The military code of Umkhonto we Sizwe

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

I. Umkhonto we Sizwe
A People's Army

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

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

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

The founding Manifesto of Umkhonto we Sizwe is our definitive declaration of intent, and an essential guide to the reasons for the creation and aims of this, the People's Army. We append the Manifesto to this Code, to be studied and understood by every Umkhonto combatant. It was no coincidence of our people. That is the major distinction between our people's revolutionary army and the army and wholly militarised authoritarian armed forces of the racists, imperialists and reactionary regimes. Umkhonto, with arms in hand, are political activists and leaders, as well as warriors. This combination of political and military functions is characteristic of all popular, revolutionary armies especially in the phase of guerrilla warfare.

II. The political and military struggle

Umkhonto we Sizwe is the fighting arm of the ANC and its allies. Our armed struggle is a continuation of our political struggle by means that include armed force. The political leadership has primacy over the military. Our military line derives from our political leadership, which in turn is determined by the popular will of the ANC and its allies. To defeat the enemy, we derive moral support from the active support and participation of all who resist oppression, discrimination, poverty and injustice.

Our People's Army

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

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

An Umkhonto combatant has the opportunity to serve in the forefront of the liberation struggle, to meet the enemy and engage him with modern weapons, to become an instrument of the people who, at all times, is determined to serve and protect the people and his fellow comrades-in-arms.

When the time was ripe for violent forms of struggle, our people understood and supported the decision to take up arms. They clearly understood long ago as December 1961, that our Movement had exhausted all peaceful avenues, and that the oppressor had imposed on us a war situation. The alternative to armed struggle was submission. As the Umkhonto Manifesto declared: "The People's patience is not endless. The time comes in the life of any nation when there remains only two choices - submit or fight. That time has now come in South Africa."

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

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

Our People's Army

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

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

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remains only two choices - submit or fight. That time has now come in South Africa. Umkhonto we Sizwe will be at the forefront of the liberation struggle. Umkhonto we Sizwe is the fighting arm of the ANC and its allies. Umkhonto is a people's army fighting a people's war. We fight to liberate our oppressed and exploited people. We fight for their interests. Umkhonto we Sizwe fights to liberate our people from racial discrimination, national oppression and exploitation.

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Revolutionary Discipline and Consciousness

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

Bourgeois and reactionary armies, like those of the Nationalist regime, use mechanical and robot-like obedience to control the troops. The people's army has a different conception of discipline and loyalty. Umkhonto soldiers are volunteers, willing and trained to carry our orders in the knowledge that instant obedience is the key to the safety of life, both of the individual and his comrades-in-arms, and to protect the people whom he serves.

Umkhonto soldiers pledge themselves to safeguard the revolution at all times, regardless of personal hardship and danger. A soldier who breaks discipline, disobeys commands, or by improper conduct betrays the high standards of our army, and is regularly punished. Such punishment is necessary to maintain the qualities expected of a people's army. Every attempt is made to correct bad behaviour and rehabilitate members who violate the army's code. But punishment is severe in cases of criminal neglect endangering the safety of others and the security of the army.

Our procedure and rules are well defined, precise, and to the point. Military orders are issued with a definite purpose and must be obeyed. It is the duty and responsibility of every soldier to know and understand the army's code of conduct, to recognise his military commanders, to be clear about his own duties, and to carry out orders immediately and without question. This is the duty and responsibility of every soldier to know and understand the army's code of conduct, to recognise his military commanders, to be clear about his own duties, and to carry out orders immediately and without question. Orders must be obeyed cheerfully, promptly, and exactly. A soldier who does not understand an order has a right to have it explained. He must know
The wilful or negligent disclosure of classified information to unauthorised persons, and the unauthorised acquisition and/or retention of secrets and classified documents shall be an offence.

2. All combatants must defend the ANC and Umkhonto, the army and the liberation. The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

a) Disloyalty or deception designed or likely to give assistance to the enemy.

b) Rebellion or revolt against the army command or part of it or attempts to commit such an act of rebellion or revolt.

c) Conduct which causes despondency, spreads a spirit of defeatism, or undermines morale in any member or section of the army.

d) Cowardly conduct in the face of the enemy.

e) Wilful disobedience or refusal of orders properly given by a commander.

f) Desertion from the army.

