so serious'. For some, a sense of 'normality' in terms of personal interactions can only be found in the company of other ex-soldiers.

> People have said to me, 'Lighten up hey' and '*Geez*, what's wrong with you? You're so serious.' I started feeling, '*Jus* like, is there something wrong with me?' But then [for a military commemoration] I saw all these guys who were with me [before] ... I suddenly realised I was with a whole lot of 'normal' guys, serious guys. I was back at home. [Parabat]

In contrast to these difficulties, some former conscripts attribute their competencies in the corporate world to their military service. According to these respondents, leadership skills, efficiency and discipline are some of the positive results of their military experience.

> The military has taught me that it is essential to plan, to make budgets and deadlines and that continued upward communication is essential. When my seniors give me a request, I take it as an order and will do everything in my power to fulfil that order. ["AT"]

Interestingly, these positive effects are sometimes reported as the outcome of a transmutation of negative effects.

> I used to be a 'follower' as a child. Now I am a leader. Aggression changes with time - it mellows – into a like for confrontations. This makes a good leader in my view. ["AT"]

"That's why sometimes we drink ..."

Levels of alcohol and drug abuse are purportedly high amongst some former combatants. Respondents confirm that solace is frequently sought in the use/abuse of substances.

Thokoza SDUs comment on their use of drugs during their days as combatants. A combination of *dagga* (marijuana) and mandrax, known as '*thula*', became an 'instrument of war', and was smoked to dull their fears and keep them awake.

> I smoked mandrax. Some smoked mandrax because they didn't have that strength to go and attack. We didn't allow liquor. You cannot take liquor and go and attack, so we used the mandrax. [Thokoza SDU]

> I started [smoking] when I was an SDU. Before I got [*thula*] eish, I was scared! There was this fear, you know, when you are close to something happening. [After I started] it means even if I would hear a gunshot I would run to fetch the gun. You could cope, you see. [Thokoza SDU]

The extent to which former SDUs continue to use drugs is unclear. While one of the above respondents has managed to kick the habit since the end of the conflict, the other says he occasionally succumbs to the powerful urge to smoke *thula* again.

Several relatives of former conscripts also report that the military experience turned a lot of former conscripts into 'alkies' and 'druggies'. Some, they claim, used marijuana and alcohol on the border as a mechanism to cope with traumatic experiences, as well as with boredom. For many, say these respondents, substance abuse intensified following return from the army, as former servicemen were able to access harder drugs that were not usually available in operational areas.

Conscript respondents often refer to increased alcohol consumption during their period of service. The following respondent describes a common manifestation of war trauma: nightmares. In doing so he refers to how he uses alcohol to cope with its ongoing alienating effects.

> It was horrific. You were coming back home [from the border] and you were going to bed at night and waking up in cold sweats and screaming and you didn't want to sleep because you'd hear these mortars and rifles and R1s and AKs going off ... That zone, it's in your mind, you can't sleep and nobody understood that. You wake up ... screaming and you are shouting, 'No! No!' or 'We are coming, we are coming, we will be there'. And there was nobody around to help you to get out of that. Anybody who says they never woke up having nightmares when they came back from the border is bullshitting. I still get it. My wife doesn't understand, 'No, it was just a dream' [she says]. That wasn't a dream, it was like reality. That's why sometimes we drink. [Conscript group]

MK/SDU respondents more commonly attribute alcohol and drug abuse among ex-combatants to poverty and unemployment.

> Other guys get involved in smoking dagga, others in drinking [because] when they look, their families are poor. A person thinks about such things, such as, 'Maybe if I did not go to exile I would have finished my education and be able to help my family'. [MK/SDU]

> I used to say it was better to stay drunk and now I realise how bad this thing is. Most of [my APLA colleagues] have passed away. Before I was in the Service Corps, I was frustrated and took a lot of alcohol. I just wanted to drink, to find solace in drinking. [APLA woman]

> Because [the SDUs] are not working, when they have a chance to get money, they drink. We think that is caused by being unemployed. And the drugs, I don't know who it is that is selling drugs. [But] the reason for them selling drugs to people is due to not having jobs. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

As the following respondent points out, substance abuse contributes to heightened levels of aggression and violence.

> The problem is drinking. When they have drunk or smoked their drugs, there is now a problem and they want to fight you. But if they could work, the person who sells drugs would disappear. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

The attraction of suicide

Suicide amongst ex-combatants was reported in all respondent categories with the exception of recces. Other than some Thokoza SDUs, all respondents commenting on suicide understand it as directly related to militarised experiences. Although the focus is on suicide and suicidal tendencies since combatant days, several respondents make mention of colleagues who committed suicide during the combatant period itself. Furthermore, while ex-combatant respondents are no longer in the military, many of those involved in past conflicts remain within the SANDF, where inherited and contemporary pressures have also contributed to a number of successful and attempted suicides among serving personnel.

> I've got their photos with me ... One of them (we were both members of the military police) ... hanged himself one day ... I understand he had arguments with some of his colleagues ... It was the weekend, they were drinking and then ... one of them hit him with an empty beer bottle. He didn't react. Instead he went home, his wife gave him food and went to sit with him ... 'What happened? It looks like you're not okay'. He said, 'No, go and sleep'. And then he [put] the volume a bit higher on the radio and hanged himself. He was an ex-combatant but he was still a serving member of the SANDF, and he was from exile. [MK/SDU]

Many MK/SDU respondents say that they know of former colleagues who have committed suicide. For the most part, this is interpreted as an attempt to escape from neglect, disappointed expectations, and the pressures that accompany unemployment.

> I have ... about ten [friends] – oh, when I count correctly there's another one ... There was our fellow comrade who drank poison. He killed himself, because of problems that we are outlining here [our betrayal, unemployment, family pressures, demobilisation problems, violence in the community, etc.]. I have a cousin-brother who I was with in Transkei, who was a PAC. He also killed himself by drinking poison. Many others have shot themselves because of the situation that we are in. [MK/SDU]

> It's like this Saturday we buried a friend of ours who shot himself last Monday. His problem was that the government was using us as their tools and at the end of the day they dismiss us and don't care about us anymore. [MK/SDU]

The conscript respondent quoted below describes the motives behind the suicides of several of his friends. Military service and war experiences in Angola, he says, totally changed the trajectory of their lives. Dramatic personality changes, relationship problems, the inability to secure employment, and substance abuse are, amongst other manifestations, typical in his army network of former 'border' cases. In the absence of support for people like himself, the consequence, he says, is a powerful sense of isolation. He claims that he is one of only three of his group of ten army friends, who have not taken their own lives.

> Six of my army friends committed suicide. All blew their heads off. One *ou* jumped in front of the train and he was my best bud. He just took a bottle of brandy one night. He sent his girlfriend next door. He said, 'Okay, well the next train's got my name on it'. Those were his last words. They found him behind the house in 17 pieces. Welcome to the funeral. Out of ten of us [there's] about three left. I'm one of them. [*Laughs*]. All of them were divorced or separated or something ... [Their suicides have happened] gradually, I'd say it's over about the past ten years. I suppose you try fit in for the first eight. Then you say, 'No, I'm not going anywhere' ... You feel like you just had enough ... It's like you can't ... give [anything anymore] and you're insecure, and even if somebody gives you a job, you still feel a bit touchy [about] what they're going to find out next. [It'll be] 'Cheers [says his name] here's another *ou*' ... You don't even trust yourself. Uh-uh, no, you don't ... With [my friend], he used to just go mad, go wild you know, just pick a fight with somebody ... [He would] get banned from that [bar] and go to the next one. He used to drug and told me he just decided on the train. [*Laughs*] Then there was the others as well ... They'd just leave a short note like, 'Sorry, had enough'. The one guy went in the bathroom [and] blew his head off and that was it. He didn't want to make a mess [so] he does it in the bath. [*Laughs*] I mean, stupid. [Conscript group, follow-up interview]

Within the bounds of the research this is an extreme case. Nevertheless, other respondents also regularly point to the psychological plight of significant numbers of former conscripts.

Ex-Thokoza SDUs' reports on suicide differ from those provided by other respondent groups. In instances, like others, they refer to their friends having committed suicide 'because of the way the violence has affected them'. But their discussions on the issue are dominated by references to gun accidents.

> You'll find that we are sitting like this. Maybe I am carrying a gun, I am busy playing with it. By mistake it happens that I shoot my friend. Here is my friend dying, there is nothing else that I can do. What is left for me [to do but] to put [the gun] on me and shoot myself. Then everything could be silent. It's not that I am just sitting in the kitchen and thinking of killing myself, no. I don't remember a friend doing that. [Thokoza SDU]

> It happens that someone plays with a gun [and] then finishes up shooting himself. It means ... some of our friends ... shot others by mistake, things like that. We are also those who kept telling ourselves that we knew guns - only to find that we shoot ourselves. [Thokoza SDU]

Psychosocial support

Traditional cleansing rituals

Several respondents in the MK/SDU and Thokoza SDU categories (as well as IFP SPU respondents) refer to the role of traditional cleansing rituals in removing the harmful effects of violence from ex-combatants. This information was provided in relation to questions about respondents' psychological well being, and their potential for future violence. Cleansing rituals are considered by some respondents to have extracted the violence from their beings and prepared them for their non-combatant lives.

