

White man killed while trying to blow up Beira railway

South Africa accused of sabotage

Gdn
26/10/81

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in Maputo

Mozambique has accused South Africa of direct participation in sabotage operations in central Mozambique, after the killing of at least one white man while he was attempting to mine the vital Beira-Umtali railway.

White Portuguese are involved in the organisation and training of the anti-Frelimo National Resistance Movement, but the discovery of a Portuguese-English phrasebook, notes in English, and books and manuals from South Africa in the possession of the dead man are cited as evidence that he came from South Africa.

A Mozambican patrol came

across a group planting mines on the railway at Doeroi, 90 miles west of Beira and halfway between Beira and Umtali. The Mozambicans fired a bazooka at the group, setting off the mine and blowing up four men, three black and one white.

According to Comandante Estevao Nhaveni, who led the attack, remains near the scene suggest that one or two additional white men were killed.

The incident suggests an increase of South African involvement in anti-Frelimo military activity. Mozambique says that South Africa trains members of the National Resistance Movement at a camp near Phalaborwa, in the Transvaal, which maintains regular

radio contact with the resistance, and that it flies supplies to resistance bands in central Mozambique. But this is the first time that Mozambique has claimed that South African specialists are actually working with the resistance in sabotage operations.

The Beira-Umtali corridor, with its railway, road, oil pipeline, and electricity line, has become a focus of fighting. The National Resistance Movement has made several raids, but the Mozambican army has stepped up security operations and kept the corridor open and traffic moving.

This particular route, and especially the pipeline, are basic to attempts by Zimbabwe and other countries in southern African to reduce their dependence on South African ports and railways. The continued importance of the South African railways gives Pretoria political and economic leverage in the region, and it was to reduce this that the Southern African Development Coordination Conference was established last year.

Since then, there has been a continuing struggle, especially in Zimbabwe. Ministers there have pressed to shift traffic to Mozambique, but the change has been slower than expected. Privately ministers in Mozambique, and Zimbabwe accuse white railway officials and shippers of working with South Africa to block the transfer of traffic.