Dutch Intelligence - towards a qualitative framework for analysis
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8 Quality – complementary elements

What complementary evidence, concerning quality, can be found? First, because the SRB published its findings a series of its reports could be evaluated. Subsequently the effect and impact they had could be traced. In addition, reports on the same issue by other organizations were also available. This complementary evidence is evaluated in this chapter to provide extra information on the quality of the SRB-publications. For various reasons, these issues were not dealt with in chapter 5 – and thus not evaluated in chapter 7.

In 8.1, a comparison is made between the quality of successive SRB-publications. As this is not limited to one specific report, it could not become part of the standard of chapter 5.

In 8.2, issues such as the effect, impact, diffusion, and knowledge use of the SRB-publications are dealt with by focusing on the way third parties judge the quality of a report, how they use such reports, and how these reports have influenced action. As the Bureau published its findings, there is – for intelligence reports – a rare opportunity to investigate the impact, diffusion and knowledge use. As this seldom happens, it therefore did not make sense to have formulated a special criterion for them in chapter 5 – although these elements are definitely indications of the quality of a report.

In 8.3, a comparison is made between SRB-publications and reports by other organizations who also investigated the oil trade on South Africa. Such a cross-case analysis cannot be incorporated in the standard of chapter 5, as this focuses on testing only one report. Moreover, such material is not often available.

In short, complementary material is available to judge the quality of the SRB-publications. Nevertheless, this material needs to be evaluated from perspectives that – for the mentioned various reasons – cannot be incorporated in the standard of chapter 5.

8.1 Quality of successive reports

What was the amount of discovered oil supplies in the successive publications? On what issues did the Bureau report on in its successive SRB-reports?

Discovered oil supplies

The SRB estimated the oil import in South Africa and then compared it with the tonnage of discovered oil supplies. The Bureau assessed that in the years up to 1990, it normally uncovered 50-60% of the oil supplies. After 1990, the SRB gained access to new sources from South Africa. From then on, the Bureau could
trace 85% of the shipments.\textsuperscript{1} The increase of the total coverage was notably the largest between the first report of March 1981 and the last publication \textit{Embargo}, 1995. The SRB stated in its first report, for the period 1979 to the first quarter of 1980, that twenty three tankers were ‘considered most likely to have delivered crude oil when they called at South Africa.’ In \textit{Embargo}, the Bureau identified sixty-four ships for the same period.\textsuperscript{2}

\textit{Successive uncovered shipments from Rotterdam}

The reason for the difference of the number of uncovered shipments, of before and after 1990, was explained (access to South African sources). Also before 1990, an increasing number of shipments were uncovered throughout the years as a result of access to new and better sources. To illustrate this, a comparison is made between the number of shipments from Rotterdam that were uncovered in the first four main reports and in the Rotterdam survey.

In the first main report, the SRB named Mobil Progress, Erviken, Champlain, and Oro Chief in the list of tankers that sailed only to South Africa. However, the Bureau did not mention any of these ships in the first main report’s list of ships most likely to have delivered crude oil. In all the other main reports the missing cases were mainly the last cases, which were probably still being investigated.\textsuperscript{3}

It is difficult to estimate to what extent the Rotterdam research was complete, but in the ten years following, the Bureau was only able to trace one other case of an oil delivery from the Netherlands to South Africa during the period of 1979-1984. This concerned the Marakanda, which delivered oil in January or February 1980 to South Africa. Vitol owned the cargo. While this ship was already under suspicion during the Rotterdam survey, the SRB could not sufficiently prove this case.\textsuperscript{4}


Table 8.1
1979-1984: Ships that apparently delivered oil from Rotterdam to South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobil Progress</td>
<td>25/1/79 – 3/79</td>
<td>no*</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erviken</td>
<td>2/2/79 – 2/79</td>
<td>no*</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champlain</td>
<td>28/3/79 – 4/79</td>
<td>no*</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oro Chief</td>
<td>21/7/79 – 9/79</td>
<td>no*</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maasrix</td>
<td>27/8/79 – 9/10/79</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes**</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maasbree</td>
<td>2/9/79 – 9-10/79</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes**</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karuma Maersk</td>
<td>18/10/79 – 11/79</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ras Maersk</td>
<td>26/11/79 – 12/79</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>no data 1979</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karoline Maersk</td>
<td>22/2/80 – 3-4/80</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data 1980</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ras Maersk</td>
<td>31/5/80 – 6-7/80</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data 1980</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karoline Maersk</td>
<td>12/8/80 – 8-9/80</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data 1980</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyle</td>
<td>23/9/80 – 10/80</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data 1980</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Green</td>
<td>23/10/80 – 11/80</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data 1980</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Maersk</td>
<td>23/10/80 – 11/80</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data 1980</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konkar Dinos</td>
<td>28/11/80 – 12/80</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data 1980</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagmar Maersk</td>
<td>15/1/81 – 2/81</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data ½ '81</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast Fulmar</td>
<td>30/4/81 – 5-6/81</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no data ½ '81</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Marcos</td>
<td>19/7/81 – 8-9/81</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoegh Hill</td>
<td>14/8/81 – 9/81</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recife</td>
<td>1/10/81 – 10-11/8</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Marcos</td>
<td>23/11/81 – 12/81</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Marcos</td>
<td>5/7/82 – 7-8/82</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Tobias</td>
<td>9/8/82 – 8-9/82</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobil Weser</td>
<td>8/11/82 – 12/82</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Benedict</td>
<td>1/12/82 – 12/82</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puma</td>
<td>21/4/83 – 5/83</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The SRB only named these ships in the list of tankers that sailed to South Africa. Nevertheless, it did not mention any of these tankers in the first report’s list of ships that are most likely to have delivered crude oil.

** The SRB named these cases as examples in a section on Rich. The period as such was not object of investigation.

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Issues reported on

It is assessed whether the SRB wrote on the issues that it promised to report on. Issues reported on are related to the criteria of 7.2. It follows naturally from the line of the specific indicator on the structure (criterion 2), and it is linked to the issue of clear and direct reporting (criterion 5). It is not included in the criteria because it is not as directly related to quality as criteria 2 and 5. However, it gains significance when successive reports can be investigated. This provides additional insights into the structure and the clear and direct reporting by the SRB.

Unlike the BVD, the SRB did not have a legal framework of tasks. Nevertheless, the Bureau had clear objectives, which it published in its reports. These objectives were constant throughout the years. They were: 1) to conduct in-depth research on oil shipments to South Africa; 2) to conduct research on legislative and other means whereby countries could more effectively enforce sanctions; and 3) lobbying. The main purpose was in-depth research on oil deliveries.6 Besides these main objectives, a report would contain background information, in order to gain a better understanding of the issues in question.7

Main reports

The principal purpose of the SRB was to conduct in-depth research on oil deliveries to South Africa. Between 61% and 87.5% of the text of the main reports was focused on this principal purpose. In terms of the total number of pages, this resulted in an average of 70% coverage of all the reports.8 Including the three objectives together, the coverage was between 66 and 87.5%. The average coverage of the three objectives for all the reports was 73%.

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6 In this first report, the Bureau did not mention the three objectives; there is no special appendix on ‘background information regarding the SRB and its founding organizations’ as in later reports (SRB, Oil Tankers to South Africa, 1981, 1, 90). In the other main reports, it mentioned the three central objectives every time. SRB, Oil Tankers to South Africa 1980-1981, 1982, 91. SRB, Secret Oil Deliveries to South Africa 1981-1982, 1984, 101. SRB, South Africa’s Lifeline, 1986, 104. SRB, Oil to South Africa, 1988, 76. SRB, Fuel for Apartheid, 1990, 98.

The Bureau mentioned in its sixth main report a new research activity, being the monitoring of coal exports from South Africa. This activity started in March 1989. This goal was additional to monitoring oil, which remained the central activity of the SRB (SRB, Fuel for Apartheid, 1990, 98). Therefore, the extra objective in the sixth and seventh report could have been the export of South African coal. The Bureau chose, however, the concept of a report about oil. In its Newsletters, the SRB paid in special sections attention to the issue of coal.

7 This will be, for example, on measures and resolutions taken against South Africa, an explanation of the method used, background information on the organization itself, or a bibliography. Furthermore, a publication contains information on data like copyright.

8 The total number of pages of the seven reports is 584 (blank pages not included). The total number of pages on the principal purpose is 411.5. Therefore, 411.5/584 = 70%. The total of the principal purpose as an average of percentages would be a bit higher, namely 73% (= 511.5% : 7) This is caused by the high coverage of the small seventh report. To balance a bias caused by a small report, the average of pages is chosen for counting the overall average.
in terms of the total number of pages. This average ratio between objectives (73%) and background information (27%) seems reasonable, as you would expect some background information on the central items.