An ex-Thokoza respondent explains, for example, how, after the SDU had participated in a community cleansing ritual, the number of suicides amongst these ex-combatants declined.

> At one stage we had to do like a traditional ritual. Members of the SDUs had to be taken to a *Sangoma* or *Inyanga* ... We were taken there to be cleansed with *mutis* and things like that and then there were some slaughterings that were done, people donated in the township [for the ritual] ... Before that there were a lot of suicides ... [and afterwards] the number went down, of people killing themselves. [Thokoza SDU]

Thinking back to their combatant days, many MK/SDU respondents report having attended rituals conducted by *sangomas*[52] where they received *muti*[53] or *indelezi* to assist them in their combatant duties. This *muti* made them brave and good with weapons. At the same time, it was believed to 'block' their attackers' guns, so that they could not be harmed.

> You can use the witchdoctor to block a gun; the witchdoctor performs a certain ritual so that when they use the gun on you the bullet does not penetrate you ... I underwent a ritual ... to make [me] excellent in using a gun. [MK/SDU]

> When we fought, we used 'things' to defend ourselves from being hurt ... After washing your body with it, you don't get scared ... because it protects you. [Inkatha SPU]

When the conflict is over it is also important for ex-combatants to be cleansed of the *muti*. It is believed that this affects both their own capacity for violence and plays a healing role. According to respondents, these rituals were usually organised by the respective organisations or, in the case of Thokoza SDUs, their community.

> I have to undergo the same ritual to get rid of it because if I don't do that, I will always be gun crazy. [MK/SDU]

> We went to [the traditional healer] to be cleaned, to get rid of bad things, we all went there. [Thokoza SDU]

These rituals clearly play an important healing role. However, as the following respondent points out, some former combatants continue to be affected by their violent experiences.

> There are no bad dreams which come to me. At the end of the war, we were taken and washed with *muti* and such things. A ritual was made on us. We prayed and asked for forgiveness from God for our sins ... Even now there is nothing that is affecting us. There are some of us who are like mad but I don't know why this is happening. There are some that we think this violence has affected them. [Thokoza SDU]

"We are counselling ourselves ..."

Most respondents regard their relationships with their former colleagues who survived the war as very precious. Indeed, many feel that those they fought with are the only people who really understand them.

> I live with these comrades, I hang out with them because they know my situation and where I have been with them. We live just like that. [MK/SDU]

The bonds formed through the militarised experiences are often presented as those they value and trust most. But the disbanding of armed formations has meant that maintaining these relationships is often difficult. Ex-soldiers are now preoccupied with trying to make it in the individualistic civilian world. A diminished sense of camaraderie and unity amongst former colleagues is registered as a substantial loss.

> Before the liberation, we were together, united. But today somebody must look after his own pocket. [MK/SDU]

> There is no unity like before when we fought together. Some of [the SDUs] left this place and some are still here [but] everybody is now looking after himself or herself. [Thokoza SDU]

The loss of this camaraderie is exacerbated by the estrangement from others that is often experienced. This is emphasised particularly by participants of the conscript focus group and by MK/SDU respondents.

> The anger does get worse because you have got nobody that you can speak to because nobody can understand what you have been through. [Conscript group]

Despite the loss of friendships, and the reduced sense of unity, ongoing interaction with former colleagues continues to play an important role in the lives of many former combatants. Several respondents amongst Thokoza SDU and MK/SDU groupings, for example, consider this contact to constitute a form of counselling.

> As we are sitting like here, we are believing that we are counselling ourselves, like having debates, talking about our problems. We feel better because we are counselling ourselves. [MK/SDU]

Thokoza SDU respondents, particularly, place importance on the role of the group to keep alive the memory of their friends who died.

> As we are brothers, I can remind my brothers that, 'Do you remember that this is the day so-and-so passed away or this and that happened?' ... We talk about our brother, good things our brothers used to do when they were alive. [Thokoza SDU]

For these former SDUs the primary function of the group, when it refers to the past, is to reminisce about the 'funny times' they shared.

> We remember that, 'Hey, we did this and that;' then we laugh. Sometimes it's a thing, a mistake [we talk about like] maybe [someone] fell with an AK ... We always talk about everything. [Thokoza SDU]

Similarly, SADF respondents say that discussion at their get-togethers, when about their army days, is generally restricted to the humorous incidents and shared experiences. More personal or difficult memories, explain several SADF respondents, might only come out in one-on-one interaction, but even then, not usually in much depth.

> Even when you talk about it, you don't talk about the day we killed that guy, you talk about the day that the guy rolled the vehicle, the funny incidents ... I can't even remember us talking about the day Pik was killed. [Recce]

In contrast, MK/SDU respondents' discussions generally revolve around the difficulties of their present situations.

> We do talk ... We are in groups discussing things that are happening, especially in our government ... We talk about these things, but the results are not evident. We are still in one place. It's like we pour water on a duck's track. I would put it like that. [MK/SDU]

> We do not see results, because that very person experiences the same problem. [MK/SDU]

These discussions, it appears, tend to feed their sense of despair and hopelessness, as they talk and talk but nothing changes. There is little to provide a sense of hope that their circumstances will improve.

"We need something to refresh our minds ..."

None of the respondents have, according to their accounts, received any form of professional psychological assistance. The only support that a minority of respondents (amongst MK/SDU respondents) have received comes from the generosity of a few individuals in their communities who have acted in their own capacity in attempt to assist the ex-combatants.

> There was a woman in our area who was a social worker. I used to visit her and she would comfort me and tell me that everything was going to be fine. She used to keep us busy, she would take us to town and walk around with us. I ended up becoming interested in farming because her son was doing agriculture in school. He would tell me all about it, about the lawn mowers. I started to mow lawns for people and maintain their gardens in the townships. [MK/SDU]

Many respondents in the MK/SDU category feel that they would benefit from professional support. For most, however, this does not appear to be an option. Service providers in their localities are over-stretched or barely existent.

> A person is traumatised but the issue is that there are no places where one can go and seek help. This thing ends up affecting you. [MK/SDU]

Alternatively, the cost of seeking help is prohibitive,

> But in [relation to] going to professional counselling, we haven't got money, [we are] bankrupt. So we are just remaining here, counselling ourselves. Some are committing suicide. I have a friend who committed suicide due to this trauma problem. [MK/SDU]

> I went to [try to see] a social worker here but ... I did not get [to see] her ... So now if I have a problem, where can I go? Because travelling [from] here to town, you can take the last R3.00 [with] which you could have bought bread to share with children. [MK/SDU]

Access to psychological services is out of the reach for most South Africans, not only former combatants. In addition, there is little awareness of the potential benefits of these services, which feeds a general reluctance to utilise them. This situation, according to the following interviewee, has contributed to increases in self-medication and substance abuse.

> They would more readily misuse alcohol and drugs than seek help. And well, [if] I think [about] the general population: soldiers, police, teachers and other people, they hardly ever reach the psychiatrist by themselves. They go to the GP and the clinic and they use alcohol. They do not come to us as easily as they should. If they are unemployed they have to go to the government clinics ... [where] there are millions that are in the queues everyday, and the Mental Health Services are loaded in the same way. [Psychiatrist key informant]

One possible solution to this significant problem, he suggests, is the establishment of special clinics for ex-combatants.

> I wish that they had a special clinic [where] they would treat so-called veterans ... I don't think that we'd be creating a special group of people – ... an elite group. We have to be realistic with those who have expectations. We have to accept that they did sacrifice a lot. That's probably the last group [of ex-combatants]. It's a group that will ultimately die out over the next fifty years or more, but we have to accommodate them now. [Psychiatrist key informant].

Similarly, female relatives of former conscripts call for psychological support services to be provided to former national servicemen in need.

> They should form support groups for these guys. I think, because of the times we are living in, they are realising that they need help. But they don't really know where to go. They won't go to a psychiatrist but they might go to like a group where there are other guys. [Wife of conscript].

Although none of the Thokoza SDU respondents said that they have received counselling, or know where they could access such services, there has been an attempt to provide psychological support-services to former SDUs and SPUs from the Khatorus townships. This has purportedly seen dramatic results. Respondents in the

parent/care-giver focus group, for example, repeatedly refer to the benefits of the National Peace Accord Trust's counselling initiatives. The following respondent, whose SDU son went on one of the Wilderness Trails co-ordinated by the National Peace Accord Trust, points to some of the beneficial effects this has had for her family:

> These children were taken in groups ... A person would leave them in the mountains with food for 21 days ... They would take them many kilometres away [and] leave them there, [saying], 'On such a day you have to be at such a place'... They were able to climb a mountain and come down [through] the river ... There's this small spaghetti [tin which they were given]. He is able to eat that spaghetti for a day, and not go hungry ... All those who came back from counselling, came back knowing [how] to save money, to save in the house [and] that he must not harass you. Always he says something that would build you as a parent, 'Mama ... I'm going to a certain friend of mine, and I'll come back [at] such a time. If someone looks for me tell him that I will be there'. So we found that these children now ... can no longer hide things even if it is difficult. Even when he has beaten someone, he comes back and tells you that, 'I have come across a certain trouble'. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

This was the only initiative identified by respondents that aims at providing psychological support to some ex-combatants. Although there are a small number of NGO-based initiatives in different parts of the country that are attempting to cater for the psychological needs of ex-combatants, these are too few, over-stretched and under-resourced.

