

SOVIET OFFICERS REPORTEDLY KILLED IN GUERRILLA CLASH

NO311036 Paris AFP in English 1023 UMT 31 Aug 79 NO

[Text] Johannesburg, Aug 31, (AFP)--Five senior Soviet officers were killed recently during a clash with anti-government guerrillas in northern Mozambique, according to the pro-government South African daily, THE CITIZEN.

The newspaper, which is reputed to have frequent inside information from South African intelligence sources, said the five were the first Soviet casualties in southern Africa.

The Mozambique Government has not officially confirmed the incident, and a total silence has been maintained so far in the capital, Maputo.

The South African newspaper said the five officers were shot while travelling in a car near the northern Mozambique town of Metuchipa in the Nampula District. Their bodies were badly burnt, and were flown to Moscow aboard an Aeroflot flight for burial. "This is the latest known incident in a rapidly deteriorating internal security situation in central Mozambique, where intelligence reports indicate that more than 50 per cent of the population now supports anti-government resistance movements," THE CITIZEN said.

The newspaper further reported that the deaths caused concern to Soviet and other Eastern bloc allies currently stationed in Mozambique.

"The resident Russian ambassador summoned all senior Russian officials throughout the territory to Maputo for discussions on security arrangements and the increasing strength of the resistance movement on July 26," THE CITIZEN said.

Quoting "reports leaking back from Mozambique," it said the five officers were killed when sugar field workers clashed with government forces. The workers, it said, had been encouraged to dissent by cadres of the Mozambique national resistance movement. Soldiers of the ruling FRELIMO liberation front were sent to the area with the five officers to stop the trouble.