

Africa

Non-attributable. I hate that word. It's been over thirty years and I still hate it.

In military parlance, a non-attributable operation is one that is outside of the acceptable rules of engagement. Governments will deny such operations happen, and there is usually an official explanation for the presence of soldiers in the wrong place at the wrong time if things don't go according to plan.

I did three of these operations during my time in the British Army. Two of them were into The Republic of Ireland, where the cover story was a misread map or compass. This would have caused a little bit of embarrassment, but it would be soon forgotten. The third, however, that was different.

In 1976 the Angolan civil war was very much in the news. Reports had reached the British Government that there were abuses and atrocities being carried out by British mercenaries, and world opinion ne This is not the complete story. To read further, please either my commanding officer, affectiona register as a new reader or login now if already registered mission my record would show I ha posed, I would be denounced as a deserter and have to face imprisonment and being kicked out of the Army in disgrace. Not to mention, I thought, being killed, but I didn't say it, instead I found myself completing an application for 48 hours leave and heading off from Colchester to London. It would be nearly nine months before I walked back into the barracks again.

Although there would be more than just me joining the mercenaries in Angola on this mission, for security reasons we were not to be identified to each other, nor was there to be any official help from the authorities. I was left to my own devices to tour the graveyards and find a baby boy who had died within a few months of my actual birth, in much the same way as Frederick Forsyth illustrated in his novel Day of the Jackal. Even today, this ploy is used by illegal immigrants to obtain a whole new identity and despite government departments knowing all about it they still have no means to detect it or put a stop to it. And we wonder why we have so many illegal immigrants who can't be traced.