Revenge Violence, Former Enemies and Reconciliation

Revenge violence

"Some of them are still having those minds of fighting ..."

Some of the ways in which the war relations – between opposing armed actors – may continue to produce violent or conflictual interaction have already been outlined. In the main, these consist of complex relationships between MK/SDU ex-combatants, the police they encounter in their communities, and 'gangsters' who during the apartheid years, they apprehended and punished. [See section, Violence and Crime].

This section explores other aspects of revenge conflict and violence, ex-combatants relations with, and perceptions of, their former enemies, as well as their appraisals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It closes with the perspectives of Thokoza SDU respondents on the Thokoza Monument, a reconciliation initiative built to honour the lives of those who died in the violence.

While MK/SDU respondents tend to depict themselves as targets of police or criminal vengeance, in rare instances, they say that they, themselves, contemplate or intend avenging the deaths of their former colleagues who were killed by criminals. In this respect they mention killings both prior to and post-1994.

> Maybe we fought with gangsters, let's say in 1993. Maybe they killed some of our friends and we didn't get a chance to fight them then. If I [were to] see them now, I would want to fight back. [MK/SDU]

> I know some of [the criminals] who have killed our comrades (in '97 or '98) who were with us in exile ... and they killed them brutally. Even today they are still killing our comrades. Some we don't know who killed them, but some we know and we will get them ... We are still going to get our revenge. [MK/SDU]

Several former Thokoza SDUs say that they still fear attack from elements amongst their former enemies, the 'Zulus'.[54] These respondents allege that these 'former' enemies are killing their friends in 'mysterious ways'.

> Every time you meet [that person from the IFP] ... his look leaves you with a question mark. Anything can happen or not. You see, what is happening now is a trap. A slight mistake [and] you get hurt and it's not that you get hurt for hospital, but for death. [Thokoza SDU]

They talk about the nature of the danger as a 'trap' and distinguish it from past combat situations, where they were fighting 'face to face'. The threat now is more uncertain and difficult to discern.

> We are being trapped, we are beaten little by little and we don't know who is going to be the next to follow ... [In] the past three weeks my friend was shot in a mysterious way, you see. [Thokoza SDU]

> Every move you are making [the IFP people] will be watching you ... The way they are trying to attack us is no longer face to face, pointing guns at each other. Now we are hitting each other behind the back. [Thokoza SDU]

These respondents generally speak only of the threat from the other side and several insist that 'revenge is a bad thing'. The words of the respondent cited above, however, imply that this violence can work both ways: 'we are hitting each other'. As a relative of an ex-Thokoza SDU explained:

> There are some of them who are still having those minds of fighting. Like our boys this side, those who are still angry with them. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

The focus group in which Thokoza SDUs reported these concerns took place not long after the shooting of one of their friends by a 'Zulu'. The incident happened during a soccer match at which the soccer team of ex-SDUs was competing with a team from the local hostel.[55] According to one respondent, the victim of the shooting had fired shots in the direction of the opponents. Instead of having him arrested, hostel residents killed him, creating perceptions that hostel residents remain a threat to former SDUs. Despite this, both a team organiser and parent/caregiver in the same community state that soccer remains a practical means to reconciliation, and that one significant outcome of the tragedy has been a renewed commitment to reconciliation from both sides.

Notwithstanding this commitment to reconciliation, deep suspicion remains for some former SDUs. The following respondent, who has great status in the community, firmly believes that there are elements among the ranks of the former enemy who want him dead.

> I have intelligence in the IFP area, even now, who are working for me. It's about my safety, because I'm not safe. [There are people] who will not stop at anything until I'm dead ... There's peace for everyone, I can move in Khumalo Street with the car but not taking a walk because [then] I will be a dead man. [Thokoza SDU].

During the research process, having been informed by a sibling that the 'Zulus' had been looking for him, this respondent changed his appearance in an attempt to further protect himself.

In SADF categories of respondent, the threat of revenge violence from previous enemies is rarely directly expressed. Many of these respondents do not refer to revenge concerns, and when a threat along these lines is perceived, it is articulated in different terms. In contrast to the fears of some MK/SDU and Thokoza respondents who maintain that they are specifically targeted as a result of their deeds as combatants, some SADF respondents refer to a more generalised revenge by 'Blacks' on 'Whites' in the form of violent crime. The way in which some of them perceive current violent crime as an extension of the conflict is discussed above [see section, Violence and Crime].

Attitudes to former enemies

"We used to call them 'terrorists' ..."

A number of respondents from both SADF and MK/SDU categories say that they respect their former enemies in their capacities as soldiers, and believe that they can see the war from one another's perspective. This is reflected in the way that some SADF respondents refer to ex-MK fighters and those whom they fought in South Africa's neighbouring states.

> The army guys sometimes feel they were fighting a just war, as our opposition did. With the benefit of hindsight, had I been Black, I would have been one of their Special Forces guys. [Parabat]

> I'm definitely racist because I do not believe that Black and White mix ... But as soldiers, if I can meet them I say, 'You bastard, you're lucky I didn't get you there in Angola' and he would say to me 'Likewise'... It was very interesting when I was with Executive Outcomes, to sit around the table with the guy who actually fought against you ... and he [would be] telling you, 'But you should have done that'. That is an excellent experience, you can't actually describe it: to sit with a guy against whom you have fought, pointing out each other's advantages and mistakes and things and then laugh about it and say how it could have been if this had happened or that had happened. [Recce]

> He was fighting an ideological war and I was fighting, I think, exactly the same. I was made to believe I was defending my country, he was disrupting my country ... but still, we're soldiers ... There's no hatred. Obviously I'm never going to love an MK soldier, he's never going to love me either, but as soldiers we respect one another. [Recce]

Some MK/SDU respondents speak of their former adversaries from Inkatha in a similar way.

> He knew the reasons why he was against me and why I was against him. But now we have to forget about such things. [MK/SDU]

> Yes it's okay, we have renewed our relations. What I can say is that we are living alright with them, there is no fighting ... We don't look bad[ly] at each other or think about the past. [MK/SDU]

> If you meet him, you just greet each other and pass ... No one will fight me if I join the IFP. I [can now] join any organisation I want. [MK/SDU]

An ex-Inkatha SPU agreed that relations with his former enemies are generally cordial.

> It's fine because we get on well with them. We sit down and chat together ... Some of them think that if you are IFP then you are against ANC, but those who understand politics do not have a problem because they know that politics has many strategies for survival. [Inkatha SPU]

MK/SDU respondents understand this rapprochement between ANC and IFP protagonists to most often be the result of initiatives driven by political leadership.

> The leadership at the top agreed that this had to stop ... If I don't follow orders given to me by my leaders, anything might happen. I [would] get detained, the organisation [would] not represent me ... That is why I say I have accepted everyone who is my enemy. [MK/SDU]

> An ANC leader organised a meeting so that we can come and start living together in peace. [MK/SDU]

> The way I see it we could have done that on our own, without the leadership coming in ... [But] there is something in the organisation, people who are products of revolution; such people want to fight all the time. Maybe that's why leaders had to intervene. [MK/SDU]

Several Thokoza respondents speak about the role of the South African Council of Churches in reconciliation initiatives in their community. In the words of the mother of an ex-SDU member:

> We thank the Council of Churches. That's why, when the TRC came, it found that we were right. It was easier for us to say, 'We forgive you'. [Relative of Thokoza SDU]

In contrast to the SADF Special Forces respondents cited above, most participants in the conscript focus group see all 'Blacks' as their previous enemies. To differing degrees, perceptions of 'Black' as the enemy have not altered in their current lives. Rather, it seems, for these particular ex-conscripts, these perceptions are fuelled by their experiences in the 'new' South Africa.

The army experience entrenched racist attitudes, they say. Often they draw on the atrocities they witnessed or heard about in the operational areas to explain how this has happened. Their encounters with the enemy – what they have seen 'them' do – are presented as the basis for their argument that 'Blacks' are inhumane.

> There is no respect for life, there never has been, there never will be ... They will walk past their own kind and they will hack them and keep on walking ... They cut babies open and they put hand-grenades and all different kinds of God-knows-what [inside]. [Conscript group].

Some focus-group respondents speak more about the role that formal and informal army discourses played in propagating these attitudes.