There are major differences between the attention paid to the three central objectives. The principal purpose was to inform oil deliveries. This explains the average coverage of 70% of the first objective. The second objective, to conduct research on legislative and other means through which countries could more effectively enforce an embargo, had a total coverage of 3%. As such, this is not a remarkable figure. Nevertheless, there was an 8% coverage of attention paid to related background information, namely on resolutions and other measures taken against South Africa. This means, that the attention paid to the related background information was higher than to the objective itself. The information on resolutions was mainly a general description of developments concerning sanctions. Implementing sanctions was also the reason for the existence of the SRB. The relatively overemphasis may be caused by the need that the Bureau felt to explain and to defend the kind of research it did. As the SRB had no legal framework of tasks, it may have felt the need to justify its activities by referring to these resolutions. Another reason will have been that the Bureau wanted to put pressure on countries that had not taken measures.

In its reports, the SRB seldom made reference to its lobby-activities, its third objective. Sometimes, the Bureau presented these activities in a more implicit way. Unlike the first two objectives, lobbying is an activity on its own, and therefore not primarily intended to be published in main reports.

**Netherlands & Netherlands Antilles survey and Rotterdam survey**

In the Netherlands & Netherlands Antilles survey, the coverage of the three objectives is almost the same as in the main reports – 72%. 28% is on background information. Because the SRB did not write for a specific group of consumers, it did not make recommendations. Probably because it was one of the earliest products of the SRB, almost all the attention was on data regarding shipments and the explanation of terms (91%).

In the Rotterdam survey, the coverage of the three objectives is slightly lower than the main reports: 60% whereas the background information is 40%. The attention paid to the SRB and history of the report is larger (11%) than in the main reports.

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9 The total number of pages of the seven reports is 584. The total number of pages on the three objectives is 428. Therefore, 428/584 = 73%. The total of the principal objectives as an average of percentages would be a bit higher, namely 76% (= 528.5% : 7) This is caused by the high coverage of the small seventh report. To balance a bias caused by a small report, the average of pages is chosen for counting the overall average.


(always 4% or less). This is largely caused by the extra attention paid to the history on how the survey was commissioned by the city of Rotterdam.

It is also the only one in which the section on recommendations and measures that can be taken (second objective) is larger (13%) than the reproduction of resolutions (10%). This can be explained by the survey being both commissioned by and made for a specific consumer, the city of Rotterdam. It is easier to make recommendations for a specific consumer than for a diverse audience.\textsuperscript{12}

\section*{8.2 Effects & Impact, Knowledge Use, Diffusion}

What was the effect and impact of the SRB-publications? What was the diffusion and knowledge use? These elements can be used to judge the quality of the SRB-publications. When necessary this even may be tested in a more formal way. This is not done so here, because it would require the development of a separate framework – adapted for the field of intelligence – that will rarely be used because such material is only seldom available. Therefore, only an overview will be provided.

First, attention is paid to how others judged the quality of the SRB-reports. Second, the focus is on exploring how others used SRB information – internally or externally. Third, speculations on the information position of the Bureau are traced. Fourth, given that the aim of the SRB was to block or to hinder the oil supplies, the focus is on whether someone stopped to deliver oil, or whether costs were enhanced as a result of activities of the Bureau. Fifth, diplomatic activities that were triggered by the reports are investigated, as these may be an indication for their quality. Because the focus is on the Dutch context, Dutch diplomatic responses are explored. These include diplomatic moves that were a result of the biased and veiled reporting on oil exporting countries from the Middle East during 1981-1984.

\textbf{How others judge the quality}

An indication of the quality of a report can also be illustrated by how the other two networks – government and business – labeled the SRB-publications. The most critical reactions can be expected from those whom the Bureau targeted its activities towards. For example, the Dutch government, ship owners, and South African authorities.

Foreign Affairs, after verification in 1980-1981, was of the opinion that SRB-data were generally reliable.\textsuperscript{13} The ministry reiterated this opinion later in public.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} The SRB made recommendations in reports written for specific consumers.
\textsuperscript{13} Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo International Organizations Department, no. 29/81, 8 September 1981.
\textsuperscript{14} Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, marginal note International Organizations Department in letter Minister of Foreign Affairs/International Organizations Department to Dutch parliament, no. DIO/XX 199171, 29 July 1982.
For the period 1981-1987, ship owner Bergesen – whose company featured in separate sections of several main reports\(^{15}\) – wrote to the Bureau ‘[l]ooking back on your reports since 1981, we find them rather accurate, however not entirely perfect.’\(^{16}\)

In 1990, the SRB gained access to sources from within South Africa. After 1990, the Durban branch manager David Hitchman of World Wide Maritime, who acted as port agent for visiting tankers, labeled the SRB-findings as ‘very accurate.’\(^{17}\)

Also at the UN – its own anti apartheid network – there were positive reactions. The chairman Anthony Nyakyi of UN IGG (8.3) thanked the Bureau: ‘the information provided by the SRB proved to be invaluable to our work.’\(^{18}\)

**How others use SRB-information**

All three networks – anti apartheid, government, and business – used SRB data. On several occasions, Foreign Affairs used SRB-information. Officials at Foreign Affairs criticized each other in internal memos, thereby referring to the ‘grosso modo reliable data of the Shipping Research Bureau’ to give their own argumentation more authority.\(^{19}\) In internal memos, the ministry referred to the names of tankers involved, Dutch harbors, oil trading companies, oil producers, and oil refineries.\(^{20}\) For the identification of possible measures to be taken and companies involved – like Shell Tankers Inc., Transworld Oil at Berg en Dal, SHV at Utrecht, Rijn-Schelde-Verolme, and Ton Trading – Foreign Affairs made use of SRB-data.\(^{21}\) To formulate its policy, Foreign Affairs took the SRB

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\(^{16}\) Letter Bergesen Gruppen to SRB, Oslo, March 4 1988, Op.dep. 01/83.

\(^{17}\) Hengeveld, *Embargo*, 1995, 121.

\(^{18}\) SRB, *Newsletter*, no. 30, first quarter 1993, 8. Such positive reactions were noticed by the Dutch embassy in South Africa. In December 1993, for example, the embassy wrote that the Tanzanian chairman declared the UN IGG could be dissolved, as a result of the changes within South Africa. In his speech, he expressed his great appreciation for the way the SRB had carried out its research (Dutch Embassy at Pretoria, South Africa, 1991-1994, 999.214, File 849, message Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, 23 December 1993, XXX-16319).

\(^{19}\) Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo International Organizations Department, no 29/81, 8 September 1981.

\(^{20}\) Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1977 - 1984, File 847, memo International Organizations Department, no. 45/82, 31 March 1982.

\(^{21}\) The SRB proposed such measures in its reports. At a certain time, Foreign Affairs did not prefer a gentlemen’s agreement with no explicit commitment, as in the case of the oil embargo against Rhodesia. It was too noncommittal. In the case of South Africa, the ministry favored direct agreements. Foreign Affairs had a problem with shipment from third countries. Officials also discussed an earlier Norwegian proposal of international consultations with oil producing and transporting countries. Officials saw a role for the pressure of the public opinion and organizations like the SRB, as far as these concerned voluntary ones (Memo International Organizations Department, 31 March 1982. This memo is present in Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1983-1990, File 847; Foreign Affairs, Code 6, 1975-1984, 613.211.45, File 5934; and Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907. See also: Foreign Affairs, Code 6, 1975-1984, 613.211.45, File 5934, memo International Organizations Department, 17 September 1981, no. 32/81).
data explicitly into consideration. SRB-publications influenced the (inter-)departmental thinking on what sanctions could be taken – concerning the transport and ownership of oil. Also in official documents of Dutch parliament, Foreign Affairs referred explicitly to SRB reports and data.

Foreign Affairs asked the Bureau for information. In turn, the SRB supplied Foreign Affairs with reports, brochures, newsletters, annual reports, and even – which the Bureau anonymously obtained – a blueprint describing which company was at what place drilling for oil and gas in South Africa.

Finally, the SRB made in its Rotterdam survey a series of recommendations – presented as ‘suggestions’ – for the city of Rotterdam. These recommendations were focused on the issue of how to prevent oil being transported from Rotterdam to South Africa. Foreign Affairs internally reported on these recommendations.

One example of the business network concerns Shell. To counter anti-apartheid activities, Shell asked Pagan International for help. In a secret report that Pagan International wrote for Shell, SRB-data was an important source to analyze the energy situation and the exposure of Shell in South Africa. There were twenty one instances (out of a total of thirty four), in which the SRB or Bailey – one of the two advisors who helped to develop the SRB-method – was quoted as the source: a score of 62%.

