

Marikana miners' mindset 'changed' before shootings

THE ATTITUDE of Marikana miners towards the police changed drastically before the shootings on August 16 last year, the Farlam commission of inquiry has heard.

Major-General Charl Annandale, who led the police special tactical operations team at Marikana, said the striking miners appeared to view the police presence positively on August 14 and 15. "Police made a proper plan and this group started seeing police as the new mediators to help them achieve higher wages."

This had largely to do with the police's efforts to get union leaders to speak to the protesting miners.

"However, everything changed on the 16th of August," said Annandale.

"There was no more negotiation with police, police were seen as an entity now standing in their way."

This contributed to different risks that became apparent on the day.

On that day, 34 striking miners were shot dead and 78 wounded when the police opened fire on them while trying to disperse a group which had gathered on a hill near the mine.

In the preceding week, 10 people, including two police officers and two security guards, were killed in strike-related violence near the mine.

Evidence leader Geoff Budlender questioned the police's apparent

assumption that miners gathered at the koppie near the Lonmin mine – some armed with dangerous weapons – might attack residential areas if they left the area with their weapons. Most protesters left the koppie after dark, and could have used these opportunities to attack had this been their intention, he said.

Annandale dismissed this suggestion, saying these were "totally different circumstances".

Budlender asked him if there had been any events reported, in the days leading up to August 16, which suggested there was a likelihood of an attack on neighbouring settlements.

Annandale said the violence reported, although not in residential areas, did indicate some risk.

He referred to the killing of two security guards the week before, as well as intimidation of workers, assaults and damage to cars reported in police occurrence books.

Earlier, the commission heard police had suffered a communications delay on August 16. Commanders of the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) at Marikana did not immediately know that shooting had broken out at the first scene, Annandale testified.

"The JOC would not know at all times what is happening on the ground," he said. – Sapa

Give and take

THE traumatic events at Marikana and on Western Cape farms lend particular significance to this year's May Day. While used internationally to celebrate the advent of organised labour and the recognition of workers' rights, it may well in the circumstances of our country today be used as an occasion for serious reflection on where we are headed as a nation.

There has been a worrisome increase in flare-ups these past few years, but there could hardly have been a more pertinent illustration of the depth of the fault lines running through our society than the violence sparked by those two instances.

It leaves many points to ponder. The unions played no insignificant part in South Africa's passage to an all-race democracy. But as that role fades, the upheavals within and on the fringes of organised labour should give cause for pertinent thought on the extent to which political agendas should be allowed to override labour concerns.

Another worry, with perhaps bigger implications, is the discord developing between the

government and business on the one side and segments of workers on the other. When, for instance, pupils' education gets thrown into disarray by teacher protests, and when these are the examples of societal behaviour fed to young people, then it is time to think again. This is also the case when, in a society now well rid of state suppression, worker protests often still degenerate into destruction and violence to enforce demands.

Discord in the workplace is not where it ends either. On the outside there is an even more fearsome spectre looming in the shape of masses who have no work at all. Among them is a preponderant segment of young people who should be readying to become society's backbone of tomorrow but who are instead unemployed and in some cases unemployable, owing to lack of skills.

Divided as employers and workers will probably always stand on conditions of employment, there rests a massive onus on both not to lose sight of the interests of society. It comes down to sophisticated leadership and a mature sense of give and take.

Army in Marikana illegally?

CLAIM: *Deployed weeks ahead of officially authorised date*

PAUL KIRK

PARATROOPERS from 1 Parachute Battalion have claimed they were operating in Marikana weeks before they were officially authorised to do so.

Yesterday the police ministry declined to comment on the claims – but did not deny them.

On September 18 last year the *Government Gazette* carried a back-dated notice giving the SANDF legal authority to operate in support of the police in Marikana. The signature on the notice is dated September 14, 2012.

The Marikana Massacre, in which 34 miners were shot dead, was in August. But two members of 1 Parachute Battalion claim their unit was deployed to Marikana well before September 14 – in an action that may have been illegal.

The Constitution gives only the president the power to deploy the SANDF in support of the police, and it also demands that the president inform Parliament “promptly”.

The Defence Act states that a notice must be published in the Government Gazette within 24 hours. The paratroopers said they were moved into the Marikana area “weeks” before the official date.

A document given to *The Citizen* marked “confidential” and titled “Quarterly Report on the SANDF Performance Against Plan for the period: July 1, 2012 to September 30, 2012” records that the paratroopers were moved into Marikana two days earlier than the Gazette notice makes legal. It says the “SANDF provided support to the SAPS by deploying a sub unit from 1 Parachute Battalion with supporting elements from September 12-17, 2012 to Marikana ...”

Asked when the army was called out by the police, and whose decision it was, police ministry spokesman Zweli Mnisi said: “We have not commented before and shall continue to respect the commission’s proceedings (Farlam Inquiry) until they are concluded.”

Miners ‘changed attitude to police’

THE attitude of Marikana miners towards the police changed drastically ahead of the shooting on August 16, the Farlam Commission of Inquiry heard yesterday.

Major-General Charl Annandale, who led the police special tactical operations team at Marikana, said the striking miners appeared to view the police presence positively on August 14 and 15.

“Police made a proper plan and this group started seeing police as the new mediators to help them achieve their purpose of obtaining higher wages. This had largely to do with the police’s efforts to get union leaders to speak to the protesting miners. However, everything changed on the sixteenth. There was no more negotiation with police, police were seen as an entity which is now standing in their way,” said Annandale.

This contributed to different risks that became apparent on the day. The commission is holding public hearings at the Rustenburg civic centre into the events at

snip

In the preceding week, 10 people, including two police officers and two security guards, were killed in strike-related violence near the mine.

Marikana on August 16.

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In the preceding week, 10 people, including two police officers and two security guards, were killed in strike-related violence near the mine.

Evidence leader Geoff Budlender questioned the police’s apparent assumption that miners gathered at a koppie near the Lonmin mine, some of whom were armed with dangerous weapons, might attack residential areas if they left the area with their weapons.

He said most of the protesters left the koppie after dark in any event, and could have used these opportunities to attack had this been their intention. Annandale dismissed this suggestion, saying these were “totally different circumstances”. Budlender asked him if there had been any events reported, in the days leading up to August 16, which suggested there was a likelihood of an attack on neighbouring settlements.

Annandale said the violence reported, although not in residential areas, did indicate some risk.

He referred to the killing of two security guards the week before, as well as intimidation of workers, assaults and damage to cars reported in police occurrence books.

Earlier, the commission heard how police suffered a communications delay on August 16.

Commanders of the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) at Marikana did not immediately know that shooting had broken out at the first scene, Annandale testified. – *Sapa*.