> I did become racist in the army and I don't like it. It's just the way people [would] talk. You know, your friends don't come back because, 'a Black shot them'. You know, you were fighting Black, and now you must sit there and salute them ... You are brainwashed. They brainwash you. [Conscript group]

> When you get to the border they start those information classes. Then you start thinking, 'Hmm man, this sounds like bullshit to me. This sounds like war against black *okes* and that's it hey.' We were brainwashed into thinking a black guy's not a human – he's sort of come out of the jungle. That, they taught me. I mean listen to how that guy went on [during the focus group]. I would say that he's still got it in his head. I mean if you had that drummed into you every Friday, 'blah, blah, blah, blah' – every Friday! – you're also going to start believing it. [Conscript group, follow-up interview].

This last respondent's views contrast starkly with those of his fellow focus group participants. As he goes on to explain:

> We used to call them 'terrorists'. Who was the terrorist? We were terrorists as far as I'm concerned: ... We were sent to somebody else's country ... The former enemy was the bloody last government if you ask me. [Conscript group, follow-up interview]

Other focus-group participants claim that their current situation exacerbates racist attitudes. Most of these respondents perceive crime to be structured along racial lines, and consider Whites to be the primary victims.

> There was a report today in the newspaper, '91 year-old granny raped'. For what? Because she is white. [Conscript group]

For them, violent crime represents the most powerful component of a broader assault against the white population, and particularly white males. Another key factor in this is affirmative action, which they believe is designed to discriminate against Whites, and to have negative economic consequences. They believe they are caught in the heart of a targeted process of marginalisation.

> Circumstance says we are now ruled by a black government. They give shit for the Whites. The last White to walk out, switch off the lights – which is what you are seeing in Zimbabwe. It's going to filter to South Africa ... I have got some fundamental problems with the definitions of a racialist. You want to make somebody racialist, push him into a corner and you make him a racialist ... [The] definition of racialism in this world is if a white man disagrees with a black man. A black man can do what the fuck he wants, but he is not a racialist ... Leave me alone! We were born in Africa, leave us alone! [Conscript group]

These respondents perceive themselves, as white males, to be regarded as 'bottom of the shit pile' in the structures and discourses of the 'new' South Africa. They view 'Blacks' as consistently provoking them into a racial hatred.

> They are taking a bit liberties, and they are doing it slowly, slowly – to push the White and push the White ... They antagonise you. [Conscript group].

Because of the vast numbers of white men who went through the SADF system, the conscript population is a particularly heterogeneous one. Views provided by other former conscripts over the 'ArmyTalk' internet chat-line, sometimes overlap with, but do not generally replicate these attitudes. [For further discussion see section, Betrayal]

> Those of us who grew up under the old system are actually at a disadvantage. We have not been equipped with the social and communication skills to bridge the racial/cultural gap. ["AT"]

> Maybe SA is fucked, but it is not that fucked yet ... I refuse to be pulled into any of this 'negativity' that seems to prevail ... (the old flag was a confusing ball of shit anyway ...) I still have a lot to say about the baboons running the country, and more [to say] about the baboons that used to run the country. ["AT"]

Contributions from recce respondents also depart from those of focus group conscripts. To a greater degree recces defined their former-enemies as soldiers rather than on the basis of race. One consequence of this, several of them say, is that they respect their former enemies: they were professionals pitted against each other in war. Although many recce respondents say they are racists, they emphasise that they do not regard 'Blacks' as 'inferior', nor can they justify the workings of apartheid, and the negation of another's humanity. Their military experience, it seems, provided them with a different basis for racial perceptions from that of some of the conscripts.[56] Furthermore, while several of these respondents also regard their situations in present-day South Africa to be difficult, a large part of their anger is targeted at the previous government.

Despite this general trend, in instances the utterances of former recces more closely resemble those of some other SADF respondents.

> Reconciliation for me is getting more and more difficult because of all the things that [are] happening ... They provoke now a racist hate that did not exist. I was always a racist, but I never hated. It's now getting to the point where I'm starting to hate. [Recce]

The location of blame, however, is different to that expressed by focus-group conscripts. Recces seem, instead, to attribute these attitudes to particular processes in society that they experience as marginalizing or stigmatising of themselves. One of these processes is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission[57]

Ex-SADF members' appraisals of the TRC

Several SADF respondents consider the TRC to have made an important contribution to society by providing information to families of victims of human rights violations.

> On one side, it's good that things are coming out so that if you lost your son, at least now you know [what happened]. I'm not proud of the evidence that's coming out of the ways that Blacks were killed. [Recce]

> I'm glad that there're people that can now say, 'Right my son was murdered, he's buried there.' So at least they get closure on that. And it's bad news. I'm not proud of that and I wasn't involved in that, but it's not nice to hear what some of the guys did to Blacks. It's not right. In my time it was war, genuine war. [Recce]

Despite these relatively positive sentiments, SADF Special Forces respondents particularly, view the TRC as a witch-hunt of apartheid state operatives. Although none of these respondents have themselves interacted with the TRC, some of their friends have done so.[58] Participants in the conscript focus group tended to dismiss questions put to them on the TRC, making comments such as:

> They had to find ways of screwing the white people more than what they can already do. [Conscript group]

Variations on this view are provided by other SADF respondents.

> It's not bringing anything to the table that's constructive. It brings bad feelings and people are now more aggressive instead of solving the problem. [Recce]

> The TRC serves no purpose at all and is nothing more than an ANC orchestrated witch-hunt. It has got nothing to do with reconciliation at all! It has all to do with revenge! ["AT"]

A common complaint is that the Commission was constituted entirely of people aligned with the anti-apartheid forces.

> There is nobody on that TRC that [a] guy that fought under the previous government could feel is an independent or neutral guy. So when he walks into the building he's already in the camp of the enemy. They made a very big mistake there. They should have got people from another country if they really needed it. Or they should have divided [the commissioners amongst] the people [from both sides]. [Recce]

> I believe that if the TRC remains true and fair and apolitical, it is an essential body for healing over a past. But unfortunately ... if anything, the opposite holds true. And that is not creating reconciliation, but rather bitterness and animosity. ["AT"]

The TRC, they claim, is a fundamental factor in the stigmatisation of ex-combatants who were part of the apartheid security forces. Those who have been 'hunted' down suffer the consequences of notoriety, and this hinders their reintegration into society. As one recce said of a former colleague,

> This poor guy just did his bloody job [which] he was ordered to do. But now he's being hunted and his name is published in the newspaper. He is a bad, bad, bad murderer ... You still need a job to survive and if your name has been in the newspaper, [it's] 'Sorry' ... [That's] what's happening now with the TRC ... How does a guy like that feel when everybody zooms

> in on you. You're just this baddy. You cannot do anything right in society. They're making him a violent man which he never was ... Society's making him a violent man, not the military, not his past experience. [Recce]

To differing degrees, respondents concede that some of the targeted individuals did abuse their powers. But the TRC, they argue, has generally honed in on a few of the 'ground guys' who are made to take the flak for an entire security force strategy. In the face of what several of them see as an opposition-orientated process, their own former leaders and strategists rarely make an appearance. Consequently, the TRC process is regarded as another component in their sense of betrayal.

> A lot of the people have carried the can for the generals ... There wasn't an operation that we did that wasn't sanctioned by government. You can't tell me that the State Security Council never knew ... So I feel for those guys. [SADF]

> Political leaders all of a sudden don't know a thing. Adriaan Vlok is now pictured in the Huis Genoot with a Bible, a reborn Christian and he didn't know about Vlakplaas and he didn't know about Eugene de Kock. Of course he knew! Only when they start firing the generals is it that the generals come together and say, 'We must make a plan now to look after ourselves'. But they did not look after the people downwards. [Recce]

> If people should have been punished they should have taken FW de Klerk, Pik Botha, the top cabinet members and [said] 'You are guilty, you maintained apartheid'. But that doesn't happen, they come to the guys at the bottom. [Recce]

The case of Namibia is held up by one of these respondents as having taken a more favourable route to reconciliation. In Namibia, all combatants were granted amnesty and no Truth Commission took place. The effects of this approach, it is claimed, have been more reconciliatory as far as ex-combatants are concerned.

> I think nothing of the TRC. It's a waste of money and time. If we really want reconciliation we must reach the point where we say, 'It's over and gone.' Namibia is the perfect solution ... [There,] both parties agreed that there is total amnesty for all combatants and participants ... [We need] to say, 'We are now in a new future'. Why must certain individuals be taken out and punished? [Former soldiers] feel threatened: they don't know what might happen to them if they appear before this commission, whereas in Namibia the guy felt grateful, thankful to just to be able to lead a normal life ... because of that attitude of forgiveness. [Recce]

The views of other SADF respondents are more diverse than these provided by former recces. For example, some strongly condemn certain individuals who have testified at the TRC.