In addition, organizations such as the Erasmus University and the UN IGG used SRB-data as a main source of information for their own research. Israel also used SRB-data to criticize UN-reports in which data on links between South Africa and Eastern European or Arab countries was deleted. Israel managed to raise doubt about the role of African countries.

How others judge the SRB-capabilities

The SRB had a simple filing system. Nevertheless, there were speculations about the capabilities of the Bureau:

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23 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo International Organizations Department, no. 84/82, 23 July 1982.
25 SRB-archive: letter SRB to A.P. Wegerif, UN Political Affairs Department, Political Affairs Section, 1 October 1986; letter Jaap Woldendorp, SRB to R.H. Cohen, African and Middle Eastern Affairs Department, Southern Africa Section, 8 August 1988.
‘In the shipping industry it was widely believed that the Bureau had an advanced computer system keeping track of the movements of all tankers. We did nothing to dispel this belief.’

Furthermore, some newspapers speculated that the Bureau might even use satellites. However, this was impossible for budgetary reasons.

**Effects of SRB-publications**

In retrospect – in 1991 – the SRB’s retiring director Woldendorp saw the extra costs South Africa had to pay for its oil as the main effect of its publications and its lobby. These extra costs were not only the result of the activities of the Bureau.

The extra costs South Africa had to pay for its oil – the extra commission to middlemen and traders, and the costs of additional South African measures – were estimated to be more than $2 billion a year. The monitoring activities of the SRB were seen as essential in reaching this effect. The order of magnitude of the extra costs to obtain oil came close to South Africa’s gross foreign debt, estimated between $15 to 20 billion by the end of the eighties. It is likely that the 1985 South African debt crisis would not have emerged if the diverse oil sanctions and monitoring had not taken place. Many commentators see the refusal in 1985 of the international banks to renew their short-term credits to South Africa as the final blow to the system of apartheid.

Besides the economic costs, South African measures also took their toll regarding the principles of the democratic legal order. The oil trade became a secret affair. Immediately after Iran ceased to supply oil, South Africa announced a new law to make the publication of data on the oil trade a criminal act. An effect of the SRB using data and reporting on it publicly, resulted in information, that was obtained from Lloyd’s, becoming increasingly more incomplete and incorrect (the Bureau reacted to this by refining and supplementing the main research design – 7.2.1, ‘Conclusion’). At the same time, the secret oil trade did not draw attention to its most noble oil brokers. As a result, South Africa paid a lot of money to middlemen and crooks. South Africa paid hundreds of millions of dollars more than necessary, or money simply was lost, because the secrecy triggered off a lack of control that would have been present under normal democratic surveillance. Investigators and members of parliament, who were attempting to supervise this process became

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frustrated. Some of them even became an object of investigation themselves. South African members of parliament warned that the potential for corruption in this area is absolutely colossal.\textsuperscript{35} The South African journalist and editor Kevin Davie was of the opinion that the secrecy had little to do with protecting the oil lifeline, but rather everything with hiding the massive extra costs of apartheid.\textsuperscript{36}

In the beginning of the 1980’s, SFF/Sasol\textsuperscript{37} paid $ 200 million more than necessary for two of its oil contracts. SFF/Sasol not only misinformed its minister about a contractor, but they also did not reveal that they had paid $ 4 more, per barrel, than necessary. SFF/Sasol requested that further inquiries and investigations into these oil deals be stopped, as this was, in their view, jeopardizing the oil flow to South Africa. Officials who wanted to report on these practices became the object of research themselves, because of the classified nature concerning the oil trade. While SFF/Sasol had the option to reclaim $ 144 million from one of their contractors, the Dutchman John C. Deuss, this never happened because of the atmosphere of secrecy and the frustrating nature of the investigations.\textsuperscript{38} Deuss’ position was so dominant that SFF/Sasol strongly stressed the need for more diversification. They did so, not only because of the dependency on Deuss, but also because of the publicity Deuss got (see also 7.2.3 ‘A large involvement?’).\textsuperscript{39}

Another case was the so-called Salem affair. Several European countries – including the Netherlands – investigated this fraud. One of the suspects was the Dutchman Anton Reidel and his company Beets Trading.\textsuperscript{40} Dutch authorities wanted information from South Africa, the central victim in this fraud. Nevertheless, from 1981 onwards, the Dutch did not receive any cooperation from South African authorities. South Africa wanted to avoid publicity at all costs.\textsuperscript{41}

The South African policy led to bureaucratic deficiencies. In the second half of the eighties, the Dutch consulate in Cape Town, South Africa, complained:
many of the measures taken are so poignant bureaucractic, as well as often the answers given on the daily press briefings by the Department for Information [GdV: = Inligting], that one wonders if a determined central policy is being pursued, or if everybody tries – on his own authority – to act according his masters voice.  

While these effects were caused by more than just the work of the Bureau, its publications and lobbying activities were occasionally useful in applying pressure directly on oil exporting countries to stop exporting oil to South Africa. With the cooperation of the Commonwealth and media (the Observer), the SRB succeeded into cutting off the oil flow from Brunei. In addition to influencing countries, the Bureau also influenced companies involved. The Dutch-Swiss company Vitol, for example, stopped delivering oil after publicity by the Bureau. The SRB described this effect as the ‘hassle factor,’ caused by negative publicity.

The Bureau helped to keep the issue of the oil embargo alive within UN circles. Woldendorp wondered whether the UN IGG would have been established, if the SRB had not been created. Amer Salih Araim, the former secretary of the UN IGG, wrote:

While the oil embargo against South Africa was initiated by governments and supported by the United Nations, it could not have gained such attention internationally without the persistent efforts of anti-apartheid groups, particularly the Shipping Research Bureau.

This quote leads us to the next section, the diplomatic activities caused by the SRB.

**Diplomatic activities**

Actions of Foreign Affairs, during the early 1980’s, illustrate the kind of activities that SRB-publications could give rise to. It began with a curious message in August 1980. The Dutch UN permanent representative somehow got hold of a telegram, dated 17 July 1980, that had been sent by Bosgra (HCSA) to E.S. Reddy, director of the UN Center against Apartheid. It is unclear, how the permanent representative obtained this telegram, but he sent the full text of Bosgra’s telegram in a confidential coded message to Foreign Affairs.

In December 1980, the SRB was preparing both its survey on the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles and its first main report. It checked data not only in

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44 SRB, Olieleverenties aan Zuid-Afrika, 1985, 195.
45 Woldendorp, “The Shipping Research Bureau and the Oil Embargo against South Africa 1985 - 1991,” 24 January 1991, 4-6, 10. For more on the UN IGG, see 8.3.
46 Araim, “The United Nations and the Oil Embargo against South Africa,” Embargo, 1995, 238 (and 234). Amer Araim was Senior Political Affairs Officer in the Department of Political Affairs at the UN. From 1986-1993, he was the secretary of the UN IGG.
the Netherlands, but also in Curaçao. Before it was published, the Dutch government, checked and double-checked the data it had received as confidential preliminary findings. There were several reasons to do so. First, the Dutch political atmosphere was extremely strained on the issue of oil deliveries. The government wanted to know exactly what was going on. Second, Foreign Affairs had already received, in 1979, signals that oil deliveries might take place from the Netherlands Antilles. In March 1979, the ministry obtained a confidential message from its embassy in Lima, Peru. The oil company Petro-Peru began to offer its oil under the condition, it would not be delivered to South Africa. Thus, the ambassador wrote, South Africa is, for its South American oil and oil products, now dependent on Ecuador and Venezuela (and Curaçao).  

Third, in December 1980, the UN Special Committee against Apartheid sent confidential advance copies of the first main SRB-report to the Dutch government and asked them to 'study and investigate the information in the attached report,' and to advise the Committee 'urgently of the results of the investigation.' The Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN passed the letter onto Foreign Affairs. When the information arrived at Foreign Affairs, the ministry produced, during the Christmas vacation, internal memos concerning the advance copies. The first internal reaction was that the data in general did not show anything that the ministry did not already know, or expect. Nevertheless, Dutch Foreign Affairs discussed the possibility of sending an ‘advance warning to Willemstad,’ given its leading position among countries from which tankers sailed to South Africa. Furthermore, in an internal memo the International Organizations Department advised to contact the Netherlands Antilles in case of oil sanctions, ‘as the Netherlands Antilles play an important role in that transport.’ In this memo, a Dutch official questioned the position the Netherlands Antilles took concerning its

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48 The main oil refinery of the Netherlands Antilles was at Curaçao. Foreign Affairs, Code 6, 1975-1984, 613.211.45, File 5927, confidential message embassy Lima to Foreign Affairs, reference 8683, 29 March 1979. Later, the Dutch embassy at Caracas told Foreign Affairs, this country kept itself strict to the OPEC-embargo. (Foreign Affairs, Code 6, 1975-1984, 613.211.45, File 5930, telex by embassy Caracas to Foreign Affairs, 4 January 1982).

