

## **CHAPTER 12 The Border War 1966-1989**

The so-called Border War began as essentially a war for independence for Namibia and Angola. The South African Defence Force (SADF) entered the war on the side of Portugal but had to deal with additional forces against it: SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organisation), MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), FNLA (National Front for The Liberation of Angola) and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)

The SADF joined the side of UNITA and the FNLA, while the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), joined by forces from Cuba fought on the side of SWAPO and FAPLA (the Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola, formed by the MPLA).

The SADF used two versions of the Impala jet in the Border War – single seaters and two seaters, and each played a different role.

The single seater had all the fire power and was used mainly to attack armoured vehicles and ground troops although it was not very effective against heavily armoured tanks. The single seaters were used successfully to attack tanks but may have disabled them rather than pierced their armour. The main tank killers were Mirage aircraft helped by the Buccaneer bombers.

The two-seaters were used mainly as spotter planes. These planes could fly as close to the ground as fifty foot which made them very difficult to spot and attack.

During the war there was no recorded fight between Impalas and Angolan and Cuban MiGS (fighter-bombers), one of the reasons being that the Impalas knew when the MiGS were being scrambled and could clear the scene very quickly at low altitude. MiGS were not effective against impalas.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Interview with Derrick Willcock, Germiston, 29 September 2017