> And I hope Wouter Basson sits [in jail] for ever. He would have been happy to test some weird disease on us. ["AT"]

Respondents tend to differentiate between various sections and units of the vast apartheid security establishment. The Security Police, Koevoet and the CCB, some consider as deserving of condemnation. Several also express shock and disgust at what they have learned through the TRC process, and there are those respondents who define their own military actions as unjustifiable. Most respondents distance themselves from these activities, arguing that they were professional, accountable soldiers. Sometimes, however, disclosures at the TRC are more closely linked to the units and structures to which respondents belonged, than is comfortable for them. A former parabat, for example, expressed outrage when some of the methods used to dispose of the SWAPO enemy he had been fighting, were revealed.

There is a sense in which these revelations constitute a loss for many of the apartheid state's ex-combatants, whatever they feel about the TRC. Indeed, today most ex-combatants' stories remain untold. The TRC process has gone some way in beginning to uncover our violent history. But by virtue of its role, the memories it provides are (unsurprisingly) almost entirely negative. Former soldiers feel that much of what they may have contributed and experienced has been lost.

> In my two years on the border I NEVER once witnessed any atrocities committed by our own forces, NEVER! ... What I do know is that we gave good medicines etc., to the local population. Funny we never hear about that or the chopper brought in late at night in grave danger to casevac a local ... Will the TRC be complimenting us on this? ["AT"]

Because of the secrecy that shrouded military operations and indeed entire wars during the apartheid era, the experiences of former SADF soldiers have not been previously communicated. Like those of their counterparts, their war stories remain untold.

Ex-MK/SDU members' appraisals of the TRC

MK/SDU and Thokoza SDU respondents' views on the TRC diverge substantially from those of the SADF. Although they have numerous grievances about the implementation of the TRC's objectives, in broad terms they regard it as a positive initiative. In contrast to SADF respondents, several have more to say on the victim component of the TRC than on its perpetrator component. As soldiers in the liberation struggle, they themselves, and their former colleagues, often fall into both victim and perpetrator categories. From the victim's perspective, they identify a number of drawbacks. These include the matter of compensation, the emotional pain revived through the process, and the difficulty of being expected to forgive perpetrators as well as watching them walk free. Although issues of race were raised significantly less by MK/SDU respondents than by ex-SADF members, some also say that efforts towards achieving reconciliation are one-sided: black people are doing all the work.

> This thing is causing me pain: when I see Whites ill-treating Blacks but talking about peace. In the news there was this fat boer who kept human beings in a shack with pigs. That [made it] obvious that these people don't want peace. We are trying to make peace but Whites don't want peace. They cannot put pigs with human beings. [MK/SDU]

In one focus group of ex-MK/SDU cadres, and unlike in other groups, particularly strong anti-TRC feelings were expressed by several respondents. These feelings revolve around a sense of exclusion. They feel that they have been left out of the process. Their views on the TRC echo those concerning the way they have been treated more generally by their organisation. Some see the TRC as a structure serving only people with power. In the same way that they feel they have been neglected while their former leaders have moved on (with their assistance) to powerful and productive positions, they regard themselves as having been marginalised by the TRC.

> 'Coming together' is a wonderful word, but in short, the only people who I know are reconciling are the big guns ... To me [the TRC] is something that has been done behind the scenes ... It is a structure that they have made for themselves, the Madibas together with the Adrian Vloks. [MK/SDU]

They perceive the TRC as attending solely to cases of high-profile people. Again, linking with their other expressions of betrayal, they say that the ANC and the TRC only interact with, and follow up on cases of people they know. That many of them operated internally (as opposed to in exile) is a factor, they say, in not being 'known'. Their main complaint is that the TRC made little effort to involve those on the ground. Their grievances are also intertwined with the marginalised nature of the neighbourhood in which they live. They

argue that the TRC's statement forms were never made available to them. In addition, none of the TRC hearings took place in their locality. The difficulty involved for them, in getting information on the workings of the TRC, and the opportunity to submit their stories is a source of bitterness. Those who wanted to make submissions say that they had to travel to Shell House, incurring substantial transport costs to do so. Here, they encountered confusing bureaucracy and feel they were treated dismissively because they are not 'known'.

> The TRC failed to come here locally ... It only chooses those at that top ... How are you going to get to Shell House if you are not working and don't have money to catch a taxi? [MK/SDU]

> The TRC existed, but it existed in name to some of us ... The problem that we had was that the forms did not reach us on the ground. Others don't understand what those forms are about. It was difficult for a person to go to Shell House and ask for forms. When he gets there, they ask, 'What kind of form are you looking for?' He would just keep quiet ... Those forms were supposed to be taken from Shell House to the [local] branches so that people could be told in clear terms about these forms. [MK/SDU]

> The TRC never got here to our area. Here we are low people, our story here is not known. We are in the bushes, in the dark, there is no help that the TRC has brought. [They should have said], 'Lets go to those people deep down in Soweto to hear what happened.' [MK/SDU]

One respondent who did manage to make a submission draws on the unsatisfactory outcome of the investigation to further illustrate his disillusionment with the ANC and TRC. He and his mother approached the TRC in an attempt to find out the story of his brother's death. In 1976 his brother left the country to join MK. They were told by his friends that he had died in a military camp but this is all they knew, and despite their efforts to find out what happened, they remain none the wiser.

> What I am talking about is [so] painful that I could take a gun and kill myself ... We do not see the work of the TRC. My mother had to struggle to try and solve this thing ... They have sent us to Bloemfontein, spending our last money. We only came back with empty promises, 'Wait, we will call you again'. There is nothing happening, there are no steps being taken. The TRC deals with favouritism. We cannot run away from that! [MK/SDU]

This lack of closure in specific cases is interpreted by some respondents as evidence of bias and favouritism in the TRC's functioning.

> Like that comrade was supposed to be exhumed. So because he was not famous, they exhumed the [other] three [who were buried with him] but the one is still remaining. [MK/SDU]

> The members of the TRC are in favour of one party. They are in favour of the ANC. His brother was in APLA [so that's why the case is not solved]. [MK/SDU]

According to these respondents, the workings of the TRC (in relation to its investigations of human rights violations) have further dashed their expectations.

These MK/SDU respondents' views overlap in a number of ways with those of recce respondents. Although approaching the question from opposite poles, and commenting on opposite processes (victim hearings and amnesty for perpetrators) both groups feel that the functioning of the TRC was partisan. Both feel that it operated to their detriment and that they have been deserted by their former leaders in the process. The outcomes of these betrayals have been opposite experiences. In the case of MK/SDU respondents, their betrayal is their marginalisation from the TRC (too little attention). Recce respondents' betrayal, on the other hand, has been the high-profile attention given to their former colleagues in the process (too much attention).

Regarding the issue of amnesty, MK/SDU and Thokoza SDU respondents often supply conflicting views. Where amnesty has worked to their own (or their friends') benefit, positive appraisals dominate.

> Amnesty is a good thing because some of our comrades have applied for amnesty and they are free now. [MK/SDU]

There is, however, ill feeling on the part of some respondents at the large numbers of political prisoners who remain incarcerated.[59] Furthermore, as is the case for the following respondent, many endured lengthy waits in prison before their cases were heard by the TRC.

> I'm an ex-political prisoner who has been released by the TRC ... I tried by all means to apply to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 [but it] took so long to respond. I [was] released only in November 1998 ... Some people are released, some are not ... Most of our people are lying in jails all over South Africa ... They are angry and they ridicule the TRC. [MK/SDU]

Few MK/SDU respondents had, themselves, applied for amnesty, and said that they would not voluntarily do so. In contrast, Thokoza SDU respondents had all applied for amnesty for their roles in the war. The decision to apply, says one Thokoza SDU, took much explaining. He too criticises the TRC for not adequately educating people on its processes. Many of the prospective applicants, he pointed out, were convinced that they would be arrested for revealing their past actions.

> The other thing which made people negative [towards] the TRC [was a] pure lacking of education and information. It was not fully given to the people to understand ... [At the beginning] my section [were] never [going] to buy the idea of going to the TRC ... They interpreted it without information [and thought], 'If I go there, automatically [the] police will be there, the government will be there [and] I was doing the wrong thing [so] the answer is that we are going to be arrested.' [Thokoza SDU]

While these SDUs did, in the end, apply for amnesty, the same reasoning is employed by several MK/SDU respondents. Without guarantees that amnesty will be granted, they consider it imprudent to apply.

> I will not go and open a case that I have killed a person before they write me a letter [calling me] ... Why must I get myself arrested? I will never get myself arrested [by saying] that I killed a person on a certain day. What if that case is taken and turned into a criminal case, and not a political case? So we must be intelligent when we talk about things such as these. [MK/SDU]

Another point of concern for some MK/SDU respondents is that testifying before the TRC may not remain a matter of their own choice. They were unnerved by the possibility that they could be called to the Commission against their will.

> [If] they come to say the TRC wants information about you, you also have to go forward [to testify]. That is why I say somewhere it is good, somewhere it is bad. [MK/SDU]

A lack of understanding of the criteria for amnesty colour some respondents' views of the process. The following respondent complains that his friend has not been granted amnesty despite his crime having been politically motivated.

