

# INTRODUCTION

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The “Scorpions”, when referred to by this nickname, are probably, outside of the police, the most recognised law enforcement body in South Africa. The impact of the Scorpions on the South African public’s psyche after four years of operation cannot be underestimated. Yet very little is really known about the Scorpions – even their official name, “Directorate of Special Operations”, draws blank looks.

This lack of understanding, along with the oft-mentioned problem of overlap with the work of the South African police force, and concerns that the DSO might use case-selection as a tool for political manipulation, make it important that information about the DSO be made more broadly accessible.

Debates surrounding the Scorpion’s establishment, mandate, and operation are discussed in this monograph. It is hoped that through recording and explaining the agency’s functioning, the questions of the ordinary reader will be answered and misconceptions about the Scorpion’s role and operation will be dispelled.