49 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 988, letter B. Akporode Clark, Chairman Special Committee against Apartheid, to Dutch Permanent Representative UN, Reference PO 230-SOAF (2-2-1), 15 December 1980.

50 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 987, confidential message Permanent Representative UN, 19 December 1980. Through all the years, Foreign Affairs – and not the Permanent Representative – was the first to answer the SRB. See, for example, Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1985-1994, File 846, confidential message Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, no. 6237/1389, 12 April 1988; followed by confidential message Minister of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN, 26 April 1988; in turn finally followed by: SRB-archive; letter H. Wagenmakers, Head of the UN Political Affairs Department, to Jaap Woldendorp, Director SRB, no. DIO/149.663, 26 April 1988.

51 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 987, memo International Organizations Department, no. 257/80, 29 December 1980 (2 pages); and confidential memo International Organizations Department, no. 68/80, 30 December 1980 (3 pages).

52 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 987, memo International Organizations Department, no. 257/80, 29 December 1980.

involvement. This official had its doubts as a result of the talks between Foreign Affairs and Shell.\(^{54}\)

In January 1981, the first public uproar took place in the Netherlands. SRB’s allegation, in its (preliminary) findings, that oil shipments took place from the Netherlands Antilles to South Africa triggered intense consultation activities – between the Netherlands Antilles, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry Transport and Public Works, and Shell. The aim of these activities was to determine a public response that would be presented to the UN.\(^{55}\) Foreign Affairs considered the fact the whole government needed to ‘speak with one tongue.’\(^{56}\) Being a touchy subject, the Dutch government felt the need to respond to Ambassador Clark of the UN Special Committee.\(^{57}\) The Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN stressed the need of a reply at short notice, as Clark was going to visit a conference of parliamentarians on the oil embargo at Brussels.\(^{58}\) In the letter sent to Clark, the Dutch Representative wrote that his government had carefully studied the SRB-report, and while he promised to verify the data, the Dutch could not take measures against companies delivering oil, for there was no mandatory oil-embargo or a voluntary effective embargo imposed by a sufficient number of relevant countries.\(^{59}\) Foreign Affairs had verified, checked and rechecked the data on several occasions.

On 6 January 1981, news reached Foreign Affairs that the Dutch press agency ANP had made public the denial from the Netherlands Antilles that they had a substantial role in transporting oil to South Africa. A press release from the Netherlands Antilles, based on a reaction to the then still unpublished SRB-data, caused this media attention. This surprised the SRB (7.2.5 ‘In time and relevance’) and the Dutch Foreign Affairs. In the press release, the Netherlands Antilles admitted two of the shipments, named in the SRB advance papers, but denied the other eight. Foreign Affairs urgently asked the Netherlands Antilles whether this media report was correct.\(^{60}\) This time, the acting governor replied

\(^{54}\) Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo International Organizations Department, no. 235/31, 22 October 1981. See also 7.2.3 ‘Correct and accurate.’

\(^{55}\) Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 987, confidential message Minister of Foreign Affairs to governor and prime minister in Willemstad (Netherlands Antilles), embassy South Africa, and Permanent Representative UN, 13 January 1981; and memo International Organizations Department to Minister, International Organizations Department, African and Middle Eastern Affairs Department, Director-General Political Affairs, Director-General International Cooperation, and Secretary-General, no. 16/81, 15 January 1981.

that one ship with supplies went to South Africa while the others only bunkered or left for another destination.\textsuperscript{61} Foreign Affairs checked the statements of the Netherlands Antilles with representatives of Shell, when data concerned them. Shell did not subscribe to the statement of the Netherlands Antilles. Consequently, Foreign Affairs left the denials of the Antilles as the view of Willemstad (7.2.3 ‘Correct and accurate’). Meanwhile, at a press conference on 13 January 1981, the SRB released the report titled \textit{Oil Supplies to South Africa: The Role of Tankers Connected with the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles}.\textsuperscript{62}

On 22 January 1981, soon after the publication of the survey, the government stated that while there was no legal basis for an oil embargo, it would still verify the data contained in the Shipping Research Bureau’s report.\textsuperscript{63} Foreign Affairs discussed how to respond further. In February 1981, in a confidential internal memo, the International Organizations Department advised temporarily not to comment on an indirect Dutch involvement, for even that ‘would add fuel to the fire of the supporters of unilateral Dutch sanctions.’\textsuperscript{64} The SRB-survey concerning the Netherlands and Netherlands Antilles was primarily aimed at serving the direct political or publicity goal of applying pressure on the Dutch government.

Shortly afterwards, the SRB published its first main report on 11 March 1981, and handed a copy to Akporode Clark of the UN. The Dutch government had already agreed to verify the data. Again, Foreign Affairs wanted to be in control of the exact answers given by the administration to third parties. The ministry also asked the Permanent Representative to the UN for the text of the letter that he had sent to Clark of the Special Committee.\textsuperscript{65} Meanwhile, Ambassador Clark sent a letter to Groenendijk, chairman of Kairos and the SRB. In return, the Dutch Representative to the UN reported this contact between Groenendijk and Clark to Foreign Affairs.\textsuperscript{66} Two months later, the SRB-report was praised at a conference on sanctions against South Africa. The UN and OAU organized this conference, held in Paris, 20-27 May 1981. One hundred and twenty four countries participated, including the Netherlands. At this conference, the focus of criticism was not on the Netherlands, but on the Nordic countries.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{61} Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 987, confidential message Acting Governor to minister of Foreign Affairs, 16 January 1981.

\textsuperscript{62} Hengeveld, \textit{Embargo}, 66.

\textsuperscript{63} Press communiqué HCSA, 11 March 1981.

\textsuperscript{64} Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 988, confidential memo International Organizations Department, 3 February 1981, no. 29/81, 2.

\textsuperscript{65} Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 988, telex 660443 Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN; and telex 665369 Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, 11 March 1981.

\textsuperscript{66} The Permanent Representative quoted in full the letter of Clark to Groenendijk. Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 988, telex 665429 Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, 20 March 1981.

\textsuperscript{67} The Dutch ambassador in Paris advised Foreign Affairs to get in touch with Norway in anticipation of the next conference on a possible oil embargo. He expected this conference to be held in the beginning of 1982. Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1983-1990. File 847; confidential message embassy Paris, reference 12789, 29 May 1981. See also the report on the
Later that year, the International Organizations Department reminded its minister that Foreign Affairs had only written to the UN Special Committee against Apartheid that the government would verify its accuracy ‘without promising to publish the results of this investigation.’ Foreign Affairs discussed its position internally. The International Organizations Department advised to say that the government was of the opinion that the report was generally correct. In turn, the Transport Adviser suggested that the reaction to the report provided important data that could be verified. Foreign Affairs still hesitated to respond. While no reaction could be interpreted that something was wrong, still the government was responsible to parliament and not to pressure groups. Then, in September 1981, the ministry internally categorized the first main SRB-report as ‘generally reliable,’ and officials used the data for internal discussions. After almost a year, the minister wrote in a public reaction that the SRB-report supplied interesting data, which needed to be evaluated more closely. Finally, in July 1982, the government publicly said it held the opinion that the data of the SRB was, in general terms, a reliable picture of the oil shipments to South Africa.