> Somehow the TRC is not doing well because some of the comrades have been sentenced but they were fighting for freedom ... They called [my friend] to the TRC and sentenced [him]. [MK/SDU]

It transpires that his friend had murdered IFP members in 1995 and 1996 as revenge for the killings of his friends and family members. Although the murders of those whose deaths he was avenging took place within

the period falling within the TRC's mandate, the revenge killings did not. The respondent, however, expected that his friend would be granted amnesty because of the political nature of the revenge killings.[60]

Former Thokoza SDUs who, as a respondent category, have the most direct experience of the TRC, provide an interesting perspective on the amnesty process, particularly as it relates to issues of reconciliation and revenge. Many of them describe their relief at having had the opportunity to speak about their deeds, and having had these named. Yet, at the same time, they fear the potential consequences of having done this.

> I revealed some of the things which I've done [and that] I was forced by the situation to do. In the TRC I testified that I was the one to give an order to this guy so that he would kill this one. So [now] it's free for me because I'm relieved you know ... I can take out [of me] the thing which is not good. It was not good for me to be a commander but ... I had nowhere to run. That's why I was involved here. On another side, I'm not relieved ... I told them what I did, and there are people who hate me now because I gave an order to kill his younger brother because he was involved in taxi hitman or Inyanga or what[ever]. [Thokoza SDU]

> [The TRC] tried to help us by granting us amnesty so that we were not arrested, but there are other ways where it left us with a question mark. When you appear [at] the TRC you'll find that even the family of that person or those people [that] you did bad things [to] during that situation [are there]. Afterwards, when they look at you, how do they see you? Because one thing's for sure ... if I killed your brother and went to TRC, well – [it] doesn't count that I went to TRC – ... [It] can lead you to hurt me because now you know what I did to your brother. [Thokoza SDU]

> We can say it brought peace but not enough, not enough the way we expected that the TRC [would] bring peace because now it brings back pain to other people, ... the families of those people who died. You come and confess 'I killed', which [before] they didn't know. [And now they can say], 'This is the person who killed' ... They might buy people to hurt you. [Thokoza SDU]

They fear that instead of confirming peace in their communities, the TRC process, by personalising the deeds of the conflict, may result in more violence. They have now provided the families of their victims with knowledge of their identities. A potential consequence, they say, is that they may become the victims of revenge violence.

A minority of other respondents also express fears they have about the TRC. Like the MK/SDU ex-combatants cited above, some respondents in other force categories also have anxieties that they may be called to testify before the Commission, a possibility that is perceived as threatening. In relation to the SADF particularly, the nature of South Africa's warfare in neighbouring countries remains largely undisclosed. Being in possession of some of this information is, for the following respondent, a burden, and something he fears may disrupt his life in the future.

> I never did anything wrong but we participated in operations outside our country where people were killed. The guys I was with didn't apply for amnesty ... I gave it a lot of hard thought, not that I was one of the main guys, but I was there ... I personally don't believe that we were obliged to [apply for amnesty] but there may come a time when people feel we should have ... That is something that worries me to a degree. [Parabat]

The only interviews conducted with ex-IFP SPU members are also informative in this regard. These respondents were very hesitant to be interviewed at all. It emerged that they fear that, if they are seen to be discussing their previous combatant activities, their former superiors will attack them.

> I was scared [to come to the interview] because I didn't know how the leaders were going to take it. They might hit me because I might be telling you the wrong things. That's what we are scared of. We are also scared of the people who were in charge of us at the training camp. [Inkatha SPU]

They acknowledge that the existing evidence for their fears is sparse; they do not themselves have proof that attacks of this nature have actually occurred.

> There is one guy I saw who was beaten and I didn't know who hit him, but I just thought that it's 'them' because I heard people talking about it. [Inkatha SPU]

Nevertheless, they are convinced that their fears are well founded. A central factor in these fears is the TRC.

> [Our former leaders] are very clever. If they hear any information about you or find out what you've been doing ... they don't say anything, they will just make sure that you are 'eliminated'. They know how dangerous you are [because of the information you have]. When the TRC meeting started, our organisation didn't like the TRC. We know that we have secrets and we know that they also know our secrets. They are scared. We think that if we say anything to the TRC, we might get into big trouble. [Inkatha SPU]

Similarly, a SADF respondent perceives the supposed suicide of his former colleague in the late 1990s to have been an assassination conducted by elements in the former state security forces who were attempting to prevent information being revealed. The respondent believes that his ex-colleague, a former Special Forces operative, was likely to be on the verge of 'talking' or betraying the security establishment.

> He was a guy who probably knew and probably did a whole lot of fucking things. He was courageous to the point of stupidity. He would've spilt the beans, if the realisation dawned on him that the credo he had believed in all these years was hollow and false. [SADF]

Neither the SPU nor the SADF respondents are able to substantiate their allegations. Whether they are true or not, powerful suspicions and fears, which revolve around the truths of their pasts, have been instilled into these ex-combatants.

Thokoza SDUs and the Thokoza Monument

"They made it for themselves, not for my friends ..."

On 16 October 1999 the Thokoza Monument was unveiled in Thokoza's infamous Khumalo Street by President Mbeki and IFP president, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The monument is a tombstone displaying the names of approximately 700 people who died in the fighting that tore Thokoza apart during the early 1990s. The purpose of the monument is 'to honour those who lost their lives or went missing during the political conflict that engulfed Thokoza and the surrounding areas before and after the first democratic elections in 1994'.[61] By providing a symbolic representation of the war, it signifies an attempt to ensure that, as President Mbeki said in his address: 'We will never [again] allow a situation where one South African treats another as an enemy ...'.

While Thokoza SDU respondents endorse these sentiments, they perceive the monument in a negative light. In large part this is a result of the process that culminated in the unveiling of the monument – one from which they were excluded. The monument represents for them an appropriation of their own initiative to remember their dead friends. As a result, it also signifies a betrayal by various community leaders and players.

They say that the idea of a memorial was their own, but that it was appropriated and adapted by other members of the community. The grievances expressed by the respondent quoted below are representative of the views of others who spoke about the monument.

> Some of the organisations around here just stole the ideas, making [them] their own. Like the issue of the monument: we were the first people to consult the [town] council on land [for the memorial] and they promised [us] land ... in front of the graveyards ... We had that kind of a dream as youth of the SDU... [We were] just [going] to say [to] each and every victim, 'Come with a brick and then [that brick] will be part of the building [of our memorial]'. That was the initial plan. We were not going to confuse the community [by] being dominated by money ... We were not going to be getting donations from everywhere ... It was just going to be a simple thing that each and every community must be part of ... And then these people of the Displacees' Committee come in ... They took up the idea and said that they want to have ... something like a tombstone, but [they] go further [with the idea. They changed it]. [Thokoza SDU]

Thokoza SDU respondents feel that those who knew about their intention to build a monument let them down by allowing the appropriation to take place.

> Like we did get involved, some of us ... were trying to intervene and ask, 'What is the whole thing of this?' The ANC knew that we had this kind of dream ... but it allow[ed] the project to take place. [Thokoza SDU]

Attempts were made only at the eleventh hour, they say, to involve the SDUs. This, they understand as expedience on the part of the organisers to present the memorial as an inclusive initiative.

> Most of the SDUs were not even involved. During the time of unveiling [was] the first [time] ... we were called in by the ANC. [They were] trying to buy us to be part of that. [Thokoza SDU]

In addition, they allege that the motivations behind organisers' involvement were not always admirable. People used the monument, they say, to further personal agendas. This was at the expense of those who had made genuine contributions to bringing peace to the community. For them, the monument represents a negation of their own central roles both during the war and in the peace initiatives.

> Some of the people have now market[ed] themselves. Some of the people are now being paid. Some of the people have now been recognised, you see ... And then what about the people who were involved? Where are the people who were involved [in] starting to initiate [the peace]? I mean you [had] several peace talks with ... the SDUs and the SPUs ... But at the end of the day, when coming to these kinds of things, we were left out. [Thokoza SDU]

Concerning the monument itself, a number of respondents also express dismay at its impersonal nature. Set against their initial idea they regard it as ill conceived. In their opinion, the venue chosen for the monument, directly outside the noisy sports stadium, is not conducive to remembering the dead.

> The monument is something that we wished for in the community of Thokoza so that it could remind us of our friends ... Most [of] my friends ... did not go [to the unveiling] because we were never informed from the start. The monument was done at [a] place we never liked ... You wouldn't make a remembrance of someone who passed away near a stadium, that doesn't make sense. It's the noise this side and that side ... That is the main thing that didn't make us happy. [Thokoza SDU]

Moreover, some complain that inscriptions are 'packed' together, making it hard to identify their friends' names.

> This thing of the monument didn't make us happy, honestly ... Even now we could go there [and] I wouldn't know if my friend is this one or that one ... because it is packed there, even [with] people we don't know ... The monument, they made for themselves, not for my friends. [Thokoza SDU]

Others say that many of the names of SDUs who died do not appear on the monument.

