

## Introduction

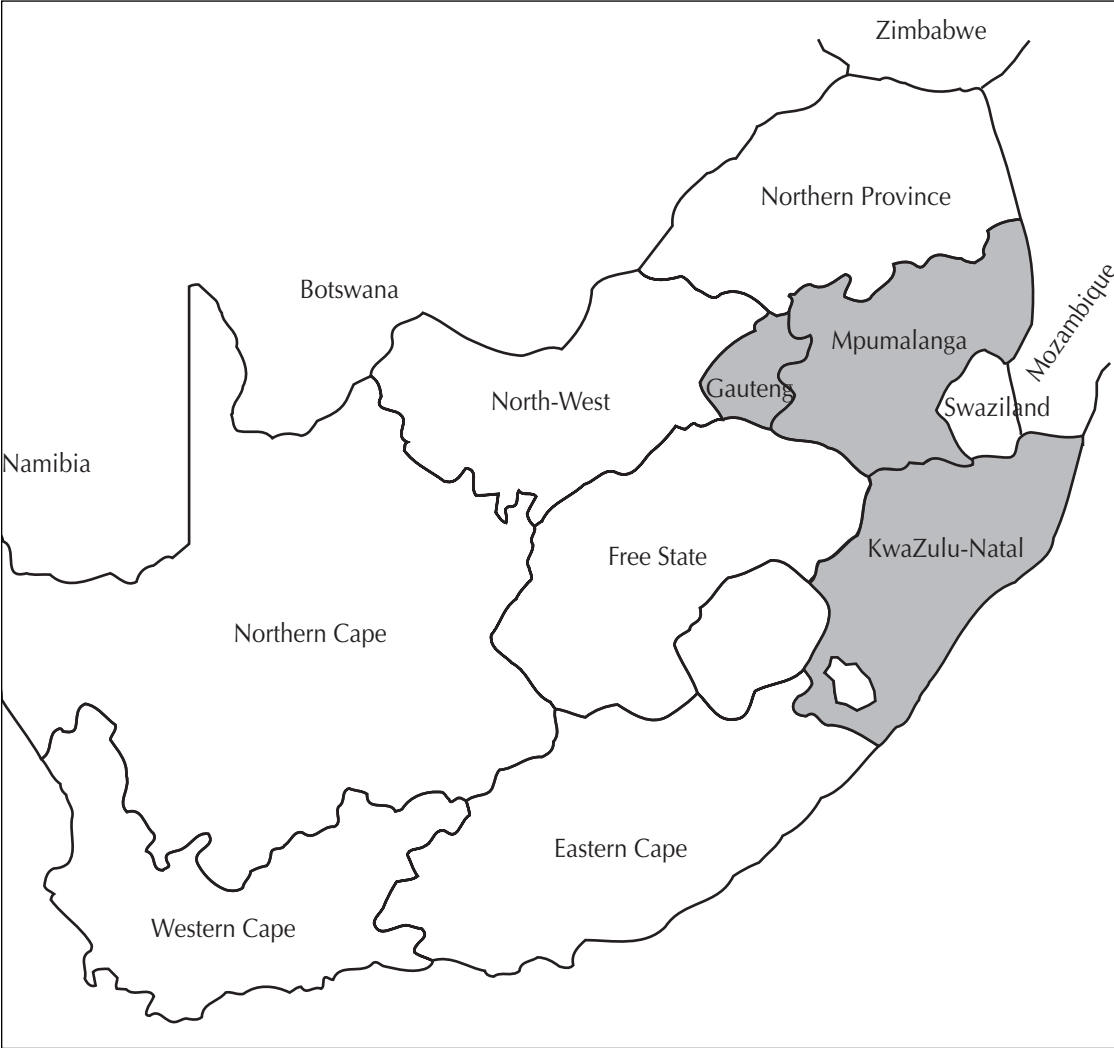
The increasing incidence of violent crime on farms and smallholdings in South Africa has become a cause for great concern. Between January 1997 and December 1999, some 361 people were murdered in 2 030 separate attacks on farms and smallholdings. The number of recorded incidents of attacks on farms and smallholdings increased substantially between 1997 and 1998 (from 433 to 767 attacks, respectively), and levelled off during 1999 (830 attacks).<sup>1</sup> The problem remains serious in several provinces of the country, particularly in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal (for a provincial breakdown of the number of attacks on farms and smallholdings between 1997 and 1999, and the number of people murdered in the attacks, see chapter 1 on the extent of attacks on farms and smallholdings).

