

# *Operation Malawi 1986*

Dr. Kriek started his game exploits during 1980 when he tried to import a large number of Sable antelope from Zimbabwe. Veterinary department South Africa refused to give permission for this operation due to the fact that foot and mouth laboratory testing was only done at Pirbright (England) at this stage.

The director did however assure Dr. Kriek that importation could be done once South Africa's Onderstepoort foot and mouth facility could do the testing. (This facility was being built at the time). The first importation was in 1982 when 34 Tsessebee were imported by Dr. Kriek. This made him one of the pioneers of the importation of game from Africa.

## *Chapter 1*



**Equipment including helicopter, animal feed, capture equipment, vehicles, personnel and medicine were airlifted to Malawi from Jan Smuts airport during the start of the operation.**

In 1982 Dr. Kriek pondered on the idea of importing rare antelope species into South Africa as he thought there would be a demand for such animals in the country.

He started negotiating with Zimbabwe from 1982 but after initially importing 34 Tsessebee from the country, he had no further success with negotiations.

He then visited Botswana in 1985 trying to get Roan, Sable and Tsessebee but with no success. Mozambique was at war during this period and Zambia was hostile towards South Africans. Then he turned to Malawi and did his first Malawi capture operation in 1986, where 21 Roan, 14 Sable and 50 Lichtenstein Hartebeest were captured and put through quarantine.

The logistics of doing such an operation in Africa was a nightmare and 66% of the animals were successfully translocated to South Africa following a lengthy quarantine period with 3 blood tests.



**Hughes 300C helicopter being loaded into the Lockheed Hercules C-130 aircraft.**

The helicopter played a vital role in this operation and the well experience pilot handled the operation very well. The helicopter operation included boma capture and darting from the helicopter.



Another logistical problem included: Building a quarantine station, approved by South African Veterinary department.



**Entering Kasungu National Park**

The game capture operation was conducted in Kasungu National Park, situated in central Malawi +/- 250km north from the city of Lilongwe. The park had abundant wildlife but had a serious poaching problem.



**Arriving at Lafupa lodge, the main camp in Kasungu National Park.**

This was the base from where the game capture operation in Kasungu was launched. The camp was frequently visited by hungry Spotted Hyena and Lion. The capture team stayed in tents and this proved to be quite risky, so they moved to permanent chalets.

This was an unsure stage as no game count had been done and they were relying solely on the reports of game scouts. The next morning they woke up early, got into the helicopter and started scanning the wilderness.