> Even the SANDF members were there [on the monument] and the SAPS members. It was just joint names of the people. And most of the people, our Jimmies [SDUs], are not written on that wall. That was the negative part of it, that we are not even there. [Thokoza SDU]

The ex-SDUs initially conceived of the monument as a memorial to their friends and the members of their community who died in the conflict. The words of some respondents suggest that, at this stage, they are uncomfortable with the fact that the names of members of the apartheid security forces and Inkatha appear next to those of their friends. Reconciliation was not the ex-SDUs' foremost aim in relation to this specific initiative. Rather, it was to be a dedication to their deceased former colleagues.

Conclusion

"Forgotten is an understatement ..."

Ex-combatants are expected to reintegrate into civilian society and to leave their militarized pasts and accompanying identities behind. Not surprisingly this does not easily happen, especially in contexts where there are few opportunities through which alternative identities can be built. In South Africa, ex-combatants are often ill-equipped to make this transition and the communities into which they are expected to integrate are equally unprepared for negotiating the soldiers' return or the ending of their combatant status'. At the level of broader society, mechanisms to assist with the reintegration of ex-combatants are apparently either absent, inadequate or failing. Rather than the development of support mechanisms to facilitate the stressful process, exclusionary, and sometimes conflictual, relations are produced or reproduced.

'We have been wished away' states one ex-combatant describing the sense of collective amnesia on the part of society, which is felt across respondent categories. Indeed, society appears reluctant to engage with either the combatant histories or contemporary situations of the key protagonists of its recent conflict. While for many South Africans, the expectations with which the ending of conflict was contemplated have not been met, and there is a sense that little has actually changed, ex-combatants' relationships to society have often changed fundamentally. Former superiors and respective communities now tend to either ignore, or distance themselves from the people who not so long ago, they urged into armed action.

This 'loss' of memory can be attributed, at least in part, to the secrecy under which these armed actions took place. As a result, much of what the soldiers experienced did not enter public knowledge and thus public memory. South Africa's largest exercise in uncovering the violent past, the TRC, because of its focus and the limitations of its mandate, also leaves 'ordinary' soldier experiences largely invisible. And few today seem interested in uncovering these while some may even have interests in keeping them hidden. But without at least some acknowledgement from society of these histories, and a commitment to understanding how they continue to impact on these individuals, ex-combatants' efforts to reconcile their militarised identities with present realities will be severely undermined.

By focusing attention on ex-combatants only when they are perceived as a security threat, will contribute to their further stigmatization and marginalisation. Thus far, contemporary public attention in relation to ex-combatants has tended to be restricted to the involvement, or potential involvement, of some in crime. This while their broader transitioning experiences and challenges are not engaged with. Not engaging with their experiences and focusing on ex-combatants primarily in relation to crime may have serious consequences for their reintegration specifically, and reconciliation more generally. As such, important insights into and opportunities for reducing violence in South African society are likely to be missed.

The framing of this study in relation to questions of violence presents the potential danger of contributing to the further stigmatization and criminalising stereotyping of 'ex-combatants'. However, this study does not measure the involvement of ex-combatants in violence but rather explores how violence impacts on their lives.

By exploring respondents' various relationships to violence in South Africa, the commonalities shared across categories of ex-combatants, and between ex-combatants and society more broadly, emerge. Conventionally, ex-combatants are perceived as 'tending-to-violence', the implicit assumption being that their receiving communities are relatively harmonious. However, respondents' articulations of their own violence or violence-potential underscore the extent to which these are thoroughly embedded in the violence pervasive

in society generally. As with other people in the country, the fear and effects of victimisation are central. Similarly, frustrations at their lived realities in post-conflict South Africa, which, for many, continue to be characterised by socio-economic hardship and exclusion, are far from unique.

As some of the actors closest to the violence of our past, ex-combatants provide an entry point into understanding the dynamics of past violence and the continuing impact of this violence: at the personal level, the community level, and for contemporary society. As such their experiences shed light on the challenges of reconciliation and the complex nature of attempting to heal the effects of violence in a society emerging from a history of conflict. In addition, their stories point to the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of contemporary conflict and violence. Indeed, while all South Africans are, to differing degrees, having to adapt to life in the 'new' South Africa, the situation of ex-combatants can be considered to represent the problems and possibilities inherent in the process of transition that society as a whole is experiencing.

Endnotes

1 The following interviews and focus groups were conducted during the research phase of this report: three focus groups with former members of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and former members of Self Defence Units (SDUs) aligned to the African National Congress (ANC); one focus group with former Thokoza SDUs; one focus group with female partners of Thokoza SDUs and one with relatives of Thokoza SDUs; one focus group with former conscripts of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and one focus group with female relatives of former SADF conscripts. In addition, a total of 26 interviews were conducted with former members of MK, APLA, SDUs, Self Protection Units (SPUs), the SADF and other key informants. Further to these research participants, discussions held with additional relevantly-placed individuals contributed to information gathering and data analysis.

2 ' Demobilisation' is used here in its broad sense. It refers to all of South Africa's ex-combatants who are no longer part of the state's armed structures, and not only to the former members of the Non-Statutory Forces (MK and APLA) who were affected by the formal demobilisation process.

3 For a breakdown of different ex-combatant groupings in South Africa, see Gear, S. *Now that the War is Over: Ex-Combatants, Transition and the Question of Violence. A Literature Review.* CSVR report.

4 This is not to say that the histories of many ex-combatants do not fall more clearly into either an 'MK' or an 'SDU' description. Rather, as far as most of our respondents are concerned, the categories are blurred.

5 See, *Report on Ex-Combatants in KwaZulu Natal*, unpublished report, CSVR, December 2000. This report was commissioned by the CSVR and based on the KwaZulu Natal interviews.

6 In instances the words of ex-SADF soldiers are cited merely as 'SADF'. This is in line with requests made by some respondents who fear the possible consequences of more precise identification.

7 ArmyTalk http://moo.sun.ac.za/mailman/listinfo/armytalk/

8 The Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) was a special unit of the SADF.

9 See section, Community Expectations, Perceptions and the Stigmatisation of Ex-combatants.

10 See also section, Violence and Crime, 'Processes to integrate armed forces – compounding problems of militarisation?'

11 See also comments regarding the Thokoza Monument in section, Revenge Violence, Former Enemies and Reconciliation.

12 Ex-combatants in KwaZulu Natal raised a number of these problems during interviews in 2000. See R*eport on Ex-Combatants in KwaZulu Natal*. Unpublished. CSVR.

13 The minimum age for integration was 18 years.

14 Frankel, P. (2000). *Soldiers in a Storm*. Colorado and Oxford: Westview Press.

15 See unpublished CSVR report, *Report on Ex-Combatants in KwaZulu Natal*. December 2000.

16 A *shebeen* is an informally-run bar, usually based in a house.

17 It is not clear whether only those SDUs who had received training from either MK or APLA instructors were included on the CPR for integration, as is implied by this respondent. SDUs who had not received any formal training may also have found their way onto the register.

18 The situation for former SADF members is not clear-cut, especially for those who wanted to remain in the force. Some felt that liberation-movement cadres received preferential treatment in terms of integration options, and that ex-SADF members were deliberately excluded at the end of their fixed-term contracts. 'Ex-soldiers leave border post after protest'. *The Star*, 21 November 2001.

19 For a discussion on this role, see section, Violence and Crime.

20 Kathorus refers to the East Rand townships of Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus.

21 According to the parents, this counselling was provided by the National Peace Accord Trust. Some of the boys attended the NPAT's Wilderness Trails.

22 TRC Final Report, Volume Two, Chapter Two, para 20.

23 See section, Betrayal; and this section, 'Current experiences of stigmatisation' – below.

24 Interestingly, the escaping from identities worked both ways. His family, he reports, 'wanted to use my identity as an AZANYU member to protect the father from intimidation. That's when I thought, 'No, I must move out of here'.'

25 Importantly, there was not always a clear distinction between sympathiser, non-sympathiser and enemy during the apartheid era. In a context of repression and counter-terror, coercive power and fear permeated actions and beliefs. As one MK respondent explained, 'The community would be brought under false pretences that you are the terrorist and you are someone who is not good to live with ... Our people were [made] to believe that the South African Police were there to look after them and the soldiers were protecting the country ... I would say, 'Those people are not looking out for our safety but ... for us to be contained, so that we may not grow and prosper' ... Whilst they understood, there was that fear, the brutality of the system was such that even your father would tell you, 'Look my son, I appreciate all the values that you stand for but I cannot take is to be kicked, *klapped* in front of my kids, and your mother. I cannot make my house a stop-by for security forces, for abuse.'

26 The conflict mirrored other hotspots on the Reef where mainly hostel residents were pitted against elements in the neighbouring township. Unlike elsewhere, however, some township residents joined forces with the hostel and the territorial frontline expanded beyond hostel walls, encompassing the residential area adjacent to the hostel, known as Phenduka.

