

He's not a spy, say the experts

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Pretoria Bureau

Lieutenant A F Bomba is not a spy.

This, at any rate, is the opinion of several authorities on African affairs.

The experts think it unlikely that the Mozambican authorities orchestrated the 23-year-old pilot's defection and said yesterday there were too many factors which supported the view that the lieutenant fled Mozambique "for personal reasons".

They say the fact that Lt Bomba's brother, Mr Bonaventura Bomba, and his family had also requested political asylum in South Africa after the pilot's defection, was a further indication that Lt Bomba's defection was genuine.

Lt Bomba was a qualified pilot and as such he belonged to a privileged elite in Mozambique, said Dr G M E Leistner, Director of the Africa Institute.

As there were only a few qualified pilots in Mozambique, the authorities would have used a "cheaper" lieutenant if they wanted to stage a sham defection, Dr Leistner said.

There were too many hitches — including language barriers — to be contended with for a black Mozambican to infiltrate South Africa to become a spy, Dr Jan du Plessis, another authority on African affairs, said.

It seemed that Lt Bomba was genuinely disillusioned by the Marxist line of the Frelimo Government.

African nationalism was steadily growing in Southern Africa and because Marxism could not accommodate African nationalist aspirations, it was fast becoming discredited, Dr Du Plessis said.

Prof Arrie van Rensburg, a noted historian who has met several African leaders, said the Mozambican authorities would not have acted in such a "clumsy" way if they had "planted" Bomba.

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