

DEFENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Professional services protecting the interests of peace-loving people

The major trend since independence has been towards the creation of a defence force biased towards the ruling party and influenced by tribal and ethnic elements. The process of politicization of the armed forces culminated in 2002, when the armed forces chiefs stated that they would not accept anyone as President (and therefore as Commander-in-Chief) who did not have clearly established liberation war credentials.

Furthermore, the four-year military intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998 came at considerable cost. In addition to the financial cost of over US\$1.8 billion, the army and air force lost a significant, and as yet undisclosed, number of combatants and officers and a large part of their equipment. The armed forces came out of this conflict a shadow of their former selves, and the subsequent collapse of the economy and the support infrastructure for the armed forces has led to further erosion of its capacity and competence.

The army has also been very badly affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with up to 60 per cent of the junior ranks having been found to be HIV-positive. Deaths, coupled with widespread resignations and desertions, have decimated the forces in terms of trained and experienced officers and ordinary soldiers. The suspension of the British training programme and sanctions in terms of the supply of arms and spare parts have further reduced the effectiveness of the army. The induction of thousands of youth militia into the ranks of the armed forces has compounded rather than solved this problem.

The primary objectives of the MDC's defence policy will be to:

-  Depoliticize the defence forces so that they serve the interests of the nation, not those of the political party in government.
-  Maintain an appropriately sized, highly trained professional army and air force that is capable not only of defending national interests but also of participating in international peace-keeping and peace-making activities.
-  Equip the defence forces with modern, up-to-date equipment, geared to helping with domestic and regional emergencies and needs.

The Defence Force Services Commission will be overhauled and new independent, qualified members appointed in consultation with commanders of the Zimbabwe National Army and the Air Force of Zimbabwe. It will be the responsibility of this

Commission to review and oversee senior appointments and promotions, as well as general working conditions and salaries of all personnel.

The veterans of the Liberation War will be regarded not as part of the armed forces but as a pressure group with special interests. The MDC's policies towards veterans appear in the social security section of this document and are directed towards providing proper pension and other welfare benefits to all genuine veterans.

THE ZIMBABWE NATIONAL ARMY

Reorganization and Right-sizing

In 2007, the army is thought to stand at about 35,000 men and women of all ranks. In addition, there are thousands of militia who have been trained by the State for use as a political force. It is clear that Zimbabwe, which has no significant external threats and should not have any internal problems under a democratic government, will quickly be faced with the need to sharply reduce the total number of personnel in the national army.

The MDC government will plan for an overall reduction in staff to levels more appropriate for a small country with no significant threats, yet at the same time will attend to the run-down nature of the military in terms of equipment and training.

Normal attrition, as a result of resignations, retirements and deaths, is expected to reduce the total number of personnel in the armed forces. It will also be necessary to cut back total numbers by offering soldiers retirement and other incentives to leave the army. The MDC will provide financially for a systematic retirement programme on decent benefits for those who might wish to take early retirement. Pension and medical aid arrangements will be put in place to give effect to this programme, which will be voluntary.

The MDC will conduct an overall review of the level of staffing in the armed forces, the status of existing units, and what is required to bring the armed forces to the standard and level that is considered desirable and sustainable. The objective of this exercise will be to right-size the army for predicted future needs, including the possibility of extensive service overseas in the employ of the United Nations. Consultation will take place with the UN to determine the possibility of Zimbabwe's participation and the terms and conditions that would apply with a view to a significant number of the armed forces taking part in UN peace-keeping operations. These considerations will then be incorporated into any right-sizing programme that is implemented.

Following this review, and to maintain a smaller, professional army that is capable of both international deployment and meeting the needs of the nation, the MDC government will then embark on a programme to revise employment and living conditions for all army personnel, which will include a comprehensive programme designed to address the health problems in the armed forces. Use will be made of the rationalization exercise to identify and upgrade army barracks for future use, while those no longer required will be turned over to local authorities for housing and other purposes.

Army Medical Services

It is acknowledged that many army personnel are presently HIV-positive. The MDC government will implement a programme to ensure that all army personnel have access to voluntary counselling and testing and that antiretroviral therapy is available to all who need it.

Advanced Training

A scholarship programme for army personnel, both men and women, will be introduced to allow well-educated staff to go to institutions of higher learning to become specialists. Such personnel will be required to serve two years with the army prior to application and to work for the army upon graduation for the same length of time as the training course followed.

Efforts will be made to use all opportunities that are available for advanced military training in developed countries with the appropriate facilities and programmes.

THE AIR FORCE OF ZIMBABWE

The Air Force of Zimbabwe, another institution with a proud record, has also been reduced to a shadow of its former self and now requires complete overhaul. Expert advice will be sought on the requirements for new equipment.

An agreed programme of staff adjustments and training will be undertaken to ensure the creation of a small but competent air force capable of serving Zimbabwe's needs. In particular, the possibility of using the air force to train pilots and crew as well as maintenance engineers will be examined. Such personnel will then be required to serve in the force for a period similar to that of their training before being released for civilian employment.

The MDC will also examine the possibility of the air force taking partial responsibility, as in other countries, for ministerial and presidential travel.

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION

The strength of the CIO is not public knowledge but is thought to be very substantial. The Organization has been abused by successive governments to subvert democracy and the rights of the general populace. It has also been used for subversion and political assassinations and is widely feared.

The MDC government will seek an international, professional partner to work with it to review the operations of the CIO and to decide its future role, perhaps as an arm of the Zimbabwe Republic Police Service. It will no longer be run through a presidential vote and its budget will be controlled by Parliament. A parliamentary committee will be created to oversee the CIO, its funding and activities, and will report to Cabinet and Parliament.

Members of the CIO who undertake illegal acts will face the full force of the independent legal system.