

MAPUTO ON WAR ALERT

MAPUTO — Mozambique's armed forces are on a state of alert in case of an attack by South Africa as leaders of southern Africa's "Frontline" states meet in Maputo to discuss regional security.

The Government of President Samora Machel said on Saturday it had learned of a planned attack by South African planes and commandos and spoke of a plot by Pretoria to set up a puppet government in Mozambique.

In Pretoria, a spokesman for the South African Defence Force dismissed the charge as "no more than speculation and a sign of a severe attack of nerves".

The spokesman added that Mozambique was "obviously in deep waters" because of what he called its support for the banned African National Congress.

South Africa has accused Mozambique of allowing ANC guerillas to plant a landmine near the border which injured six South African soldiers last Monday.

Maputo accused Pretoria of having planted the mine as a "pretext" to attack Mozambique.

"As far as the Kangwane landmine is concerned, the Defence Force is not prepared to comment on such blatant nonsense," the SADF spokesman said.

The one-day summit in Maputo will also discuss Pretoria's decision earlier in the week to clamp down on the employment of Mozambican workers in South Africa.

The Mozambican statement yesterday said of the landmine blast: "This fabricated incident, played up and manipulated by the regime's propaganda, is forming the pretext for launching direct aggression against our country."

"... The South African warmongers are preparing direct attacks on our country and the city of Maputo by the South African armed forces with the ultimate aim of overthrowing the Mozambican Government and installing a puppet regime in Maputo at the service of apartheid."

The statement accused South Africa of having stepped up its military aid to right-wing Mozambican National Resistance rebels who, it added, were increasingly infiltrating Mozambique from South African territory.

Political analysts have said Pretoria wants to step up economic pressure on Maputo because Mozambique's ports could become increasingly crucial to its landlocked "frontline" partners eager to reduce their dependence on South Africa.

A foreign ministry statement said the leaders would hold separate talks in Maputo with President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire.