

DESTABILISATION CALENDAR

Note: This is not a complete listing of South African backed MNR bandit attacks, Mozambican forces' offensives, people killed or acts of sabotage that took place in March 1989. Due to the poor state of communication in the country, many bandit attacks in remote areas do not even come to the knowledge of the media.

1 March: MNR bandits raided the district capital, Memba town, in northern Nampula province, killing 17 people, wounding five and kidnapping 99. Another four people were drowned when they tried to escape by swimming across the Mecuburi river. The bandits looted and destroyed district warehouses and several houses.

4 March: The Mozambican armed forces (FPLM) killed 20 bandits of the South African backed MNR in a clash at Nhanale in the southern province of Gaza. The FPLM action followed a bandit attack in which ten civilians were murdered and three wounded.

On the same day troops killed eight bandits and captured two in operations in the district of Matutuíne, in the extreme south of the country.

12 March: The transmission line carrying electricity from South Africa to Mozambique was sabotaged about 30 km from the border town of Ressano Garcia, 15 km due east of the South African border. This was the sixth sabotage since Mozambican and South African presidents Chissano and Botha met in Songo in September.

14 March: MNR bandits killed three people in an attack against the locality of Matola-Rio, in Boane district, 25 km west of Maputo. The bandits attacked a local bakery, and stole 2,000 loaves of bread and several sacks of flour before blowing it up. Two of the victims died in the explosion, while a third was shot while trying to escape. The bandits also looted a nearby restaurant and shop. The ruined bakery is the only one in the region, and several thousand local residents have been deprived of their regular supply of bread.

16 March: MNR bandits attacked the town of Memba, kidnapping four people from the International Red Cross who had arrived in Memba the previous day to assess the situation where at least 5,200 people have starved to death since the beginning of the year (see kidnapping story in *News in Brief*).

17 March: MNR bandits killed three people and kidnapped a large number of others when they raided the town of Magude, about 110 km north of Maputo. The bandits entered the town at about 10 p.m. and only left at 8 a.m. the following morning.

They looted five shops and set fire to six houses and two vehicles. A district warehouse and several government buildings, including the administrator's house, were also sacked. The MNR withdrew when Mozambican special forces arrived.

This is the second attack on Magude in less than a month. In the earlier raid, seven people died. Magude is now partially destroyed, and its residents are leaving the town to seek shelter in more secure areas.

19 March: MNR bandits murdered 15 people when they attacked a residential zone at the sugar centre of Maragra, about 70 km north of Maputo. In a counter-attack, Mozambican forces stationed at Maragra killed two bandits, including the commander of the gang. The last MNR attack against Maragra was on 3 February, when they killed 27 people and kidnapped 40 others.

22 March: MNR bandits killed 13 people and seriously wounded five in an attack against the residential area of the Salamanga Quarry, in Matutuíne district, about 60 km south of Maputo.

The attack took place at around 5 p.m. Large numbers of people had gathered at the quarry complex to say goodbye to friends and relatives who had just left on a train for Maputo. The bandits opened fire into the middle of this crowd, and then began attacking the quarry machinery. They burnt down 55 houses, the quarry workshops, the health centre, a tractor, a 17-tonne truck, two air compressors and a water tank.

They attacked in two groups, one concentrating on abducting local people, while the other looted and destroyed. Mass kidnappings are the way in which the MNR replenishes its ranks.

27 March: MNR bandits murdered three Italian missionaries and an unknown number of Mozambican civilians in the central province of Zambesia. Francesco Bortolotti, Camillo Campanella and Ureste Saltori were found dead after a raid in the district of Inhassunge, about 20 km south of the provincial capital of Quelimane. Another Italian missionary, Gocundo Bagliara, is missing.

29 March: MNR bandits murdered two people and seriously injured a third in an attack against a bus travelling from Maputo to Xai-Xai, capital of the southern province of Gaza.

Zaida Novel told AIM that the bandits stepped into the road, ordering the bus to stop. As people tried to escape, the bandits opened fire through the windows and shot at the bus' tires. Eleven people of the 56 aboard the bus were captured. The bandits were about to set the vehicle on fire when they were surprised by a unit of the Mozambican armed forces and fled.

The ambush took place at 9 a.m. local time near the "Third February" communal village in the district of Manhica, 90 km north of Maputo. It was the first ambush of a bus on the main road in several months though bandit incursions against the towns in this region, such as Xinavane and Macia, were frequent in the first two months of the year.