Zimbabwe state intelligence, abductions, and modus operandi

I have been not on one, but several decent drinking benders with the former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) Menard Muzariri. I was introduced to him by a mutual friend. When he knew that I was with the Police Protection Unit (PPU) and also from Mt Darwin. We hit it off! We partied in the usual night spots in Harare and Chitungwiza and he would occasionally summon me to go and look for women for him! One time we partied with some South African intelligence operatives whom he introduced to me. He never talked work and I never dare ask him questions. At that time I was not aware of his role in the Gukurahundi democide. These experiences and other interactions with intelligence, forensics, and policing personnel triggered by entanglements with those fields.

The Zimbabwean state since it came into being after independence from Britain in 1980, has been known for various democides which include political violence, crimes against humanity, state sanctioned murder, violence and illegal mining atrocities. The purpose of this piece is to outline the contemporary state intelligence tactics, structure, resources and *modus operandi* in relation to murders and abductions in Zimbabwe. I will primarily focus on the CIO. The paper will also elucidate some the actions and profiles of other perpetrators such as the Zimbabwe national Army (ZNA), Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), War Veterans (WV) and ZANU-PF Youth Wing (YW).

The present CIO, formerly Special Branch came into being in 1981 and was headed by Ken Flower till his retirement in 1984. The Special Branch was responsible to the Deputy Commissioner (Crime and Security prior to its incorporation into the President's Office). The present CIO boss is Isaac Moyo and is deputised by Brigadier General Walter Tapfumaneyi and former NUST Pro-Vice-Chancellor Gatsha Mazithulela. Between the two of them they supervise various key branches such as - internal, external, counter-intelligence, military intelligence, training, close protection unit, technical, training, administration and another simply known as Branch Six. In addition there are desks on social media, trade union, projects, terrorism, and propaganda. There is currently around 3500 full time staff and around 2000 part time 'assets' deployed mostly in Zimbabwe. There are also operatives in most African countries and in Europe. In terms

of locations where they operate from, a decade ago SW Radio Africa published a credible list which is found [here](). In addition to these locations like most intelligence agencies around the world, the CIO has safe houses and farms dotted around the country. As readers might be aware, Zimbabwe is one of the countries that was listed as one to which the CIA used for [renditions]() This is the abduction and torture of suspects by the CIA carried out in other countries with permission.

Before discussing the shenanigans of the Zimbabwe intelligence service, lets discuss briefly what a professional service like this should function. Firstly it should not be based in the office of the President for obvious reasons such as bias, corruption, misuse and manipulation. Hallmarks of the present CIO. The purpose of a professional intelligence service is to gather intelligence, manage information, work on evidence and disclosure, and support other security services. In Zimbabwe as this paper will demonstrate, the CIO literally serves on the pleasure of the President. However I must admit not all intelligence services are 100% professional, the extent to which they are dubious is the problem in Zimbabwe.

Now readers might want to know what intelligence is. The CIA (1999), defines intelligence as knowledge and foreknowledge of an individuals or entity's surroundings used for present and future decision making and action. Intelligence can also be viewed as actions or processes used to produce knowledge. Global Intelligence Working Group (2003), defines law enforcement intelligence as the acquisition and analysis of information to produce intelligence which can be used for decision making. There are plenty of examples within Zimbabwean contexts that can be used to illustrate some of these definitions. Take the former archbishop of the Bulawayo province, [Pius Ncube](). The CIO had information that, despite him being a devout priest, he had a weakness for the ladies. They had this information for years and were waiting for the right opportunity to use that information (intelligence) to shut his anti-Mugabe stance down. And they used that albeit successfully I should say. Readers can think of dozens other such successful use of information particularly against politically connected individuals has worked. Remember former Vice President Joyce Mujuru previously mentioning that Mugabe has [files]() on everyone. This is the kind of information that they have.

So how is intelligence of ordinary citizens collected by the CIO? This is done covertly, overtly, through social media, some of it comes through ZRP, ZNA and paid informers. Covert intelligence is information gathered through undercover, technical surveillance, and pseudo operations. Zimbabwean CIO operatives like being known and most of them are not exactly discreet. There are various videos of human rights defenders (HRD) who have been followed by operatives and subsequently filmed them. The Namatai Kwekweza video being one such example. The purpose of such aggressive form of surveillance being to intimidate and to distract the individual. What sort of intelligence or information does the CIO collect?. Well they note everything from shoes size, clothing, friends, family drinking habits, sporting activities, vehicles used, work, addresses, and in some extreme cases they can collect DNA. This information is often fed into a software system, analysed, rated for use, or marinated. Marination is when any useful information is kept for future use.

Let me give you a practical example below on how that information looks like presently. Previously intelligence was kept on index cards which took ages to search and input intelligence.

