



27 October 2022

The Children, Grandchildren and the Entire Bereaved Family of the Late Retired Colonel Otto Omuwa-Etuna Shiyagaya  
Okathitu-Kambanda Village  
Ogongo Constituency  
**OMUSATI REGION**

It is with profound sorrow that I have learnt the sad news of the passing on of your beloved father, grandfather, brother, uncle and a Veteran of our National Liberation struggle, the Late Retired Colonel Otto Omuwa-Etuna Shiyagaya, on Tuesday, 18 October 2022, at his homestead, at Okathitu-Kambanda Village, Ogongo Constituency, in Omusati Region.

The obituary of Retired Colonel Akudhenga, as we affectionately called him, bares testimony to the fact that the history of our armed liberation struggle is filled with his valuable contributions as he was part of a generation that fought fiercely in the 1970s and 1980s for the attainment of our freedom and genuine independence.

I therefore join my fellow mourners to bid farewell and pay tribute to a gallant and unwavering freedom fighter, a steadfast and celebrated ex-Plan Detachment Commander and Chief of Staff, who persevered under all circumstances and never wavered until the attainment of our freedom and genuine independence on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990.

Like many of his generation, Retired Colonel Akudhenga was conscientised during the late 1960s as part of the generation that kept alive the flames of liberation that the apartheid regime sought to extinguish by imprisoning our leaders or forcing them into exile. His political grounding in the students and youth movements was to establish in him a life-long commitment to improving the conditions of our people.

When the apartheid regime intensified its repression, Retired Colonel Akudhenga took the difficult decision to leave the country and join the liberation movement in exile. Indeed, it is worth recalling here that in the aftermath of the Portuguese coup of 1974 and the violence after the boycotted Ovamboland Bantustan elections of 1973, a large number of young Namibians joined us in exile. A significant proportion of these young militants were SWAPO Youth League (SYL) activists who were instrumental in the operations of the internal wing of SWAPO.

Against this background, Retired Colonel Akudhenga formed part of this militant youth and became a disciplined and brave combatant of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's Military Wing, which he joined in July 1974.

He travelled through the jungles of Angola and Zambia before he arrived at Oshatotwa where he reunited with some of his childhood peers such as Niilo Taapopi "Kambwa kaShilongo", Shaanika Amukwaya, Max Kaanandunge, Nekwaya IyaHango, Athanasius Chimwandi and Rex Sheehama, amongst others.

These young militants received their basic military training at Oshatotwa in Zambia under Commander Mac Namara and together with his fellow PLAN Combatants like Commander Lucas Hangula "Fogu" and Commander Darius Shikongo "Mbolondondo" as well as Commander Niilo Taapopi "Kambwa kaShilongo" and others, they were the first group of 100 PLAN Combatants Volunteers to leave Zambia on 23 November 1974 and go to Casappa training camp in Angola, where they received further military training in different guerilla tactics.

Indeed, under Commander Mbulunganga together with Commander Dimo Hamaambo, many gallant combatants of PLAN such as Aron Embashu (Shongambe), Paulus Nandenga (Zulu), Wilbard Tashiya (Nakada), Elise Hauliyondjaba, John Hamukoto (Kalola), Jonas Kataleonga (katengela), Erickson Hauwanga (Kapanya), Jonas Kapapu (Mumbwela Weemhadi), Linus Hamwele (Mawila), Sakeus Kapulwa (Kapuleko), Ismael Kamati (Ngiringiri), among others, were fighting against both the Portuguese regime in 1974, as Angola was not yet free, as well as the minority regime of apartheid South Africa and faced all kind of difficulties but never wavered!

Retired Colonel Akudhenga was later deployed and operated at the Northern Front under the leadership of Commander Isak Shikongo "Pondo" and Commissar Niilo Taapopi "Kambwa kaShilongo" between 1975 and 1976 and was the first PLAN Combatant to destroy enemy target in the area of Ruacana.

At the end of March 1976, at the famous battle of Ohaukelo, East of Ondobe, Retired Colonel Akudhenga earned himself the title "Fearless Commander" when he distinguished himself from his comrades as a brave and fearless combatant. He and Comrade Amini were injured and sent back to Angola for medical treatment and after that he was deployed at the Defence Headquarters in Lubango as a personal driver to the Late Commander Peter Nanyemba, the then SWAPO Secretary for Defence.

Indeed, at its Meeting of January 1977 at Efitu in Angola, the Military Council decided to restructure PLAN and demarcate its operational areas. At that meeting, it was decided to have Military Regions with the Late Comrade Matias Ndakolo (Mbulunganga) as the Commander of the North Eastern Front, Comrade Phillipus Hamutenya Nandenga (Zulu) as the Commander of the Northern Front. Comrade Hamunyela wa Shalali took over the Eastern Front while the Northern Western Front was under the Late Commander Wilbard Vayakohambo Tashiya Nacada Chikololo and later under Commander Kanaan Uno Shaanika and finally under Commander Erastus Negonga.

