

## **MEC VR Shongwe on the history and the importance of the role played by Umkhonto Wesizwe at a Gala Dinner in Graceland on the 02<sup>nd</sup> July 2012.**

Ladies and Gentlemen I will not greet you again because I did that earlier today.

When we were conceptualizing on the summit we there were a number of things that we had to consider. Amongst those were issues of patriotism, selflessness, volunteerism and commitment to die for your country.

One cannot have that kind of attitude of dying for your country unless you are a patriot. We should be patriots in our thoughts and in action.

One can better express this view by bringing in a typical example on the concept of patriotism hence I want to take this opportunity to talk to you about the Armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto Wesizwe, the spear of the nation. I am deliberately doing that because earlier today Military Veterans from both Umkhonto Wesizwe and APLA were honored.

I felt it was proper that we take a little bit of our time to look at the role played by this fearless brave men and woman who left the country to train as soldiers to come back to fight the system.

The then social contradictions brought about conflict in the country around issues of land, minerals, wealth and apartheid. Young men and woman took it upon themselves to confront the system through an armed struggle. In their minds was a determination to contribute to the country so that when and free its people from oppression by another.

As the Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison together with the Justice cluster cannot win this fight alone but we need the participation of all people hence the structures like CPF's and so forth.

The President of the country, Honorable Jacob Zuma took time to honour distinguished members of both Umkhonto Wesizwe (MK) and Apla, the armed wing of the PAC.

I thought as we enjoy our meal in this Gala Dinner, lets briefly look at the history which led to the President of the Country to honor, particularly the ANC aligned Armed wing, uMkhonto Wesizwe.

The reason is obvious, I am a member of the ANC and I understand its programs, its structures and wings better than that of the PAC. I am not privy to their history and operation and I don't want to distort their history.

History correctly captures that the African National Congress (ANC) in 1961, established MK as its political army. MK was established to fight against apartheid, at a time when all other forms of resistance and engagements with the Government had failed.

MK then embarked on series of sabotage operations which were executed by cadres who had some prior engineering knowledge and could manufacture the explosive devices. At the same time, new recruits were sent to receive training abroad and in many African countries which includes Angola, Tanzania and Algeria.

This is a clear indication of the level of involvement and commitment other African countries to see a South Africa that is free. We must as South Africans acknowledge and appreciate the fact that frontline states provided so much support the freeing our country and we must always honor and respect liberation movements like FRELIMO, MPLA, Zanu PF, ect.

We have a moral and political obligation to ensure that we live by the ideals of all those who perish in the course of the struggle, fighting for freedom, justice, stability, peace and security.

We have lost too many precious lives during the struggle patriots who paid the ultimate price. We must never forget their names and we must always be inspired by their sacrifices to fight that South Africa is truly free.

Free from crime, racism, underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment and all sorts of social ill.

Let me briefly tell you about some of most important milestones in the life of the ANC Armed Wing, Umkhonto weSizwe, the Spear of the Nation.

It was on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1961 that uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) was formed by the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and other fraternal organizations.

It immediately announced its arrival by a series of bomb blasts against apartheid structures in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban.

In January 1962, Nelson Mandela left South Africa for military training in Algeria.

1963-1964 October - June, The Rivonia trial, which results in MK high command members Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni and Elias Motsoaledi's being sentenced to life imprisonment, takes place. The charge sheet at the trial lists 193 acts of sabotage.

1964 November, Vuyisile Mini, Wilton Khayingo and Zizakile Mkhaba, three prominent trade unionists from Port Elizabeth, are sent to the gallows for MK activities.

1967 30 July-3 August, The "Luthuli Detachment", comprising ANC and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU guerrillas), crosses the Zambezi river into Southern Rhodesia (the present Zimbabwe) and engages joint Rhodesian and South African troops at the start of the Wankie and Sipolilo battles, which rage until late 1968.

25 June 1975, Mozambique receives its independence from Portugal after a protracted 10-year battle by Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) troops against the Portuguese authorities, in which MK troops participated.

11 November 1975 another important milestone in the African Countries, Angola got its independence from Portugal. The Angolan Government went further to invite MK to train its cadres on Angolan soil.

16 June 1975, Following the Soweto uprisings, thousands of young people leave South Africa to join MK. They are henceforth called "The June 16 Detachment". And I know General Manager Nkuna always say OR Tambo use to call them the "Young Lions"

1979 was named the Year of the Spear, named in tribute to the history of unbroken resistance since the Battle of Isandlwana on 22 January 1879.

MK operative Solomon Mahlangu was hanged in Pretoria in 1979. His comrade, Monty Motloutse, suffered brain damage from the torture he received at the hands of his captors.