Let's give an example of our well known journalist Hopewell Chin'ono. What does his profile look like on their system? Here is an example;

Pictures	Addresses	Associates	Vehicle	Crimes	Intelligence and Operations

Schematic of CIO intelligence system.

Each of the above tabs will be interactive and when you click on them they will show you further contents associated with an individual. In addition, as you go from left to right, depending on operational level of clearance, one will not be able to see certain information. The intelligence section is the most populated as it will contain detailed descriptive intelligence on an individual. For high profile individuals, there might be daily updates or intelligence. If there is a high level of intelligence from multiple sources, this will force the analyst to make actionable decisions. This can be either an arrest, abduction, warning or assault etc. So what does most intelligent notes look, like, here is an example;

On the 05/10/2020 Chin'ono was seen in company with Jacob Ngarivhume at Belgravia shops at approx. 3pm. Hopewell was wearing blue jeans, grey t shirt and black shoes. Jacob was wearing blue trousers, grey shirt, and white trainers. The long range listening device was not working hence could not hear conversation. Both individuals stayed at the shops for approximately 2 hours and left in their respective vehicles which are already on file

When this information has been sent, it then becomes rated according to the source of information, intelligence evaluation, information content, and risk assessment. Also as demonstrated information is easily falsified, politicised, and accepted. If you look at the history of all opposition leaders from Joshua Nkomo to Nelson Chamisa, most of the intelligence gathered against them is false and grossly exaggerated. Recent statements by security Minister Owen Ncube about [Operation Light House](#) being one such example. If the intelligence is correct and further investigation were done, why then not arrest the individuals in question or mount an operation? In Zimbabwean contexts detailed surveillance of individuals is limited to high profile individuals found in opposition and human rights groups. Surveillance for [Nelson Chamisa](#) for example will be in technological terms and the use of operatives. Technological devices can be planted on vehicles, associates and can be unwittingly downloaded via clips in chat groups/social media which have a worms. I had the privilege of working at the American Embassy during my PPU days. They sweep their vehicles for devices every single day. The devices used to check are readily available and some can be found [here](#).

In terms of overt surveillance, operatives will normally be a 6 men team, the two advance party (AP), static team (ST), and direct observation (DO) team. The DO team are the ones observable and have been reported numerous occasions by individuals being followed in Zimbabwe. The ST are static and normally are on the peripheral edges of a target. The AP team are the ones who know the route normally taken by a target and can be used often to intercept. The Sanderson [Makombe](#) incident can give you a lose indication on how the teams worked in the incident that ended up in two people dying. For 'minor' individuals the surveillance will be smaller as you can see it's very expensive due to the number of people and resources involved.

Another important source of intelligence in contemporary contexts is social media and hacking of phones. The CIO as stated previously have a dedicated cyber unit which carries out offensive and defensive operations on selected targets. They have additional access to the MI unit based at Mt Hampden as reported by Professor Jonathan Moyo. There are myths associated with what they can reasonably do or perform. They cannot hack your WhatsApp as it has end to end encryption. However, messages can be read before they are encrypted or after they are decrypted. That means any spyware dropped on the phone by an attacker could read the messages. Edward Snowdon encourages people to use other apps such [Signal](). In addition, all companies and individuals who have local server emails are easily hacked. I remember telling Paston Dzamara about his email which he later changed. To demonstrate this we can look at the [Baba Jukwa]() investigation which lead Commissioner Crispen Makedenge nowhere. Even Facebook messages are safer unless of course one has unwittingly downloaded spyware on your phone from a WhatsApp group, they can read and see everything. In addition, unless you a targeted individual, they do not have the capacity and personnel to carry out analysis of millions of people like what China does for example. In terms of internet, [Tor]() browser is useful if you want to circumvent prying eyes of the CIO. I am aware that Jonathan Moyo is currently banging on about the Mt Hampden listening centre which is apparently being manned by Group Captain Peacemaker Credo [Kereke.]() However as demonstrated previously, the CIO has not been able to effectively utilise those tools as they currently rely on abduction and the physical examination of devices. Readers might be reminded that big companies such as Facebook and Apple will not even supply information to the [FBI]().

Lastly let's move on to the abduction and torture of individuals by the CIO. What is the plan, what do they do, and where do they take them? Since 2000, there has been over 5000 abductions by the state and associated organs. Each respective state apparatus has associated signature however I am going to focus on the CIO. The purpose of abduction is normally to scare, disable, or illicit information that otherwise was not obtained during normal surveillance methods as discussed previously. Before an abduction takes place, intelligence is synthesised and an operation order is issued by a senior intelligence officer. This order will contain information such as purpose,

personnel, location, target, resources, risk assessment, and tactics. In addition there will be trigger plans, these are the processes to implement in case something goes wrong. If we give the example of the [Itai Dzamara](), these processes were in place when he was abducted on the 9th March 2015. I spoke to the late Patson Dzamara at that time a few weeks after and suggested they apply for mobile phone triangulation of his phone which I believe the idea was refused by the police. Itai's mobile phone would have indicated who was travelling with him and where was taken if the phone was on. This I also strongly suggested in the Tawanda [Muchehiwa]() abduction as the perpetrators used his phone to lure other victims. The nearest mobile phone mast to that location has details of individuals who were close to him. This is dependent on their mobiles being on. The state is aware what exactly happened as they have obfuscated the information at every turn. My theory on Dzamara is that something went wrong during the abduction and torture resulting in the officers in question implementing the trigger plan.