The rural safety summit, held in October 1998, recognised the extent and complexity of the problem of attacks on farms and smallholdings, and the challenges to find solutions. Two of the needs referred to in the ten-point summit declaration were for more detailed information and research on the nature of the problem and the development of a comprehensive policy framework to ensure a sustained focus on the problem (for background information on the summit and a summary of the declaration adopted at the summit, see chapter 3).

To promote the goals of the summit, a farm safety research project was initiated in the second half of 1999. The research project was based on primary research consisting of in-depth interviews with the people directly affected by and concerned with farm and smallholding attacks in selected parts of the country. This included, *inter alia*, farmers and smallholders (both victims and non-victims), farm and smallholding workers, members of the security forces, private security company personnel, representatives of organised agriculture and community leaders. (The research project's findings and recommendations are presented in section B as part of the evaluation of the rural protection plan.)

The broad objectives of the research project were to:

# South Africa's provincial



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- assess government and civil society initiatives to reduce attacks on farms and smallholdings;
  - develop a better understanding of the nature of crime on farms and smallholdings; and
  - make recommendations to inform policy on rural safety and in particular the rural protection plan (see chapter 2 for information on the plan and its operational structure).

Because of time and resource constraints, the research project focused on three geographic areas:

- Piet Retief in the Eastern Highveld police area (Mpumalanga);
- Greytown and Ixopo in the Midlands police area (KwaZulu-Natal); and
- Wierdabrug in the Vaalrand police area (Gauteng).

These areas were chosen by the research team in consultation with representatives from the secretariat for safety and security, the National Operational Co-ordinating Committee (NOCOC), and organised agriculture. All three areas had experienced a high and increasing number of attacks on farms and smallholdings in the year prior to the research project. In respect of the Piet Retief and the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands areas, the research team concentrated on attacks on farms, while attacks on smallholdings formed the basis of the research conducted in the Wierdabrug area.

The research project was undertaken in partnership with the secretariat for safety and security, the South African Agricultural Union (now Agri South Africa), the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the South African Police Service (SAPS), and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). The project was funded by the Agri Securitas trust fund and the secretariat for safety and security.

The fieldwork and research were conducted by Martin Schönreich, a senior researcher with the Institute for Security Studies, Jonny Steinberg, a senior researcher with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, and Paul Thulare, an analyst in the monitoring and analysis unit of the secretariat for safety and security. The fieldwork for the research was conducted during October and November 1999. (For a list of the interview questions used in the project, see Appendix I.)

Further research is to be conducted in 2000 in the farming areas surrounding Tzaneen (Northern Province) and Klerksdorp (North-West). Moreover, an offender-based study will be conducted to identify some of the motives for the attacks on farms and smallholdings. This will involve interviews with imprisoned persons convicted of crimes related to farm and smallholding attacks.

## Notes

- 1 At the time of writing, the Crime Information Analysis Centre (CIAC) had not released figures for the number of farm and smallholding attacks (and the number of murders committed during the attacks) for the period July-December 1999. The figures for this period have been obtained from NOCOC. NOCOC's figures are operational statistics which have not been independently verified. They may differ slightly, therefore, from the figures the CIAC will release in due course for the July-December 1999 period. Moreover, the CIAC figures for the first six months of 1999 had not been finally verified at the time of writing and could change slightly in future CIAC reports.

For statistical purposes, NOCOC uses the following definition for farm and smallholding attacks: "Attacks on farms and smallholdings are acts aimed against the person of residents on farms and smallholdings, whether with the intent to murder, rape, rob or inflict bodily harm." Moreover, NOCOC includes in its definition "all actions aimed at farming activities as a commercial concern, whether for motives related to ideological, labour disputes, land issues, revenge, grievances or racist concerns, for example intimidation." Crimes which NOCOC includes in its definition of farm and smallholding attacks are: murder, attempted murder, rape, assault with the intent to do grievous bodily harm, robbery and armed robbery, vehicle hijacking, malicious damage to property where the damage exceeds R10 000, and arson. Cases relating to domestic violence, drunkenness or the 'normal' social interaction between people are excluded from NOCOC's definition of attacks on farms and smallholdings.