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## MOZAMBIQUE—SOUTH AFRICA

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### Coaster Attacked

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A South African coaster came under attack off Mozambique on July 24th, according to a radio message from the ship, received in Durban. The vessel, the *Limpopo*, was on its way south along the coast from the Mozambique capital, Maputo, to Durban, when it came under fire from a 7.62mm. machine-gun, mounted on a Cessna light plane, the message said. The attack lasted half an hour, as the plane made repeated runs over the coaster. None of the crew was hit, but the firing damaged the bridge and superstructure of the ship. The attack occurred about 10 miles (16 kms) north of Cabo do Ouro, which marks the limit of Mozambique's territorial waters at the extreme north-east point of South Africa's Natal Province. The ship's crew could not identify what country the plane came from.

On July 26th, the attack was described as a "mistake" in the Mozambican newspaper *Noticias*. According to the newspaper, the aircraft was trying to prevent a Portuguese-owned vessel, the *Natalia*, from reaching Durban, after slipping out of Maputo harbour. *Noticias* said the 1,320 ton *Natalia* had left port without authorisation, to escape from Mozambique, with five people aboard. The aircraft apparently mistook the *Limpopo* for the *Natalia*. The South African coaster later docked in Durban with bullet-holes in its hull and superstructure.

According to the report, the *Natalia* was taken out of Maputo harbour by its owner, Nicolau Leitao dos Santos, and by the harbour pilot Ugo Manuel de Barros. It carried three other passengers, all of them Portuguese, and was believed to be heading for Durban, about 500 kms (350 miles) south. Several Portuguese-owned vessels have recently been taken out of Mozambique by their owners. In June, on the eve of the first anniversary of Mozambique's independence, a fishing trawler, the *Nossa Senhora das Dores*, made a successful bid to reach Durban. Travellers from Mozambique have also reported that, because they lack an Air Force, the local authorities are allegedly using armed light aircraft to patrol the southern coast between Maputo and the Province of Natal.

In Cape Town on July 20th, the Defence Minister, Mr. Piet Botha, said that "any ship that calls for help in South African territorial waters will be given speedy protection". (NA 26/7)