25 years ago: The attack on Martin Olds:

At 04.00, on 18 April 2000, emergency personnel at the ambulance centre in Robert Mugabe Way, Bulawayo, looked on curiously as a convoy of no less than 13 vehicles including cars, pick-ups and minibuses sorted itself out on the opposite side of the road. The men there were not the usual rag-tag of out-of-work types. These were well-armed with AK-47s and had a purpose and demeanour about them that suggested honed military skills and recent training. ZANU-PF had bussed this Shona-speaking group in from Mashonaland, especially for the task to hand. They were commanded by the infamous Comrade from Karoi and were stiffened by regular CIO or army personnel from the North Korean trained 5th Brigade.

They were a hit squad.”

This ominous convoy passed by the Nyamandlovu police station and waved knowingly to the police on their way to Martin Old's farmstead. The police, who in turn were armed with FN rifles, were clearly expecting the hit squad and the police put up a roadblock immediately after they had passed through to prevent any help from reaching Martin while he was under attack. Just before dawn this Convoy from Hell arrived at the workers’ compound. They rounded up the employees including Jukumani Sibanda, who had worked for Martin for 10 years and placed them under armed guard.

The well organized hitmen then completely surrounded the farmhouse security fence and ‘set up seven firing positions’.    Martin phoned a neighbouring farmer and told him he was surrounded by between ’30 to 40′ well armed veterans and that the position looked pretty serious.

There were in fact, at least 70 ZANU PF employed terrorists.

Martin then made the unwise decision to walk out unarmed to speak to them; no doubt hoping to diffuse the dangerous situation. In reply he was immediately shot in the leg shattering the bone. Under fire, through sheer

will power, Martin somehow managed to make it back into his house where he quickly made a splint for his leg using two planks to enable some continued mobility.

He fought for his life, sending out an SOS on his CB radio, while moving from room to room and returning the fire of his attackers. The walls of his modest home were soon peppered with bullet strikes. "He was a trained soldier salted by combat from the Bush War, even though that was 20 years before. He was gutsy to boot and knew what he was doing.”

Realising his attackers would cut the phone line, Martin quickly made another call to his neighbour explaining he had been shot and asked that an ambulance be called. This ambulance was prevented from reaching Martin by the armed police road block.

Not realizing the complicity of the police, he then phoned his mother, Gloria Old's, who lived in the area and asked her to phone the police. Although she did this four times the police failed to respond.

“They cut the security fence, advanced on the house and threw the flaming Molotov's, intending to burn him out. Martin fought a desperate rear-guard action although his weapons were no match for the automatic AK-47’s, many of which were loaded with armour piercing bullets. He had kept his own weapons loaded which enabled him to switch from one to the next. He was a crack shot, especially at close range. The fight lasted three hours [in fact it was  later reported as  5 hours in the Guardian newspaper] during which he wounded and killed numerous of the veterans.”

The ambulance called for Martin was forcibly detained at the police road block. They were then ordered to treat wounded “veterans”. Meanwhile, the remaining “veterans”, had set the house ablaze. Martin sheltered in the bathroom by filling the bath with water to avoid the intense heat and flames but eventually he was forced to exit via the window and crawled along the side of the house, dragging his splinted leg behind him.

“Because of his heroic resistance, his attackers took their revenge on his bullet riddled body and savaged it with iron bars and axes.”

Because the Zimbabwe government was deeply embarrassed by their casualties and the fact that it took several hours for their elite 5th Brigade to finally overcome Martin, they officially claimed only a few wounded.

However, eyewitnesses reported fleets of ambulances and other vehicles to cart away the 5th  Brigade dead and wounded. Military Intelligence in Pretoria informed us that Martin killed at least 18 of the attackers and wounded and known number of others.

It is understandable why from both perspectives, that of the Mugabe regime and from the farming community, they both wanted to downplay the casualties of this several-hour gunfight, but realistically, a Greys Scout would not have been able to keep a company of well armed 5th brigade attackers at bay for hours without causing numerous casualties.

Also: because of restrictive Zimbabwe laws, gun owners were limited to something in the region of only 120 rounds of ammunition at any one time. Martin ran out of ammunition as a result.

This attack occurred on Zimbabwe's "independence day", 20 years after the Revolution, 1980. The attack on Martin Olds signified the beginning of the 2nd Phase of the Revolution: Farm Invasions... His resistance  shocked ZANU-PF & discouraged similar open attacks on other farmers...

Farm Disaster Report 2008:

"...the infrastructure on Martin Olds’  Compensation Farm, which was a thriving safari and wild animal conservation operation, is burned out and abandoned. All the animals, including a herd of rare sable antelope and Olds’ herd of 1,000 pedigree cattle, have been killed for the pot. Peasant subsistence farmers settled by the government on the land in mud and wattle huts have been unable to produce crops…”     #martinolds  #resistance  #courage  #farminvasion  #LastStand  #

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