

Section I The problem and the state's response

This section provides the backdrop against which the research, presented in this monograph, was carried out. It focuses mainly on the period from 1997 to 1999. General trends in attacks on farms and smallholdings (chapter 1) point towards a substantial increase in the number of attacks, as well as the number of attacks which resulted in murder. However, these increases are not uniform throughout the country. Most attacks perpetrated in 1999 occurred in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, while the greatest increases between 1997 and 1999 occurred in Gauteng, the Western Cape and Mpumalanga. Most murders as a result of attacks on farms and smallholdings in 1999 were committed in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, but the greatest increases in comparison with 1997 were reported in the Western Cape, the Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

In 1997, the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) requested that something had to be done to address the rise in violent crime on farms and smallholdings (chapter 2). As a result, a task team convened by the Joint Security Staff visited all the provinces to consult with roleplayers. This brought about the *rural protection plan*, which was implemented in October 1997 at the request of the former president, Nelson Mandela. The objective of the plan is to encourage co-operation and co-ordination with regard to planning, action and monitoring to combat crime in the country's rural areas. It includes the South African Police Service (SAPS), the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), organised agriculture, provincial and local government, as well as any person, group or organisation which can play a role and assist in promoting rural safety.

A rural safety summit (chapter 3) was convened in October 1998 to reach consensus on the process to deal with attacks on farms and smallholdings, as well as other issues of rural insecurity. The summit formulated a rural safety summit declaration. Following the summit, the rural safety task team formed

three working groups to deal with communication, information and research; operational interventions; and rural safety policy.

As part of the backdrop to the research results presented in section II, six government reports on farm and smallholding attacks, covering the period between 1997 and 1999, were reviewed (chapter 4). In general, these reports provide valuable input in terms of their focus on:

- provincial breakdowns of farm and smallholding attacks;
- comparisons with previous years;
- security measures in place on victimised farms and smallholdings;
- robbery and theft as the main motive for attacks, and the types of items generally taken;
- age of victims;
- numbers and ages of assailants;
- victims' familiarity or not with assailants;
- the use of firearms in attacks; and
- methods employed by assailants to flee from properties after attacks.