In this regard, in 1977, Retired Colonel Akudhenga was sent to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) for Battalion Commanders' Course at Odessa in the District of Ukraine. After his military training, he returned to Angola and was deployed to the North Western Front under the Late Commander Uuno Shaanika "Kanana" and Commander Niilo Taapopi "Kambwa kaShilongo" as Regional Commissar.

He was appointed as a Deputy Commander of the Air Force Detachment and later became its Commander. In 1980, he was assigned to command the Special Forces Detachment. Those two detachments, while under Retired Colonel Akudhenga's command, inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy during raids at Onavivi, Ruacana, Opuwo military bases and other battles and engagements in that general area of operation, also capturing many enemy military materials.

In 1981, in recognition of his fearlessness and astuteness as a combatant, Retired Colonel Akudhenga was appointed as the Chief of Operations of the North Western Front and later appointed as Acting Chief of Staff of the Front when the substantive Chief of Staff, Comrade Erastus Negonga "Jicky", went for further training abroad. He was later confirmed in that position after Commander Negonga was promoted to command the North Western Front in 1982.

In this regard, in 1983, Retired Colonel Akudhenga partook in a Special Operations planned and organized by the Regional Commander of the North Western Front to attack Sector 10 Headquarters of the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) at Oshakati. Retired Colonel Akudhenga was the most senior officer from the Headquarters deployed at the forward positions to support the execution of the operations that resulted in the enemy suffering many casualties.

Retired Colonel Akudhenga was sent to Vystrel Academy in the former Soviet Union in 1983 for the Mechanised Infantry Brigade course, completing that training in 1984 and returned to Angola and was immediately assigned the responsibility of Chief of Staff of the North Eastern Front, the position he occupied until 1986. From 1987 to 1990 Retired Colonel Akudhenga went for further tertiary studies at the Institute of Social Science in Moscow, Russia.

Indeed, our people should know that the independence we are enjoying today was not handed over to us on a silver platter but came through the sweat and blood of many brave sons and daughters of Namibia under the umbrella of our National Liberation Movement SWAPO. This is the glorious legacy by the gallant and heroic sons and daughters of Namibia that we must preserve for future generations. I therefore extol our people to persevere in the struggle and to march forward in unity.

At the dawn of independence on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990, Retired Colonel Akudhenga joined the Namibian Defence Force and was posted at the Defence Headquarters. Despite his preference to provide leadership from the background, he held various appointments at different Units and Formations, rising to the rank of Colonel in 2011 until his retirement in 2015. This speaks volumes about his leadership capacity and the high regard in which he was held within the structures of the Namibian Defence Force.

Those who served with him remarked that his quiet but firm leadership style was highly appreciated by all. He was deeply principled, and never sought positions, publicity or personal wealth. These leadership features, being quiet but firm, were important because the complexities of our transition to democracy demanded nothing less.

He was a dedicated servant of our people who served with distinction in every position he occupied and every responsibility he was given. In undertaking these tasks, he was honest and measured, deliberate and principled. Where he found fault, he sought solutions.

Throughout his work – indeed throughout his life – he remained true to his character and true to his convictions, but most of all, he remained true to the people. In his honour, we must remain resolute and not waiver in our efforts to renew and rebuild the country that he so diligently served. Most of all, we must pick up where he has left, and pursue with greater urgency and purpose the achievement of a democratic society that is free, peaceful and just. Let us learn from him the qualities of selflessness, sacrifice, hard work, discipline and love for the people.

To the family I say, we share in your sorrow and we join you in celebrating a life well lived in the service of others punctuated by indelible marks of bravery and patriotism. Our thoughts are with you as you go through this difficult time of mourning. Please be consoled by the fact that in recognition of his bravery and self-sacrifice, Retired Colonel Akudhenga was conferred with the honour of the Most Distinguished Order of Namibia 2<sup>nd</sup> Class on March 21, 2004 at Omugulugombashe, Omusati Region.

To the surviving children the nieces, nephews, grandchildren and the Entire Bereaved Family, may you be comforted by all the words of honour that have been ascribed to your beloved father, grandfather and uncle.

As the Late Retired Colonel Akudhenga takes a befitting seat amongst our heroes and heroines and as the family comes to terms with this tragic moment of the dark cloud hovering around you, allow me on behalf of the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, the Nujoma family and indeed on my own behalf, to convey our deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies for this loss. It is my sincere wish that we may all be comforted and granted fortitude during this difficult time of mourning.

May his revolutionary spirit continue to guide us as we chart the future destiny of our country.

May His Soul Rest In Eternal Peace!



**FOUNDER**  
The Sam Nujoma Foundation

Sam Nujoma  
**FOUNDING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**