Let us discuss abductions using Harare as a snapshot in order to unpack tactics and locations. The way the CIO abduct, torture and leave individuals either alive or dead has explanations within psychological and criminological contexts and I have identified certain concepts. [Routine activities theory (RAT]()), presupposes that for an offence to occur, three elements need to be present. That is, a motivated offender (CIO), suitable victim (HRD), and the absence of a capable guardian (ZRP). The optimal foraging theory (OFT), can be used as a theoretical framework for applying abduction site prediction modeling to aid in locating the missing. This will be illustrated briefly in the next section. Offender profiling is guarded by two significant assumptions, consistency and homology theory. The consistency assumption suggest that perpetrators often repeat offences in an analogous fashion. This can partly explain the methods of various state entities in the massacres and abductions that has taken place in Zimbabwe. The 5th Brigade for instance, were very consistent in their methodologies in searching, detaining and killing of people in Matabeleland. The homology theory proposes that the way an offence is committed is related to background characteristics of the perpetrator (The more training, resources, time the offender has the greater the opportunities and severity of torture). We can use the [Justina Mukoko]() abduction as an example within

that context. This can be explained in other various signature kidnappings by either MI, the Ferret Team/s or War Veterans.

Let's discuss these aspects using the dozens of abductions that have taken place in Harare in the last few years. If we look at the abductions of Justina Mukoko, Patson Dzamara, Joanna Madamombe, Peter Mugombeyi, Samantha Kureya to name but a few; a pattern emerges. The location of torture and subsequent release are within an hour of Harare and include; Beatrice farming rea, Mt Hampden (near Cyber Centre), Mazoe, Bindura, Seke/Dema junctions, Snake Park, Nyabira, Nharira Hills and Lake Chivero. Anyone can actually map this (*I have a map!*). The operatives are operating within their comfort zone in an analogous fashion. They also have a stand down area nearby and are familiar with the area. Now the cat is slightly out of the bag they might change tact! In forensic contexts there might be still a wealth of information which is available in these locations.

Another aspect with regards abductions of civilians in Zimbabwe is the issue of injection of unknown substances by the CIO. Examples of people who have been subjected to such methods include Job Sikhala and Peter Mugombeyi. The CIO inherited personnel and equipment used by the Special Branch and Rhodesian Forces. As reported by Cross in *Rhodesia and Chemical Biological Warfare 1975-1980*, Zimbabwe had a chemical warfare unit which poisoned thousands of guerrillas in the liberation war. Curiously if you look at the press release in the appointment of deputy director of the CIO Dr Mazithulela, it states that he is the chairman of the National Authority on Chemical Weapons Convention! Now why is Zimbabwe in the convention and what chemical weapons do we have? So what substances are being injected into detainees? We know the CIA, the rendition colleagues of the CIO use Scopolamine aka "Truth Serum". Other substances are sodium thiopental and phenobarbital. If any of the barbiturates were administered to Joanna Madamombe for example, it might explain her present physical and mental health. People metabolise and respond differently to certain drugs.

In concluding this piece, it is important for HRD and other victim groups to implement community safety and abduction prevention/mitigation measures. These can be found in countering some of the activities elucidated above. Examples is the use of smart bracelets and registering on the Sentinel project for satellite tracking. These are all

legal and can be found in technological, psychological and simple security measures. So those concerned should data capture long hanging fruits such as [vehicles used](), [names]() published, and locations. There is also opportunities on the technological fronts in the phone of cleaning devices and use of VPN as alert tool, using social media and a bit of journalist work as demonstrated by Hopewell.

Peace.

K K Silika Phd.

Abduction hot spots

Location	Coordinates	Number of people
Nharira Hills	-19.076354, 31.152313	4
Lake Chivero	-17.898395, 30.749048	6
Snake Park	-17.821280, 30.895255	8
Nyabira	-17.685108, 30.814907	2
Mt Hampden	-17.712599, 30.908939	6
Mazoe	-17.532991, 31.006830	11
Seke Rd/Dema Junction	-18.045587, 31.174681	13
Bindura Road	-17.332250, 31.236535	3
Beatrice	-18.252877, 30.861494	12