27 The nature of the SDU relationships with communities varied from location to location, and to a significant extent reflected the degree to which SDU elements were associated with criminal enterprise. Communities were also affected by internal SDU rivalry and conflict. At Sharpeville in the Vaal Triangle, for example, internal SDU conflict during the early 1990s resulted in the community being divided territorially, and in a cycle of attacks and counter-attacks that created no-go areas and pervasive fear. This situation was exacerbated by attacks by 'faceless' killers, believed to be supporters of the IFP, and by suspicions of police complicity. In this context, even criminal elements within SDU structures provided some measure of protection.

28 Not all East Rand SDUs were financed by local communities. Some relied on crime. Reasons for this included the fact that in some sections SDUs were the only community members who remained during the violence. Families fled and the boys and young men were left to protect their properties. As one former SDU put it, 'We had [an] all-boys town after the old people ran away: the area was conducted by boys'.

29 The parameters of legitimate action by both SDUs and liberation movement elements more broadly, remain a complex and contested area, and impact on notions of and attitudes towards enemies and victims. This usually involves some level of distinction between military and civilian targets, (although in some cases – i.e. APLA – this distinction was never drawn). In general, this distinction was not clear-cut, as evidenced by some of the lengthy debates that came before the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC). There is a broad understanding, while not necessarily agreement, however, that perpetrators can be 'victims' and, as such, former enemies can also be categorised as 'victims'.

30 The AWB is the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging or, in English, the Afrikaner Resistance Movement.

31 Unlike many black townships that experienced the brunt of violence, suburban white South Africa was a comparably safe and peaceful environment. See also section, Betrayal.

32 Mass-based opposition to the apartheid system, and the lack of policing for black communities meant that during the struggle, comrades frequently became the de facto authors and enforcers of law in their communities. While the official law of the country by no means endorsed their activities, it had the unintended effect of legitimising them in large sections of the broader population.

33 Implicit in their equation of the Firearm legislation with a disarmament of Whites is the assumption that Whites possess licensed weapons, and Blacks, unlicensed weapons.

34 In 1993, Willem Ratte, a former Special Forces operator, took possession of a military base, Fort Schanskop outside of Pretoria. Although he was convicted and sentenced to five years for storing explosives, his occupation of the fort was non-violent. Following his release, Ratte was subsequently arrested and charged with the theft of weapons from the SANDF's Pomfret base in 1997.

35 This question is covered in more detail in section, Violence and Crime, 'Outbursts of aggression and violence'.

36 As discussed above, their expectations of how they should respond in this context appear to be connected to their militarised backgrounds. In addition, they draw distinctions between 'war' violence and 'crime' violence.

37 A SADF respondent also raised concerns about being under the surveillance of the National Intelligence Agency.

38 According to one respondent, those former SDU members primarily involved in these activities are those that received some sort of professional counselling following the violence. See section, Trauma and Distress.

39 This initiative took place under the Kathorus Presidential Lead Project. See also section, Violence and Crime, 'Processes of armed forces integration – compounding problems of militarization?'

40 Mistry, D. (2001). *Perpetrators of farm attacks: An offender profile*. (conference presentation). Institute for Human Rights and Criminal Justice Studies. Technikon South Africa. Abstract sourced at http://www.crimeinstitute.ac.za/

41 On the way back from one such robbery the SDU commander referred to was shot and paralysed. He was sentenced to 13 years, which, owing to his disability, he is serving in the community.

42 Thokoza SDU respondents had not in fact received any formal training. They learnt to handle weapons 'on the job'.

43 The perception that ex-combatants are harbouring weapons is not then limited to the police.

44 'Taxi hitman sentenced to three life terms'. *SAPA*, 12 December 2000. http://www.iol.co.za index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=qw976629660332B263

45 These relationships contrast with those in some Thokoza SDUs where former members have utilized the strong bonds between themselves to provide support and develop initiatives for ex-members.

46 Other factors contributing to these deaths reportedly include brandishing of firearms and resultant clashes, assassinations connected to pending cases in which community constables were required to give evidence, and being targeted by criminals for their firearms.

47 They were usually housed in a military base, and participated in groups for wives of recces. As the wife of a former recce explains: 'We couldn't reach out too much. That's why we kept in a group like this in military surroundings. It was safer there because everybody knows when their husbands are gone, that they have to support each other. You also respect the fact that you don't ask another soldier's wife where her husband has gone to ... We never knew when they were coming back again. The day when they step in the door, then you know they are back again. So it was quite big uncertainty that our lives [were] based on ... and that is why it has been such a big challenge to cope'.

48 They stress however that these cases are rare. SADF Special Force respondents maintain that as specially selected, highly trained professional soldiers who had chosen to follow an elite career path, they were not susceptible to traumatic stress and its manifestations.

49 'Flossie' is a South African military colloquialism for a large troop-carrying aircraft.

50 'Uitklaar' or 'klaaring out' was a purely administrative process that soldiers underwent on leaving a unit (for leave, following operations, or final discharge). It involved completing an 'uitklaar' form and handing in one's military kit.

51 The evacuation of a casualty.

52 *Sangomas* and *Inyangas* are traditional healers. They are differentiated from each other by the different methods they employ in their work.

53 *Muti* is traditional medicine.

54 Although most of these respondents speak Zulu themselves, they distinguish between themselves as Zulu speakers and the 'Green Zulus', who were in the ranks of the IFP enemy. Green Zulus speak 'deep' Zulu and have their origins in the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal. As one respondent explained, 'I'm not a green Zulu. A green Zulu is one that cannot understand. Most of them didn't go to school. At the time they [should have gone to school] they had to chase the cows'.

55 For discussion on this soccer team, see section, Violence and Crime, 'Ex-combatants and criminal involvement'.

56 Obviously a range of other socialising experiences also feed such attitudes. The military is only one factor, and that which is under consideration here. Respondents however frequently link their attitudes on race to their military experiences.

57 Primary research was conducted and the bulk of this report was written while the Truth Commission was still operational. Much of the analysis as well as comments from interviewees therefore relate to the Commission in a contemporary context.

58 These are generally people who they had met in the military, but who had moved into other specialised units such as the CCB.

59 Similarly, (on a very much smaller scale) men captured as SADF soldiers remain in Zimbabwe prisons. A former recce had this to say on the matter, 'There's not even an effort being made to get them out now. You know if the ANC government uses its common sense, it would [score] a lot of points for going and getting them out.'

60 The question remains as to what to do about events that occurred later than the period that the TRC was mandated to address.

61 Programme, Thokoza Monument unveiling ceremony.

Acknowledgements

Deep-felt thanks to all participants for giving your time and sharing your stories.

Thank you also to the following people:

Piers Pigou for ongoing guidance, encouragement, and editing assistance.

Bronwyn Harris for support of a remarkable, 'way-beyond-the-call-of-friendship-or-colleagueship', kind, through-out the process. Tony Roshan Samara for your astonishing assistance and care in the strenuous final throws. Craig Higson-Smith, Barbara English and Helen Hajiyiannis for editing help and feedback.

Sally Sealy, Dumisane Simelane, Jenny Irish, Steve Manjaro Corry, Michelle Kay, Lukas Bakkes, Paul Thulare, Quinton B. Painter, Steve Terblans, Henri Bosshof, Thabo Rangake, Hezekiel Mothupi; John Dovey, Barry Fowler and 'ArmyTalk' subscribers; as well as those of you at various veterans' associations and elsewhere, who helped to make the research happen.

Kindiza 'saturday-work' Ngubeni, Joy Dladla, Jeffrey Ndumo, Benjamin Dlolo and Traggy Maepa for your facilitation and translation support. Phineas Riba, Mona Saungweme, Pearl Munonde and Nicky Harris for transcriptions and translations. David Macfarlane and Amanda Dissel for putting up with it all.

Colleagues at the CSVR particularly David Bruce, Nokothula Skhosana, Tebogo Mafokoane, Lazarus Kgalema, Hugo van der Merwe, Polly Dewhirst, Sibusiso Ntuli, Lauren Segal, Jonny Steinberg, Yvette Geyer, Frances Spencer and Mary Roberson for encouragement, advice and debriefing.

To Tsepe Motumi, Jabu Dada, Kees Kingma, Martinho Chachiua, Jacklyn Cock, Mafole Mokalobe, Pops Mashike, Guy Lamb, Michelle Parlevliet, Ntombi Mosikare, Thandi Shezi, Trudy de Ridder, Janet Cherry and Mikki van Zyl for generously sharing your knowledge in the area.

Brandon Hamber and Wardie Leppan for your support of the project. Thanks also to Aurora International, particularly Jim Statman; and to Rachel Prinsloo and Clint van der Walt of Technikon South Africa for support and assistance in getting the research into a public arena.

We gratefully acknowledge the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for the funding that made the study possible.

The United States Department of Labor has generously funded the publication of this report. Many thanks.