

# *Operation Malawi 1991*

## **Chapter 1**



**Crates' being packed with supplies**



**Crates being loading on transport trucks**

The Malawi Operation of 1986 was a success, but only a few animals were captured. After the 1986 operation, Dr. Kriek yet again commenced with negotiations with the Malawian government. After years of negotiation, they gave approval for another operation during 1991.

The organization of the second and largest Malawi trip had to start right away and there were huge logistical problems like availability of helicopters, jet fuel, Lucerne, distances and high altitude operations for helicopters. The same helicopter type could not be used for the 1991 operation because one of the capture areas was at Njika National Park 7500ft above sea level. A turbine helicopter had to be ferried from South Africa. It took 18hours. The altitude and terrain made it difficult, if not impossible for piston helicopters to operate effectively.

Clearance had to be obtained for the Bell Jet ranger 206 helicopter and this was a nightmare. The operation almost went completely bad, as someone did not communicate the aircraft clearance to the tower. The tower called the helicopter entering their airspace and denied entry. The pilots could not turn around due to a critically low fuel situation and they were arrested as they landed. They contacted Dr. Kriek and arrested him, also because he chartered the helicopter. They were taken to the airport police station. Dr. Kriek explained to them that he obtained all the clearances and permissions, but they were aggressive and wanted to lock them up. He told the official that he spoke to a certain Mr. Msasu, the commissioner of police. They phoned him and found that they made a mistake, as someone didn't do their job. They release the pilots and Dr. Kriek and formally apologized for the incident. This was a scary situation and almost ended the Malawi operation before it started.

Another problem was the distance between the two capture areas, Liwonde, for the Sable Capture and Njika for Roan capture. The distance between the capture areas were 800km, which necessitated the building of two quarantine stations, close to each capture area. These two quarantine stations were situated in Lilongwe (The base for the 1986 operation) and Mzuzu, 400km apart. . The areas were undeveloped and the quarantine station was non-existent after the 1986 operation.



**Lucerne, Jet fuel etc. had to be taken**



**Dr. Johan Kriek & workers boarding SAA**

The first team member to go with Dr. Kriek was Gideon Chomse, James, Mannetjies and Jock. Mannetjies and Jock were fencers and had to help with the reconstruction of the quarantine station. James was the truck driver. Five, 30 ton trucks were hired to transport equipment and vehicles to Malawi. Custom clearance was a nightmare and Dr.Kriek used clearing agents to speed up the process.



**Trucks arriving at quarantine station**



**Dr. Kriek & workers arrive at Lilongwe**

The equipment arrived safely and the huge task of constructing the quarantine stations was to commence immediately. This was going to be one of the most challenging game capture operations in history. The team worked non-stop to construct the quarantine stations and the camping sites (for the capture teams).

After completion of the quarantine stations, SA veterinary approval were needed to make sure the facility was up to their standards. The facilities were inspected by Dr. Adele Faules, and approved by SA veterinary council. The operation was now entering the game capture phase and the team prepared for the first capture operation, which would be in Liwonde National Park.