***Apartheid* South Africa’s intelligence failures: Angola 1975, and beyond**

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**Abstract**

In October of 1975, the South African Defence Force (SADF) launched Operation *Savannah*. The operation quite rapidly turned into an abject military failure, with the South African intelligence apparatuses shouldering a significant portion of the blame. (Warwick, 2012) Drawing on a vast number of south African archival sources, this paper examines the structural and doctrinal causes for South Africa’s poor performance in Angola in 1975 and argues that, due to an almost pathological obsession with the internal security of the *Apartheid* system as a whole, the work of South African Military Intelligence (SAMI) was significantly hamstrung by the competing security requirements of the South African state.

Formed from the outset as an organisation designed to quell internal risings by disaffected Africans, the SADF and its attendant Military Intelligence system had been forced to adapt to more conventional military intelligence work by the twin challenges of the Second World War and the emergent Cold War. However, by the 60s and 70s, disengagement from international organisations and the British Commonwealth brought about by Pretoria’s intransigence on its policy of *Apartheid* prompted political-doctrinal shifts that again focused SAMI’s attention inwards, towards matters of internal security (Frankel 1984). The so-called “securitisation” of the Vorster government during that time, did not, however, rationalise and reform intelligence systems—instead complicating their operations, muddying jurisdictions, diluting and duplicating efforts, and prompting outright political competition between four major South African organisations: SAMI, the national Bureau of State Security (BOSS), the South African Police’s Special Branch (SB) and the Foreign Ministry’s own intelligence system. Together, this awkward system persisted in an alliance with Salazar’s Portugal (governing the territories of Mozambique and Angola) and Ian Smith’s Rhodesia, undergirded by an assumption that that an anti-revolutionary firewall of settler states could be sustained well into the 1980s. (Meneses, Rosa and Martins, 2017).