In 1982, Foreign Affairs assumed a defensive attitude. The SRB published its second main report in June 1982. Before this publication, the (new) chairman of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid, A.Y. Maitama-Sule, submitted a memorandum prepared by the Bureau to the Dutch government. As the Dutch political situation was still sensitive and many shipments from the Netherlands Antilles were named, the minister of Foreign Affairs sent a letter to the Member of the Council of Ministers of the Realm for the Netherlands Antilles on 27 January 1982. The minister wrote, that he did not want to respond to the preliminary findings, but did ask the Member of Council of Ministers for a verification of the facts, and wanted to be informed on the outcome. Furthermore, the minister stressed the urgency of his request, which he made on 23 October 1981 to the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles, to join a

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68 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, marginal notes by International Organizations Department, in memo Economic Cooperation Department, no. 213/81, 23 October 1981, 3.
69 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, marginal notes by International Organizations Department, and Transport Adviser in memo Economic Cooperation Department, no. 213/81, 23 October 1981.
70 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo International Organizations Department, no. 29/81, 8 September 1981.
71 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo Minister to International Organizations Department, Secretary-General, and Director-General International Cooperation, 16 November 1981. See a similar reaction in the letter to the HCSA and Kairos: NiZA-archive; letter by the Minister/International Organizations Department, Political Affairs Section, to Jan de Jong, HCSA/Kairos, DIO/PZ-348085, 15 December 1981.
73 In later years, the SRB itself would directly send its ‘Summary Data Sheets’ to UN ambassadors. The UN received copies simultaneously, to be able to take action. Hengeveld, *Embargo*, 1995, 71.
possible future Dutch, oil embargo. The next day, after contacting the HCSA, Foreign Affairs discovered that not only were the Netherlands Antilles involved in shipments, but also the Netherlands itself. This information had not arrived from New York and the minister of Foreign Affairs, Max van der Stoel, immediately contacted the Permanent Representative to the UN to obtain this information. Again, Foreign Affairs wanted to coordinate the answers to be given in respect to the letter of the UN Center against Apartheid. Of special interest is an extract of the standard answer, sent to the Permanent Representative to the UN and the Prime Minister at Willemstad (Netherlands Antilles). This answer was based on verification of the data. In this standard answer, there is a ring of uneasiness on the use of the UN by the SRB as a channel for the verification of its data (quote in verbatim text):

'...regarding possible oil deliveries in the past which are the subject of the data presented to the special committee against apartheid by the shipping research bureau, the position of the Netherlands government is that, until very recently there have been no legal or other measures in the Netherlands aimed at the curtailment of oil deliveries to South Africa. It goes without saying that this implies that there was no government agency that monitored or controlled the movement of oil tankers to South Africa so that accurate verification of the data of the shipping research bureau by the Netherlands government cannot be guaranteed. For that reason the government prefers to abstain from commenting on the accuracy of these data. Furthermore, it would appear to the government that the shipping research bureau, being established in the Netherlands, could perfectly well communicate with the government directly rather than through the special committee.'

Actually, the Netherlands was interested in an accurate verification. This verification also led to the belief at Foreign Affairs, that the data presented by the SRB was generally accurate. The accuracy of the already checked data and the actual Dutch involvement in oil deliveries probably contributed to the public statement that an ‘accurate verification’ ‘cannot be guaranteed’ and ‘for that reason the government prefers to abstain from commenting on the accuracy of this data.’

At the same time, Foreign Affairs was also curious to learn about the lobbying activities of the SRB and the HCSA in parliament. On at least one occasion, Foreign Affairs had surreptitiously obtained information that these organizations wanted to address an open letter to parliament about the Dutch

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76 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, confidential message minister of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN and Prime Minister at Willemstad, 19 February 1982. At 23 February 1982, the Permanent Representative to the UN sent this standard answer the Director UN Center against Apartheid.
77 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo International Organizations Department to International Organizations Department and Director-General, International Cooperation, no. 29/81, 8 September 1981.
involvement in oil deliveries to South Africa. Knowing this, Foreign Affairs prepared itself through memos stating that while there was an involvement, it was not a big involvement as the Bureau said. This defensive attitude remained also in 1983, by the ministry then writing that it could not verify the data accurately.

In 1984, the third SRB-report, unlike the first two, did not trigger off so many diplomatic consultations or verifications in the Netherlands. The Bureau sent the first of a series of topical surveys – on oil deliveries made by a Norwegian shipping company – to UN representatives of all member states. In this letter, which was also sent to the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN, the Bureau included a standard clause, saying ‘we are well aware of the determination of your Government to tighten the oil embargo against South Africa.’

Later reports did not have the impact on Foreign Affairs, as the first two had. In 1985, the SRB asked the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN to verify possible Dutch involvement in nine oil deliveries. Foreign Affairs simply answered that the SRB oil shipments to South Africa were not illegal, and therefore they did not verify the data. In 1988, the SRB asked the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN for information on the possible involvement of the Dutch enterprise Transworld Oil (Deuss) in an oil delivery. ThePermanent Representative passed it, as always, to Foreign Affairs. As before, the ministry did not give information, because it was not part of the Dutch oil sanctions, but wondered, internally, ‘we must have had such letters before. Don’t we have any standard answer to the same effect?’ In those years, in the Netherlands, oil deliveries were no longer a very touchy subject. The anti-apartheid movement had lost momentum in parliament and the Dutch involvement had decreased in the second half of the eighties.

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78 Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, memo International Organizations Department, no. 11/82, 5 February 1982; and memo International Organizations Department, 8 February 1982. For more on the degree of involvement, see: 7.2.3 ‘A large involvement?’

79 SRB-archive, letter International Organizations Department to SRB, DIO/PZ-276940, 14 October 1983.

80 Letter SRB to Permanent Representaties UN, 28 November 1984.


82 SRB-archive; letter Head of the UN Political Affairs Department to SRB, no. DPV/PZ-175.548, 18 June 1985.

83 Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1985-1994, File 846, marginal notes on open message Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, 12 April 1988. The SRB was not the only one to receive formal answers. The UN IGG also received answers to the same effect, if it got an answer at all (Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1985-1994, File 846, confidential message minister of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN, reference no. 9263, 23 July 1987). Finally, the emphasis on oil transports changed from Europe (Norway) to Hong Kong. See biannual reports and Foreign Affairs, Code 6, 1985-1990, 613.211.45, File 1557, open message Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, 14 April 1989.
Direct contact

The SRB and Foreign Affairs were also in touch with each other in a more regular way. Not every lobby group received answers from Foreign Affairs. Foreign Affairs used criteria to assess whether to respond or not to groups actively involved in anti-apartheid issues. First, a response should not be an open letter. In the letter it should also explicitly be written that a response would be highly appreciated. Second, the organization in question was a political factor. For example, the ministry saw the biggest union FNV as a political factor, concerning the anti-apartheid struggle. Third, Foreign Affairs took into account the amount of publicity that they had already given to a certain issue.

As the SRB was a political factor – through the UN and its lobby in Dutch parliament – Foreign Affairs answered its letters. A letter from the SRB even could trigger a meeting of different ministries. This happened, for example, after a letter on alleged oil deliveries from the harbor of Rotterdam. It resulted in a meeting between the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In an internal memo, Foreign Affairs wrote that they highly appreciated the presence of those invited.

Besides letters, the SRB could also meet in person. Foreign Affairs had several meetings with members of the board of the SRB.

Consequences of biased and veiled reporting 1981-1984

According to the Bureau, the biased and veiled reporting in the second and third main report did no permanent damage. Nevertheless, there was more to this issue than just the credibility as the SRB thought. It also had effects at a diplomatic level.

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85 FNV: Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging – it is the largest Dutch Union.
86 Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1983-1990, File 852, memo International Organizations Department, no. 125/81, 22 May 1981.
Dutch Foreign Affairs was aware of the pressure that was applied on the SRB by the ANC and OAPEC-countries. The ministry knew how the bias of deleting individual names of these countries, had crept into the SRB-reports. Already in July 1982, the International Organizations Department wrote ‘it has heard from the UN Center against Apartheid, that the Arab countries have insisted on the removal of this data.’\(^{90}\) At the same time, Foreign Affairs wrote to the Dutch parliament that this way of reporting had led to a bias of applying pressure on oil transporting countries. Foreign Affairs argued that this bias was not necessary, because in its preliminary findings the SRB named Arab countries and harbors.\(^{91}\) Also to its UN-representative, the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs wrote that Arab countries left ‘the multinational, carriers, insurers, etc., to carry the can.’\(^{92}\) The Dutch minister wanted the focus to be shifted onto the countries that joined the oil embargo. He wrote that it was the other way round that they passed on the responsibility of the OPEC-embargo to the carriers. This was ‘businesslike incorrect and politically undesired.’ According to the minister, a solution to the possible transport problem lay in the first place in the hands of the producers. ‘The only thing the producers – and anyway after having put their affairs in order in the first place – could ask the carriers was not to undermine their embargo measures willfully.’\(^{93}\)

As a result of this diplomatic game – and other considerations – the Dutch, at the UN, wanted a low key approach, both towards a conference on oil supplies to South Africa, and towards the co-sponsorship of UN-resolutions.\(^{94}\) It did not want to join conferences and committees anymore. To its parliament, however, it wrote that the Netherlands had not been invited to join the UN expert group

\(^{90}\) *Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, marginal note of International Organizations Department in (the draft version of) the letter Minister of Foreign Affairs/ International Organizations Department to Dutch parliament, no. DIO/XX 199171, 29 July 1982.*

In a confidential memo from Foreign Affairs to its Permanent Representative to the UN, the ministry made a direct link between on the one hand leaving the oil transporting countries carrying the can and the activities of OPEC-countries at the UN group of expert that discussed “the effective implementation of the embargoes imposed by oil-producing and oil-exporting countries”, and, on the other hand, leaving out the names of oil exporting countries from the Middle East in the SRB-report. Reddy, head of the UN Center against Apartheid, had informed Foreign Affairs on this issue (Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 2324, confidential message minister of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN, 10 November 1982). The Dutch Permanent Representative saw the same Reddy as the one who politicized the meetings of this group of experts (Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 2324, confidential message Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, 17/18 February 1983. This group of experts was the predecessor of the UN IGG).

