

## **Mozambican Commentary Explains Reason for Transport Dependence on S Africa**

Maputo in English for southern Africa 1800 gmt 24 Jul 86

Text of commentary:

In his speech this week on US policy towards southern Africa, President Ronald Reagan rejected economic sanctions against South Africa. One of the reasons he gave for this position was that several other states in the region are dependent on South Africa for access to the sea. The states rely on the roads, railways, and ports of South Africa for their trade. This is true, but for the historical record, it is worth looking at why.

For landlocked countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the natural routes to the sea do not lead through South Africa. They lead through Mozambique and Angola. However, the routes to the ports of Maputo, Beira and Nacala in Mozambique and to the port of Benguela in Angola are periodically sabotaged by armed bandits. These armed bandits are not independent operators, they operate as extensions of the South African armed forces. When the UNITA bandits blew up the Benguela railway it was because they had been ordered to do so by the South African authorities. The MNR bandits in Mozambique sabotaged the railway line from Zimbabwe to Maputo port because they were ordered to do this by the South African authorities. The same is true for every sabotage operation against railways, roads, and ports in the frontline states.

It is therefore not by mere chance that landlocked states in the region are dependent on South African ports. It is a matter of deliberate South African policy. Through this policy Pretoria inflicts enormous economic losses on the countries of the region. For the landlocked countries that situation is particularly serious. They are susceptible to blackmail. Pretoria uses military means to cut the Angola and the Mozambican routes to the sea and then threatens to prevent them from using South African ports should international sanctions be imposed. In this situation, it may seem surprising that the frontline states support calls for international economic sanctions against South Africa. But the reality is that the military and economic aggression to which they are subjected will not end until apartheid is removed and democracy is established in South Africa. Sanctions will help to speed that process.