

Mozambique preparing for attack by SA — defector

By
POEN de VILLIERS

MOZAMBIQUE was preparing itself for an attack by South Africa, Lieutenant Adriano Bomba, defected pilot of the Mozambique Air Force, said at Hoedspruit in the Eastern Transvaal on Saturday.

Lt Bomba was addressing South African and foreign journalists at his first Press conference since his dramatic flight to South Africa on July 8.

Flying a Russian-made MiG 17 fighter jet, he was intercepted by two Mirage F1 fighter jets and forced to land at Hoedspruit Air Force Base only 45 minutes after taking off from Maputo.

Asked whether there was any military build-up in Mozambique against South Africa, he said the forces as well as the population were preparing themselves for a possible attack by South Africa.

Shelters

Among these preparations were the building of shelters and the planning of support by the civilian population to the Mozambique forces in a possible counter attack.

But Lt Bomba said he never believed South Africa was a threat to Mozambique.

"The genuine Mozambique people — they too believe that South Africa is not a threat to Mozambique."

He said the Mozambique Government was also supporting the African National Congress.

"The Mozambique flag has a red star which means internationalism. The government feeds the ANC under the banner of that red star."

He said the Mozambique government "has yet to admit openly that it allows ANC bases in the country but is afraid of South Africa crossing the border again".

Asked whether he knew of any ANC bases, he said no, because he had not seen any.

"I wouldn't like to suppose things. I only speak on facts."

Problems

Lt Bomba also said the National Resistance Movement was giving the authorities big problems in the areas where it was active.

"Beira is the place where the resistance movement has more popular acceptance."

He said in Mozambique the people were told that the resistance movement obtained assistance from South Africa, "but I have not seen any proof of this yet".

The pilot's older brother has also asked for political asylum in South Africa.

Before giving Lt Bomba the opportunity to speak to the Press, Brigadier Dries van der Lith, Chief of Air Staff Intelligence, said Mr Boaventura Bomba, older brother of the pilot, had crossed the South African border from Swaziland with his wife and son only 36 hours after the lieutenant had landed at Hoedspruit on July 8.

Brig Van der Lith said he had applied for permanent residence in South Africa and the matter was being dealt with by the civilian authorities.

Mr Bomba had been allowed to see his brother at Hoedspruit, the brigadier said.

Intention

Lt Bomba said his brother had not known about his intention to defect to South Africa.

"My brother told me he had heard over the radio while he was in Swaziland that I had flown to South Africa. He wanted to know why I had done it and also came to South Africa."

Lt Bomba said his parents and sisters were still in Mozambique, but he did not think they were in danger.

The Mozambique Government does not have a concrete case against them. "This was purely my own decision."

He also denied newspaper reports that one of his sisters was married to a captain

in the Mozambique Air Force: "I don't know of any of my sisters being married to an air force captain. Where did you fish that one out?"

S African

Lt Bomba also confirmed that his mother was South African born. She, however, left for Mozambique 25 years ago.

Asked whether his mother had not told him about the situation in South Africa regarding Blacks, he said: "My mother left SA 25 years ago, so what she told me was old news."

The defected pilot said Russia would probably supply Mozambique with more modern fighter aircraft — but it was not certain when.

He disclosed that Mozambique's only fighter aircraft were obsolete MiG 17 jets, while MiG 15 jets were being used for training.

"There are now only 23 MiG 17's in Mozambique — the 24th one is now in South Africa," he said. There were three of the even older MiG 15s — and now only 21 fighter pilots.

Lt Bomba said he had done only reconnaissance flights during his 120 hours' flying.

"I have never used my weapons against the National Resistance Movement."

Anti-White

He denied allegations in Press reports from Mozambique that he was "violently anti-White" saying firmly: "That's a lie."

Asked what his impression was about not seeing any Black pilots in South Africa, he said: "I did not find this strange because I have not seen any White pilots in Mozambique."

However, he had been treated well by personnel of the South African Air Force since his arrival on July 8. He was allowed to watch TV, listen to music and read — mostly Portuguese literature.

Lt Bomba is regarded to be

in some form of "open custody" until finality is reached on his application for permanent residence. This was in the interest of his own safety, said an air force spokesman.

Influence

His decision to defect could influence many other Mozambicans to do the same, Lt Bomba said.

Giving the full reasons for his defection he said he had been disillusioned and his move was politically motivated.

"I am aware that this act could awake feelings in others to do the same now that they have seen what can be done. I'm sure my air force colleagues are not surprised ... we shared the same ideals."

Lt Bomba said he had been thinking of defecting for more than a month. He said the decision was taken because he knew the situation was much different to that in Mozambique and because "I knew in South Africa I would be safe."

He did not know what to expect.

"But when I came I was actually surprised to see how Whites and Blacks interacted, because it was not at all what we were told in Mozambique."

Enlightened

"It's obvious I am not properly enlightened about White and Black relations in South Africa. It is different to the propaganda in Mozambique. What they tell us in Mozambique is a lie."

He was asked what type of life, being Black, he expected to find in South Africa. His reply was: "When I came to South Africa, I did not intend to become involved in opposition to the internal policies of the country."

Lt Bomba confirmed he had officially applied for a permanent residence permit: "My situation will be decided by the South African authorities."

He further disclosed that he would like to follow an

academic career, studying at a university for "a scientific degree".

Machel

"In 1977 when I was still in school in the 10th class (equivalent to Std 9) President Samora Machel had a meeting with the students and informed us that the 10th and 11th classes would come to an end and the students would be incorporated in the forces.

"This affected me and many others and then we set ourselves the question: 'Are we free to decide for ourselves?'

Lt Bomba then joined the air force and was trained in Russia for two years and nine months.

"Once Frelimo took over, it was oppression. The people are no longer free.

No Food

"At this moment, Mozambique lives on diet of speeches by Samora Machel. There is no food in the stores."

He said he was convinced he could still serve his country indirectly if he furthered his education. "And in the long run whatever degree I finish in the scientific field could be of value to Mozambique."

He said while he was in Russia he had been allowed access to literature banned to the normal Russian citizen.

"I then realised that there was the same type of persecution in Russia as in Mozambique."

Religious people in Mozambique were persecuted.

"They are oppressed and this particularly affects the older people."

Lt Bomba said he had been a Catholic before he joined the air force, but was not allowed to worship afterwards.

"Now I am free and a Catholic again."

Surviving

People in the lower class, he said, were not living "but are surviving what the Frelimo regime are doing to them".

The upper class in Mozambique, the lieutenants said "obviously consisted only of government members".

Lt Bomba would like to resume his flying career one day, but only if another government came into power in Mozambique.

"I like my speciality," he said. "Every fighter pilot likes his speciality... it goes into his blood."