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

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

a) Conduct that weakens the people's trust, confidence and faith in the ANC and Umkhonto.

b) The conduct of a comrade or the people, looting of property, or other forcible seizure of goods.

c) Abuse of authority and/or power

d) Cruelty inflicted on a member of the army or public.

e) Assaults, rape, disorderly conduct, the use of insulting and/or offensive language, bullying and intimidation, whether against a comrade or member of the public.

f) Shameful conduct likely to disgrace the ANC, army or the offender, or bring them into disrepute, or provoke indignation and contempt against them, such as violating the rights and dignity of the opposite sex, whether in operational or base areas.

Cruelty against the enemy.

Cruelty against any person.

Unjustifiable homicide.

Ilistri-ment of prisoners of war or persons in custody.

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

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

a) Failure to protect commanders and comrades against assaults or attacks.

b) Wilful or negligent destruction or misuse of the property and/or funds of the ANC and army.

c) Failure to submit and hand over to the commanding authority properly tagged or acquired during military operations.

d) Negligence in handling, using or storing and loss of weapons.

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

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

a) Absence without permission.

b) Escaping or attempting to escape from the custody of a competent authority.

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

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

a) Smoking dagga or using other harmful drugs or being in unauthorised possession of the same.

b) Neglect of duty.

c) Drunkenness on duty and/or in public.

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

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

7. All members of the ANC and Umkhonto shall act in such a manner that the people will put their trust in us, recognise us as the protector, and accept the liberation movement as their legitimate and authentic representative.

The following acts or omissions shall be an offence:

a) Conduct that weakens the people's trust, confidence and faith in the ANC and Umkhonto.

b) The conduct of a comrade or the people, looting of property, or other forcible seizure of goods.

c) Abuse of authority and/or power

8. Punishment.

All members of the ANC and Umkhonto are required to respect the terms of the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War, in keeping with the formal acceptance by the ANC of these terms in 1981.

Any violation of these terms shall be an offence.

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

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

1. Reprimand or rebuke administered in private or public.

2. Suspension from duty for a specified period.

3. Fatigue and drills.

4. Restriction with hard labour for a specified period determined by the commanding officer.

5. Demotion from a position of responsibility.

6. Restriction in a rehabilitation centre.

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

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

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

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

5. It is strictly forbidden to point a weapon, loaded or otherwise, at any person other than our enemy, without proper cause, lose, misuse, transfer or give to the enemy.

6. Those entrusted with the handling of such material.

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

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

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

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

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

12. All transfer and movement of war materials from one area to the other shall be entrusted to the Ordinance Department.

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

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

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**THE BATTLE OF NYATUWE**

(Related by Comrade Rogers, a Wankie veteran)

We reached Nyatubo early in the morning before sunrise. After establishing an outpost and detailing some comrades for guard duties, I instructed Masimini to seize the ridge and then rush towards us to the south of the river. The ridge was steep and rocky, and the enemy was forced to take cover.

The hill was a very strategic position because it overlooked the river and suspended our supplies of ammunition. At 08.30 hrs, a deafening salvo of automatic rifles fire from all directions broke the silence. From the sound, I knew the weapons were not ours. I gave the order: "SURRENDER!"

When I lifted my head a long burst went off and the ZAPU comrade who was manning the outpost 200m from me was hit. The enemy was firing from hip position and the shots made by their weapons overwhelmed ours. Their fire pinned me down. I lay flat as I was on the ground, with bullets hitting the sand all around me.

This sudden volley from the enemy, caught us off-guard. Masimini, a brave soldier in NK, was firing from hip position and the enemy was only a few metres away. He was alone manning another position.

As we were running towards the ridge, the enemy continued firing. They saw I was pinned down, Masimini and I had sub-machine guns and they took cover in a small bush which proved to be a natural obstacle to the enemy. With long burst of the three guns, the enemy was forced to take cover.

In a few seconds I was up, took my bag and gun, told Masimini and Sibanyoni to come with me. We met Zami (Bothwell Tamare) who was alone manning another position, firing at the enemy. The fire was heavy. I thought the enemy was trying to take control of the area.

Suddenly the enemy burst out from the trees and there were helicopters hovering over us. We took positions and Masimini joined, followed by Sharp (MC). We were five. None of the comrades took position because of lack of cover.

We ignored it. Just when I was beginning to fall asleep, I think about the 08.30 hrs, a deafening salvo of automatic rifles fire from all directions broke the silence. From the sound, I knew the weapons were not ours. Then I heard a hoarse voice bellowing: "SURRENDER!"

When I lifted my head a long burst went off and the ZAPU comrade who was manning the outpost 200m from me was hit. The enemy was firing from hip position and the shots made by their weapons overwhelmed ours. Their fire pinned me down. I lay flat as I was on the ground, with bullets hitting the sand all around me.