\(^{91}\) *Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 907, letter minister of Foreign Affairs/ International Organizations Department to Dutch parliament, no. DIO/XX 199171, 29 July 1982.*

\(^{92}\) *Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 2324, confidential message minister of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN, 10 November 1982.*

\(^{93}\) *Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 2324, confidential message minister of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN, 10 November 1982. See also: Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 2324, appendix of memo International Organizations Department to Director-General Political Affairs, International Organizations Department, and Director-General International Cooperation, no. 164/82, 29 November 1982.*

\(^{94}\) *Foreign Affairs, Central Mail and Filing Division/Secret Files, 1975-1984, 613.211.4, File 670, secret message minister/International Organizations Department to Permanent Representative UN, no. 415945, 11 October 1982.*
studying an oil embargo. The Netherlands was not the only country complaining. Norway also had a problem with leaving the oil transporters to carry the can. Still, Norway was willing to join an international conference on the oil embargo, but only if it was clear beforehand this would not end up in ‘empty resolutions and statements.’

The diplomatic game continued throughout the eighties. When in later years statements were made in UN-documents such as ‘while oil-exporting States have committed themselves to an oil embargo against South Africa, very few major shipping States have done so,’ an official of Foreign Affairs wrote in the margin ‘passing the blame. Nevertheless, if the producers do not export to S.A., carriers do not have anything to transport.’

The change in 1985 by the SRB on the policy of reporting also led to positive reactions. From this time on, no more criticism of biased or veiled reporting by the SRB can be traced at Dutch Foreign Affairs. Also, for example, the opinion of the Israeli UN-delegation of the Bureau improved as soon as the SRB – the now ‘highly reputable, non-political’ ‘independent agency’ – mentioned the names of the oil exporting countries from the Middle East in its reports.

8.3 Similar reports by other organizations

What was the quality of reports written by others? The Bureau was not the only one to produce reports on oil and South Africa. In this section, reports by others – that had also relevance within the Dutch context – are investigated, but only from a limited perspective. Attention is only paid to differences in quality compared to the SRB-reports.

This may lead to additional insight in the quality of the SRB-publications, and to factors that influence the quality of reports (12.2). This involves a cross-case analysis.

This section is explicitly not aimed at an assessment of the quality of these other reports. This is outside the scope of this research and, furthermore, would be more relevant to chapter 7. The reports that are discussed include – a report

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95 Lower House, session 1984-1985, 17895, no. 21, 17 June 1985, 7. For the atmosphere in this group of UN-experts, see footnote in: 8.3.


97 Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, 1983-1990, File 837, fax Permanent Representative UN, 22 November 1988, 1620, 4 and marginal notes.

98 Hengeveld, Embargo, 1995, 104. Original source: Meir Joffre, Statement in the Fourth Committee, New York, 1 October 1986; and Statement by Benjamin Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly, 6 November 1986, issued by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information Division, Jerusalem. Before 1985, Israel cross-checked the veiled SRB-data with Lloyd’s Voyage Record. The Israeli Permanent Representative at that time was Benjamin Netanyahu, later prime minister of Israel. Hengeveld, Embargo, 1995, 103-104. During the Gulf war of the 1990’s, Israel had its own sophisticated system to monitor ship movements. This turned out to be a help for the allied blockade of Iraq (De Graaff & Wiebes, Villa Maarheeze, 1998, 383).
by the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, publications by the UN, and an analysis by the Dutch embassy in South Africa.

**Report of the Erasmus University at Rotterdam**

At the end of 1984, the municipality of Rotterdam commissioned a complementary research. It asked the Erasmus University of Rotterdam – together with the SRB – to investigate the trade links between Rotterdam and South Africa (6.3.3 ‘Rotterdam survey’). The municipality asked the Department of International Economic Relations of the Erasmus University to investigate the effects on Dutch employment, if oil shipments to South Africa were stopped. In its report, the Erasmus University focused on three scenarios: 1) a one sided oil embargo against South Africa; 2) a stop of all exports; and 3) retaliation by South Africa.  

According to the report, the one sided oil embargo had minor consequences. 

This study included a contact between the university and the SRB. The Bureau described early consultation between itself and the Erasmus University as indispensable. For its econometric calculations, the university needed the SRB-data on oil shipments. As the Bureau was still working on it in April 1985, it could only supply the university with temporary findings. In its letter of 4 April the SRB explicitly wrote that the data was provisional and could only be used internally as an indication. On 18 June 1985, the Bureau submitted to the university the final data. According to the SRB, this was weeks before the completion of the report by the university, which had said it hoped to finish the report in the first week of July. During the next contact, on 8 July 1985, the researchers from the university said – again, according to the SRB – that the report would be typed next weekend, and the definitive figures of the SRB would be used. As this data was crucial for the university’s calculations, an overview follows.

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100 In internal memos Foreign Affairs was of the opinion, that the bias was too much on the econometric effects, and the university hardly argued political effects, as the reputation of Rotterdam as a free port (Foreign Affairs, Documentary Information Systems Service - Cabinet, 1985-1990, 553.12, File 467, confidential memo of official of Transport Adviser to the Transport Adviser, no. 240/85, 9 October 1985, 3 pages. Foreign Affairs, Code 6, 1985-1990, 613.211.45, File 1550, memo official of Transport Adviser, no. 251/85, 17 October 1985). As such, this criticism is correct, but does have a scientist on econometric calculations to describe political effects? Furthermore, the university mentioned on page 28 the effect of the reputation of Rotterdam – a political effect.


You would expect the university to take into account the most recent year for its calculations: 1984. In this year 0 tons were shipped. However, the university chose SRB’s provisional data from 1982. The university calculated this figure by simply counting up both figures (quite sure and maximum extra). The university also did not estimate the probability of the provisional data. As the SRB-method was to reduce the number of suspected cases, the tonnage could be – and actually was – remarkably lower.

The entire Erasmus-report is a mixture of provisional and final data, and also of different years taken as a starting point. In chapter one, the university took 1984 as a starting point to describe trade and employment, but it did not work with the 1984-data for its calculations on an oil embargo. The university did not only choose 1984 as an example of a ‘good overview of our trade with South Africa,’ it also stated that in this year no crude oil was exported. This means, that the university began with quoting the final 1984-data in its report. However, at the very moment the university began its calculations, it suddenly referred to provisional data of another year. Further in the report, the university even made the assumption that ten oil tankers transported a total of one million ton crude oil a year. Even, according to the SRB-data of 1982, four tankers supplied South Africa with oil, not ten. Furthermore, the university presented the loss of man-years, calculated on this assumption – which was disputable, because it was already too high – as a minimum estimate. Finally, the

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Table 8.2 SRB-data submitted to Erasmus University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>4 April 1985: provisional data</th>
<th>18 June 1985: final data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>quite sure: 750,000 tons</td>
<td>final data: 545,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maximum extra: 250,000 tons</td>
<td>(the SRB expected this final figure to be lower than the provisional data, due to its method of reducing the number of cases to be investigated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>quite sure: 215,000 tons</td>
<td>final data: 80,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maximum extra: 735,000 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>quite sure: 0 tons</td>
<td>final data: 0 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maximum extra: 2-800,000 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
university did not present an overview of the SRB-data, or referred to the trend of diminishing numbers of transports. On the other hand, however, the university did give this kind of data and information about trends for both the overall employment, and for the employment and income from the transfer of crude oil.

In the introduction of its report, the university wrote that some of the data of the SRB was provisional. Nevertheless, the university showed that it knew the definite figures (page 3 and 4 of the report). The choices made are unsatisfactory. Compared with the Erasmus university report, the SRB did not juggle with data. A reason for this difference between the university and the SRB is difficult to provide (see: 12.2).

**United Nations, the Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa (UN IGG)**

In 1986, oil exporting and oil shipping countries agreed to establish an intergovernmental group to monitor oil shipments and the embargo against South Africa. Through the General Assembly resolution 41/35F of 10 November 1986, the UN established the Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa (UN IGG). The UN IGG did research in the same field as the SRB.

The aims of the UN IGG were twofold. First, the UN IGG monitored the oil supply to South Africa and published annual reports. Second, it encouraged and assisted governments to enact legislation and comparable measures to impose an oil embargo on South Africa. To monitor the oil supply, the SRB

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For the year 1981 and 1984, Dell a/o, *Werkgelegenheidsaspecten van een Olieboycot tegen Zuid-Afrika*, 1985, 10. This is worked out in table 6 on page 11.

