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RAID IN MOZAMBIQUE DEFENDED BY BLACK

By JOHN F. BURNS

SALISBURY, Rhodesia, Aug. 2 — Black leaders of the transitional Government in Salisbury today defended Rhodesia's latest raid into Mozambique, indicating that the five-year-old conflict between whites and blacks may be transformed into a black civil war potentially bloodier than anything the country has suffered so far.

At a news conference today, the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, one of three black leaders in the country's biracial transitional Government, defended not only the raid but also the white-led armed forces for not informing the black leaders in advance.

Senator Jeremiah Chirau, another black member of the Executive Council, the body that heads the interim Government, has defended the raid in terms similar to those used by the armed forces' own commander. The third black leader, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who is in London, has been more elusive but has not condemned the attack.

The raid, said to have "neutralized" 10 guerrilla bases in the bushland of northwestern Mozambique, posed particular difficulties for Mr. Sithole. Since becoming a member of the transitional Government five months ago, he has often claimed to be the true leader of the guerrillas whose bases were hit.

Today, while maintaining his claim that large sections of the guerrilla force in Mozambique supported him and not Robert Mugabe of the Patriotic Front, Mr. Sithole said that the strike had been necessary to uphold the March 3 internal agreement, which Mr. Mugabe and his partner, Joshua Nkomo, have vowed to upset.

"We have started a democratic process, but there are forces outside this country which would like to disrupt that democratic process," Mr. Sithole said, "so that sometimes we have to do things that we don't like to do normally. As to whether such things are good or bad, that is not the point."

Mr. Sithole, echoing Gen. Peter Walls, the armed forces commander, who briefed reporters yesterday, insisted that the Government would go ahead with elections for a fully black government based on the principle of one man, one vote. The elections have been tentatively scheduled for Dec. 4 to 6. Two weeks ago, the white co-minister responsible for conducting the elections, Rowan Cronje, implied that they might be called off if the war, in which more than 2,700 have died this year, continued at its current pace.

If elections are held, the winner will inherit an army with a white officer corps, except for a few newly commissioned black second lieutenants. However, blacks account for more than 80 percent of the noncommissioned officers, and an even higher percentage of the police.

Although the ranks of the white officer corps are being thinned by men leaving the country as their commissions expire, the internal black leaders express confidence that black soldiers will offer the new Government strong support. Part of

their reasoning is that the guerrilla leaders, Mr. Nkomo and Mr. Mugabe, have threatened reprisals against blacks serving the Salisbury Government if they win power by force.

The new Government's army is expected to number close to 50,000. Against them, according to estimates compiled by the armed forces, would be a potential guerrilla force, trained and in training, of about 20,000. Of these, about 7,000 are estimated to be inside Rhodesia now.

Although the Mozambique raid has won the backing of the blacks in the interim Government, they learned about it only after the orders were given. At his briefing, General Walls said that the three black leaders, as well as Prime Minister Ian D. Smith, were informed "at about the time" the raid began on Sunday.

Apparently, the decision to launch the raid was made by the War Council, an all-white body comprising the commanders of the armed forces and senior civil servants. General Walls said that the military commanders had "clear instructions" from their political superiors that made it possible to launch a raid without prior approval.