

Umkhonto we Sizwe Military Code

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.

1. 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 we Sizwe 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 rights 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 that MK`s first operations were launched on December 16, Dingane`s Day. Umkhonto will carry on the warrior traditions of our people under the conditions of modern guerrilla warfare.

Those who join Umkhonto we Sizwe, the People`s Army, perform a sacred duty to our people, our nation and the South African Revolution. When we have liberated our country, Umkhonto will constitute the basis of the defence forces of our country and the Revolution, and will serve as an instrument of social progress.

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 a steed revolutionary who at all times is determined to serve and protect the people and his fellow comrades-in-arms.

We look back with great pride to the period of militant non-violent struggle waged by the ANC. During this period our people learnt through their own experience that they could not

satisfy their aspirations except by means of armed struggle arising out of our mass political activity and culminating in a **revolutionary** seizure of power.

When time was ripe for violent forms of struggle, our people understood and supported the decision to take up arms. They clearly understood as 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. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom.`

2. 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 line. Every commander, commissar, instructor and combatant must therefore be clearly acquainted with the policy with regard to all combat tasks and missions. All of us must know clearly who the enemy is, and for what we are fighting. Thus MK cadres are not only military units, they are also organisers 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 cadres, 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.

3. People`s War

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 has no mercenaries, no paid soldiers or conscripted troops. It consists of the sons and daughters of the most oppressed, the most exploited sections of our people. For these reasons we claim with pride and truth: Umkhonto is the Spear of the Nation.

We fight a people`s war, not by armed struggle alone, but first and above all 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 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-collaboration, propaganda, 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 us 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`.

4. 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 National Party regime, the creator and driving force of apartheid.
- c. Our programme is the Freedom Charter; it defines the goals of all democrats regardless of colour, race or creed.
- d. The interests of the people and the demands of the revolution are inseparable and the main concern of the people`s army.
- e. Our MK Manifesto declares that the army includes in its ranks South Africans of all races. But the overwhelming majority are members of the most oppressed and exploited people. By this dedication and commitment and training, they represent the vanguard of our people. In Umkhonto language, the army is the Spear of the Nation.

5. Umkhonto insists on a high standard of selfless devotion to the revolution on the part of all its members.

They are required at all times to:

- a. behave correctly to the people;
- b. respect their persons and property;
- c. refrain from molesting or interfering with their legitimate activities;
- d. assist them to solve their problems and where possible give material aid in their labour; and
- e. demonstrate high moral qualities in word and deed.

6. 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 the army forces of the racists, instil a mechanical and robot-like obedience in their units. The people's army has a different conception of discipline and loyalty. Umkhonto soldiers are volunteers, willing and trained to carry out orders in the knowledge that instant obedience is the only way to safeguard life, both of the individual and his comrades-in-arms, and to protect the people he serves.

Umkhonto soldiers pledge themselves to safeguard the revolution at all times regardless of personal hardships, suffering and danger. A soldier who breaks discipline, disobeys commands or by improper conduct betrays the high moral standards of our army will be 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 serious crimes, treachery and 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. 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 when to raise problems, to whom he must report, and how to obtain clarification. He must not, in any circumstances, refuse to obey a command or argue over the execution of an order.

Outright disobedience and failure to obey an order promptly may have serious consequences. A soldier who thinks that he has been given a wrong order must obey it first and if need be complain afterwards to his commander. Our commanding officers, commissars, instructors and others who are entrusted with responsibility to lead must be above reproach. They are to be a shining example of modesty, sound moral behaviour, correct attitudes towards all members, respectful and helpful to every member of the army, regardless of his position. Commanders and Political Commissars occupy a central role in Umkhonto. Without them disorder can result. They are the principal target of the enemy and must be given maximum protection. Umkhonto is engaged in guerrilla warfare, against a powerful and remorseless enemy which resorts to torture, banditry and terrorism.

During the stage of guerrilla warfare, great initiative and resourcefulness are required of every combatant. Under such conditions, formalities such as the courtesy of saluting commanders are reduced to a minimum, while discipline and vigilance are maintained at the highest levels.

In our external training bases, however, we have conditions and facilities similar to those of a regular army. Here we insist on full military procedures, including the practice of saluting commanding personnel; higher ranks; parades; roll calls; and fall-ins. These are necessary for the orderly camp life and discipline and co-operation among guerrillas in combat zones.

The inner forms of discipline, arising from political maturity and consciousness of our struggle, are far more important and enduring than a discipline enforced from above. But a proud bearing, alertness and quick response to commands, a smart uniform, and respect of

leadership, commanders and commissars are the hallmarks of a good soldier who is proud of his platoon, detachment and army.

With the triumph of our revolution, Umkhonto will be the official army of our country, the true shield of our nation, defending the people against external aggression and internal counter-revolution. To prepare ourselves for these noble tasks, we must live up to the army's code of conduct in all respects and at all times during the present phase of our struggle.

General Regulations

1. All army units shall preserve and safeguard political and military and organisational information relating to the army's security and well-being.

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 be loyal to it, the army and the revolution.

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 despondence, 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 the army, recognise it 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. Theft from 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 obscene 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.

- g. Unjustifiable homicide.
- h. Ill-treatment 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 commissars against assault or attacks.
- b. Wilful negligent destruction, neglect or misuse of the property and/or funds of the ANC and army.
- c. Failure to submit and hand over to the commanding authority property seized or acquired during military operations.
- d. Negligence in handling, using or storing and loss of weapons.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. All members of the ANC and combatants 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.

8. Punishment

All members of the ANC and combatants are required to respect the terms of the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War in line with the formal acceptance by the ANC of these terms in 1981. Any violation of these terms shall be an offence. Subject to these proposals, the Commission recommended that:

- i. The codes be accepted in their entirety.
- ii. They come into force immediately.

- iii. Their operation be reviewed after two years` experience.
- iv. The Justice Officer be appointed as soon as possible and that amongst his first tasks be an investigation, in the light of the principles of the codes, of all cases of persons still serving sentences in terms of earlier proceedings, and of all cases awaiting trial.
- v. The military code be strengthened by the inclusion of a section dealing with competence, hearings and appeals; the necessary drafting to be done by responsible officials in MK.

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 the 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. Punishments 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 tribunal.
5. Demotion from a position of responsibility.
6. Restriction in a rehabilitation centre.
7. Dishonourable discharge.
8. Solitary confinement for a period determined by tribunal.
9. The maximum penalty.
10. Any other penalty not included herein but appearing in the schedule of penalties for grave or serious crimes and violations.

Rules and Regulations Covering the Handling of Weapons and Explosives of our Movement

Introduction

Amongst the most sacred duties of a soldier in MK is to protect and preserve the weaponry and other war material of our army - in certain circumstances even with life. The loss of a weapon would be regarded in the same light as the loss of a limb and has serious consequences for the body of our army.

Our weaponry and other war materials are there to be used against our enemy and must, at all times, be maintained in a proper state of combat readiness and must only be used to further our revolution. This is the duty of every organ and individual soldier entrusted with the task of handling such material.

In the interests of our revolution the following rules and regulations will be strictly enforced:

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 fulfil 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.
6. It is a serious offence to abandon without proper cause, lose, misuse, neglect or damage weapons, ammunition and explosives.
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 for the defence of ANC personnel and property.
9. All records, inventories of all war materials have to be kept by Ordnance, Security and by any organ entrusted with such material.
10. The use of war materials for emergency purposes has to be reported to the appropriate authority.
11. The security and care of all 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 Ordnance 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.