In the face of death, Solomon Mahlangu said,

"My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruit of freedom. Tell my people that I love them, they must continue the fight"

In 1980 MK operatives attacked the Soekmekaar police station. The attack was aimed at supporting the local community's resistance to forced removals. Johnson Lubisi, Petrus Mashigo and Naphtali Manana were later arrested.

3 March, A large cache of arms is discovered in a township near Springs, East of Johannesburg. Together with the buried arms are bundles of ANC leaflets.

Around April 1980, MK operatives launch a rifle, rocket and grenade attack on Booyens Police Station, Johannesburg. Pamphlets are scattered demanding the release from Robben Island of Walter Sisulu.

1 June, The SASOL I fuel plant complex at Sasolburg, fifty miles south of Johannesburg, is attacked. On the same night SASOL II at Secunda sees an unsuccessful limpet mine explosion which fails to set off fires. Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, claims that both attacks were launched by ANC guerrilla units. This event marks the first use of limpet mines by MK. The attacks result in millions in damages to fuel storage tanks.

In 1981 in its January 8th statement, the ANC declares 1981 the 'Year of the Youth', to pay tribute to heroism. It also urges students to continue mass struggles and to join the MK.

30 January, The South African Army raids Matola in Maputo, Mozambique and assassinates 12 ANC members. General Constand Viljoen, Chief of the South African Defence Force (SADF), announces that earlier in the day a South African commando has attacked and destroyed the planning and control headquarters of the ANC at Matola in Maputo, Mozambique. According to the SADF, 30 ANC activists were killed and two SADF recruits died.

8 February, Mozambique stresses its continued support for the ANC in a statement made at the funeral of 12 ANC members killed in the South African raid on Matola, Maputo, on 30 January.

Also in 1981 MK launches an attack on a military base at Voortrekkerhoogte, outside Pretoria, using Soviet Grad P rockets.

On the 70th anniversary of the formation of the ANC, MK attacks the Koeberg nuclear power plant in Cape Town.

17 August, Ruth First, the wife of Joe Slove was killed in a parcel bomb, sent by the South African security police, at the University of Maputo, Mozambique. We visited her grave and that of other South Africans who were killed during the Matola Raid by SADF.

9 December, South African forces raid houses in Maseru, killing thirty members the ANC and seven women and children caught in the crossfire. A chain of sabotage incidents within South Africa are blamed on the ANC command structure in Lesotho. The incursion is widely condemned. General Constand Viljoen describes it as a pre-emptive raid to prevent attacks during the festive season.

In 1984, In its January 8th statement, the ANC calls for a people's war based on four pillars – ANC underground activity, united mass action, MK attacks and an international campaign to isolate the apartheid government.

28 June, Jeannette Schoon and her six-year old daughter, Katryn, are killed by a parcel bomb at their home in Lubango, northern Angola. The bomb was targeted at Marius Schoon who was not home at the time.

In 1985, Thabo Mbeki announces on Radio Freedom that the ANC would continue to make the country ungovernable and would 'attack on all fronts in a united and co-ordinated political and military offensive'.

In June 1985, South African Defense Force Special Forces, together with members of the security branch, launch a cross border raid on ANC targets in Gaborone, Botswana. Twelve people are killed and six wounded in this operation. Among those killed are eight South Africans, two Botswana nationals, a Lesotho and a Somali citizen.

19 October, Samora Machel, President of Mozambique, dies after the plane he was travelling in crashed in the Lembombo Mountains, near Mbuluzini, South Africa.

7 April 1988, Albie Sachs is seriously wounded by a car bomb in Maputo. He loses his arm and sight in one eye.

9 June, Stanza Bopape of the Mamelodi Civic Association, and suspected head of MK operations in Pretoria, is detained, and disappears without trace. Police claimed he had escaped while being transported to Vereeniging, but the TRC later heard that he died while in custody after electric shocks had been administered. Police threw his body into the crocodile-infested Komati River.

25 July 1990, Senior ANC member, 'Mac' Maharaj and over forty other members of the ANC and the SACP, are detained for allegedly attempting to overthrow the government as part of Operation Vula.

August, The ANC NEC resolves to suspend the armed struggle in advance of a meeting with the government in August.

7 August - The ANC and the South African Government issued a joint declaration (the "Pretoria Minute") at the conclusion of 15 hours of talks. The ANC announced that it would immediately suspend all armed actions, while the Government undertook to consider lifting the state of emergency in Natal "as early as possible" and to continue reviewing the security legislation and its application "in order to ensure free political activity". The final report of the Joint Working Group on political offences was accepted by both parties. Both sides pledged to redouble efforts to reduce the level of violence in the country.

In the spirit of the dedicated, passionate peace loving hero's and heroines of our struggle to liberate all Africans in South Africa,

In the spirit of self sacrificing, and love for the country, I honor and pledge loyalty to the achievements of the ideals they forth for.

Amndla.....