For these last issue, the figures for the years 1979-1983 were given. Dell a/o, *Werkgelegenheidsaspecten van een Olieboycot tegen Zuid-Afrika*, 1985, 12. This is worked out in table 7 on page 13.


126 Countries supported this resolution. There were 5 countries against and 15 abstentions, among them the Netherlands. Norway was an initiator of this resolution. SRB, *Newsletter*, no. 6, January 1987, 12.


was the most important source of information.\textsuperscript{117} In fact, for a longer period the UN IGG was almost completely dependent on the input of data by the SRB,\textsuperscript{118} in particular for the complete sets of preliminary findings.\textsuperscript{119} Besides supplying data, the Bureau also advised, through extensive memos, the UN IGG on how to improve the quality of its work.\textsuperscript{120}

In 1988-1989, the UN IGG wanted to establish an independent database. The goals were to verify the SRB-information and to expand the research to all ships capable of carrying oil.\textsuperscript{121} Like the Bureau, the UN IGG reached the conclusion that Lloyd’s had to be the main source of reliable information to carry out such an investigation: ‘The company in question is the sole provider of a unique service. Such data is not available from any other original source [...] There is [...] no alternative to buying it from Lloyd’s.’\textsuperscript{122} After the contract with Lloyd’s, the SRB remained an important source for the UN IGG.\textsuperscript{123}

There were some differences between the UN IGG and the Bureau. SRB-investigations did not include the smaller product and chemical tankers.\textsuperscript{124} From a certain moment, the UN IGG wanted to include in its research, calls to South African ports from all vessels with petroleum-carrying capabilities. This encompassed not only crude oil, but also refined petroleum products, petrochemicals, and liquid gas shipped by smaller tankers. The latter had much more irregular trading patterns, such as calling at different harbors, than the more straightforward trading patterns of the large crude oil tankers. The SRB already had more or less abandoned the regular investigation on the more complex trade by smaller tankers, which were also often used for shipping non-petroleum products. These investigations were requested for political reasons by

\textsuperscript{117} For example, the SRB brought up more than 60 cases for the second report of the UN IGG of November 1988. SRB, \textit{Newsletter}, no. 14, January 1989, 1.
\textsuperscript{120} Hengeveld, \textit{Embargo}, 1995, 129.
\textsuperscript{122} UN IGG, internal memo, 3 September 1988, reference: Lloyd’s Seadata contract. The UN IGG wondered if the SRB obtained the expensive Seadata or the more inexpensive Voyage Record and Shipping Index. The Bureau used all. The UN IGG wondered ‘It is my suspicion that the SRB, which has never been overly informative about its methods, may be doing just that. If they have unlimited access to volunteer labour it might make sense to do this’ (UN IGG, internal memo, 14 September 1988, reference: Lloyd’s hard-copy publications).
\textsuperscript{123} An example of such a lead for the UN IGG was a broadcast by the Norwegian television on 21 April 1989 based on information provided by the SRB. This is reported in an internal memo of the UN IGG (UN IGG, memo from Paul Conlon to Amer Arai, 30 April 1989, reference: recent port calls in South Africa).
In turn, the SRB often referred to the UN IGG, for example in its \textit{Newsletter} (SRB, \textit{Newsletter}, no. 6, January 1987, 12-13; no. 8, July 1987, 8; no. 10, January 1988, 6-7; no. 14, January, 1-6; no. 18, first quarter 1990, 7-8; no. 20, third quarter 1990, 3; no. 21, fourth quarter 1990, 8; no. 22, first quarter 1991, 4; no. 23, second quarter 1991, 10; no. 24, third quarter 1991, 4; no. 25, fourth quarter 1991, 6-7; no. 26, first quarter 1992, 5-6; no. 27, second quarter 1992, 2; no. 29, fourth quarter 1992, 7; no. 30, first quarter 1993, 3 and 8; no. 33, fourth quarter 1993/first quarter 1994, 2, 6).
\textsuperscript{124} Hengeveld, \textit{Embargo}, 1995, 129.
certain member states that wanted to divert the attention from crude oil shipments towards western-dominated transport of chemicals and related products. They consumed a lot of time, both of the UN IGG’s secretariat and of the SRB, which assisted the UN IGG in spite of its experience that such research was not very likely to yield solid outcomes.

Another category of port calls, which took a lot of time to investigate, were duly reported (as opposed to secret) as calls by combined carriers, so-called OBO’s that can transport oil as well as dry cargo. The SRB used to investigate these calls, but had learned quickly to discern between calls that were unrelated, and therefore not reported to a government, and those that were possible oil deliveries.\textsuperscript{125}

The diplomatic pressure was difficult for the UN IGG, due to the political nature of the organization. For example, when a document was forged, in the opinion of the SRB, the Bureau did not delete the case of a tanker on the mere ground that a country had handed over the document. The UN IGG – although aware of this problem – did not want to put aside such documents, in order to not lose the cooperation of those governments. This led to difficulties, especially when two governments gave conflicting answers on the same case. In 1988, at the presentation of the second report, the UN IGG complained that governments should scrutinize the authenticity of the documents presented, and that they should be more alert to prevent companies forging such documents.\textsuperscript{126}

Two illustrations of this problem are presented – on the Berge Enterprise and on the Beatrice. The Berge Enterprise was an ultra large crude oil carrier, owned by the Norwegian Bergesen. On 2 June 1987, the SRB had already handed over detailed information to the UN IGG about the possible oil delivery by this ship.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{1}This ship delivered a cargo of 300,000 tonnes of crude oil, collected in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to South Africa in April 1987. In 1989 Qatar sent the Group [GdV: UN IGG] a certificate which stated that the cargo had been discharged at Singapore in April 1987. An earlier certificate provided by the Saudi Arabian Government stated that the cargo had at the same time been discharged in Egypt. Despite the fact that the discharge story lacks cohesion and that Bergesen, the Norwegian owner of the ship, confirmed that its ship had delivered oil to South Africa, the case was deleted [GdV: by the UN IGG].\textsuperscript{128}

In its third report, the UN IGG deleted incorrectly the Beatrice on the basis of a false certificate:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 129. Interview with Hengeveld by the author, 4 July 2000. The UN IGG made extensive lists of, for example, ORE and bulk carriers (UN IGG, un4.igg: lloyd’s mardata, 01/18/89 library, u\#pbq19721,east,sm). From internal memos, it is shown that the approach of the UN IGG can be inspired by its fear to imitate the SRB too closely (UN IGG, “Memo on general strategy,” file date: 1989-02-09, point 6 and 7).
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Hengeveld, \textit{Embargo}, 1995, 129-130.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} SRB, \textit{Newsletter}, no. 8, July 1987, 8.
\end{itemize}
‘This ship made an oil delivery to South Africa in May/June 1986. The “sufficient evidence” to delete the case, was based on a certificate of discharge provided by Iran, which stated that the Beatrice had delivered her cargo in Genoa, Italy. However, this certificate shows certain errors. In the first place it is riddled with grammatical mistakes. Secondly the certificate was not even correctly falsified, and thirdly the Beatrice could not possibly have sailed to Genoa in the time mentioned. Again, the ship owner confirmed the delivery to South Africa. Also the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations wrote to the Shipping Research Bureau in August 1989 that according to their information the Beatrice had not discharged any oil in Genoa: “this could indeed substantiate the conclusion that the documents in question were falsified.”

In 1991, the UN IGG reopened 11 cases in which it suspected forged documents were in play, among them the Berge Enterprise and the Beatrice. The UN IGG saw as its main success that it had ensured the cooperation of many states.

In comparison, the Bureau managed to filter out manipulated data and forged documents, contrary to the UN IGG, which was not able to put aside forged documents for diplomatic reasons. The SRB could list such deliveries, because it was not dependent on the diplomatic circuit. For the same reason, the Bureau could drop time-consuming and non-effective research, such as focusing on OBO’s. Besides the problems in the diplomatic sphere, the SRB was of the opinion that ‘there was no catching up with the Shipping Research Bureau’s lead on investigatory experience.’

**United Nations, the Khalifa-lists**

The UN produced other reports on sanctions and South Africa. The so-called Khalifa-lists were listings of companies and people having connections with South Africa. The lists were named after its Egyptian chairman, Ahmad M. Khalifa of the UN Center for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland. In

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130 The UN IGG reopened three other cases because of suspect calls. SRB, *Newsletter*, no. 25, fourth quarter 1991, 6-7. Internally, the UN IGG was already in 1989 aware of having a problem here ‘Neglecting to pursue leads generated by the IGG’s own recent research efforts will seriously impair the credibility of the IGG in the future’ (UN IGG, Memo from Paul Conlon to Amer Arajim on “IGG’s scope of activities,” 5 June 1989, page 4 of 5).


