

Pretoria links landmine to Maputo and ANC

Mr Chissano immediately faces a fresh crisis in relations with South Africa. The South African military announced on Monday that a landmine had exploded in the Eastern Transvaal, killing a white lance corporal. African National Congress guerrillas were blamed, and the army said they had infiltrated from Mozambique.

The Mozambican authorities denied that their country had anything to do with the explosion. A government spokesman quoted by the Mozambique news agency, AIM, pointed out that the South Africans had electrified part of the border with Mozambique, and had concentrated a large number of troops in the frontier areas. It was therefore hardly likely that ANC guerrillas could slip over the border without being detected.

The dead soldier was named as Lance Corporal Albertus le Roux, aged 20. He was killed when the horse he was riding detonated the landmine, near the border.

"There is no doubt that the mine was planted by ANC terrorists operating from Mozambique," the South African Defence Force said, noting that 14 landmines have been detonated on South Africa's eastern borders with Mozambique and Swaziland since the beginning of the year.

Earlier last month six soldiers were injured in a landmine explosion in the area.

The Mozambican spokesman described the South African claims as "a pretext for new aggression against Mozambique."

Relations between the two countries are already at rock bottom due to the widespread suspicions that the South African military was involved in Mr Machel's plane crash.