132 Problems with oil research as a result of diplomatic entanglements were endemic within the UN. The UN IGG was preceded by a group of UN-experts. In 1983, this UN-group prepared a report in order to come to an effective oil embargo. The atmosphere within the group got worse. First, there were the already existing differences and confrontations between oil transporting and oil producing countries. The Norwegian delegation, who attended this group of experts, was the opinion the draft of this UN-report did not even meet the standard of a ‘schoolboy’s paper’: it was biased, left the Western countries to carry the can, and was meant to whitewash the OPEC-countries from which countries 90% of all the oil that was supplied to South Africa originated from. Second, also according to the Norwegian delegation, the Kuwait chairperson of the group caused an ‘indecorous atmosphere’ as a result of its ‘despotic chairmanship’ (Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.214.9, File 2324, confidential message Permanent Representative UN to Foreign Affairs, 30 September 1983).


134 Besides the Khalifa-list, there was also the Khalifa-report. In practice there was a close link between them, but formally they were not connected. There were updates of the Khalifa-list. Foreign Affairs,
February 1986, the Dutch Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva wrote ‘as known, Khalifa has the discriminating habit to omit certain unpleasant facts on Arab and East-European countries, concerning their commercial trade (oil) with South Africa. These gaps were, accurately documented, and filled in by the Israeli ambassador.’

In October 1986, the discussion was repeated at the UN in New York. This discussion gained in intensity as the Israeli delegation denounced the East-European and Arab commercial interests in South Africa. The Israeli delegation used SRB-data (8.2) on occasions like these. Despite sharp Arab reactions, the contribution of Israel aroused doubts among some African countries. The criticism of the 1986-list was not an isolated incident.

Although the Bureau knew a period of veiled reporting, this was a minor incident compared to the practice of the Khalifa-lists. In the case of the Khalifa-lists, unpleasant data over a long period was simply completely omitted.

**Dutch Embassy in South Africa/Foreign Affairs**

Already in 1977, the Dutch Embassy at Pretoria identified credit and oil as the two vulnerable spots of South Africa. According to the embassy, only the large-scale withdrawal of long-term capital would have a damaging, political effect on South Africa. This 1977 message turned out to be quite prophetic for the 1985 debt crises; although it was the refusal of short-term credit that actually triggered the crisis (6.3.4). The only difference between the analysis by the embassy and the SRB-approach was the assessment of the effectiveness of sanctions.

Also in later years, Foreign Affairs showed that it was capable of making accurate assessments, as it did in the dispute over shipments from the Netherlands Antilles to South Africa (7.2.3).

On 18 June 1986, the Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* published that during a press briefing Foreign Affairs had said that Libya had made a contract with South Africa for oil supply. The SRB wanted to know whether the ministry did have information on such contracts. Foreign Affairs responded to the Bureau, by saying that even though it did not have such information, it was an assumption that some oil exporting countries did supply South Africa with oil, while saying,

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136 Foreign Affairs, UN Political Affairs Department, File 842, June 1986-August 1987, open message Permanent Representative UN, 10 October 1986.

137 Ibid.

138 For criticism on the 1982-list, for example, see: Foreign Affairs, UN, 1975-1984, 999.232.154, File 2605, confidential message minister of Foreign Affairs to Permanent Representative UN, reference 15720, 7 October 1982, 1-2.

in public statements, that they joined the embargo. However, the SRB wanted to know on what information Foreign Affairs based their assumption. In its reply, Foreign Affairs wrote that no further information could be provided to the SRB.\textsuperscript{140}

The then SRB co-director Hengeveld had the impression that Foreign Affairs was talking drivel on Libya. The reason Hengeveld insisted on an answer from Foreign Affairs was that he wanted to have this in black and white, if only to allay the suspicions – leveled at the Bureau – that it was reluctant to follow-up on leads that did not fit into its preconceived views.\textsuperscript{141} As such, the Libya-statement by Foreign Affairs was not an analysis, but rather empty talk or a slip of the tongue at a press conference. Therefore, it cannot be used to compare it to the quality of the SRB-publications.

\textbf{8.4 Conclusion}

In 8.1, it was shown that in successive reports the number of unveiled shipments increased throughout the years. The two largest increases were after the first report, and after 1990 when the Bureau gained access to South African sources.

In the successive report, the SRB found a good balance between the objectives it wanted to report on, and background information. One minor point was that the Bureau did not have a consistent policy on making recommendations in its main reports.

In 8.2, the effect, impact, knowledge use and diffusion of the SRB-publications was explored. The political targets of the Bureau were positive on the quality of SRB-data (Foreign Affairs, Bergesen, and South African official). They – and others – used (internally) SRB information to give their arguments authority, and to underline their views (Foreign Affairs, Pagan International, and Israel). The information potential of the SRB was sometimes overestimated. The Bureau played to an extent – which cannot be accurately estimated – a role in enhancing the costs South Africa had to pay for its oil. Some publications by the SRB were a direct reason for stopping oil deliveries (Brunei, Vitol). The SRB helped to keep the issue of the oil embargo alive at the UN. In the Netherlands, the Bureau was taken seriously and treated in a way similar to a major labor union. Foreign Affairs even had to take a defensive attitude, and the SRB-publications led to diplomatic maneuvering. Activities of the Bureau and its lobby were closely followed and on some occasions this occurred even in a more unorthodox way.

\textsuperscript{140} SRB-archive: letter SRB, Richard Hengeveld, to Acting Head UN Political Affairs Department, Political Affairs Section, A.P. Wegerif, 20 June 1986; letter Head of the UN Political Affairs Department, Political Affairs Section, J.Th. Hoekema, to SRB, Richard Hengeveld, no. DPV/PZ-172.705, 2 July 1986; letter SRB, Richard Hengeveld to Head of the UN Political Affairs Department, Political Affairs Section, J.Th. Hoekema, 3 July 1986; and, letter Acting Head UN Political Affairs Department, Political Affairs Section, A.P. Wegerif, to SRB, Richard Hengeveld, no. DPV/PZ-175.548, 28 July 1986.

\textsuperscript{141} Interviews with Richard Hengeveld by the author, 29 September 1998 and 4 July 2000.
All this complementary evidence points to the accuracy and influence of the Bureau, and is an indication of the high quality of SRB-publications. There is one exception. Omitting the names of individual oil exporting countries from the Middle East in the second and third report led to a low key approach by the Netherlands, both towards a conference on oil supplies to South Africa, and towards the co-sponsorship of UN-resolutions. After this biased and veiled way of reporting was abandoned, the Bureau’s reports were praised by countries like Israel, which had been earlier very critical.

When the quality of the SRB-publications is compared to the reports from Erasmus University, the UN IGG, and the Khalifa-lists, the quality of the SRB-publications is higher. They are more accurate on details (in comparison to Erasmus), and there is less bias (in comparison to UN IGG, Khalifa).

Concerning the general analysis, the quality of Dutch Foreign Affairs seems to be at the same level of that of the Bureau. No comparison can be made regarding details, because of the differences in status of the material (Libya, slip of the tongue at press conference).

**To compare the results of chapter 7 and 8**

The findings of the criteria – chapter 7 – and of the complementary evidence – chapter 8 – show a similar pattern. Overall, the SRB-reports were of a high quality. Also there is a similar pattern in which four different periods can be distinguished.

The first period encompassed the first two surveys and the first main report. They were a test case for the Bureau, especially concerning the accuracy of the data presented. This accuracy was crucial for the authority that the SRB was able to build. The government of the Netherlands Antilles directly cast doubt on facts presented in the survey on the Netherlands Antilles. Nevertheless, Foreign Affairs was aware that the Bureau was right. However, the first publications suffered some teething troubles. Subsequently, in later years, the SRB-staff started saying that the first report was out of print.\(^{142}\)

In the second period (second and third report), there was sharp criticism, when the SRB omitted in Table A the names of individual oil exporting countries from the Middle East. Despite this these two main reports were generally of good quality. The main problem was the possible implication concerning the SRB’s credibility and its diplomatic effects. Nevertheless, the Bureau managed to gain a better insight into the networks of oil traders.

In the third period (fourth and fifth report), the veiled and biased way of reporting was abandoned. Countries like Israel, which had expressed sharp criticism now welcomed SRB-publications. From 1985 onwards, no criticism is traced in the archives of Foreign Affairs. The main reports – and the Rotterdam survey – were now of high quality.

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In the fourth and last period (sixth and seventh report), the SRB gained access to new South African sources that enhanced the number of ships discovered.