

# Rhodesian Raids Provocation for Foreign Help?

By Tony Avirgan

Special to The Washington Star

**MAPUTO, Mozambique** — Officials here believe Rhodesian raids into Mozambique are a desperate move aimed at undermining popular support for the Mozambican government and at provoking Mozambique into calling for outside help, preferably from Cuba.

But high-ranking government sources in the Mozambican capital claim the raids, which have been increasing in frequency and intensity, are proving a net loss for Rhodesia's white minority regime. One aide to President Samora Machel even said the attacks inside Mozambique are "a good thing."

The Mozambicans believe Rhodesian Prime Minister Smith's theory is that if Mozambique suffers enough, outside military help eventually will be called in. They believe Smith hopes that if the Cubans are drawn into the conflict, South Africa and possibly the United States then will come to Rhodesia's aid in the interest of halting the spread of communism in Southern Africa.

**ALTHOUGH** South Africa still supplies arms to Rhodesia and allows the landlocked country its only outlet to the sea, South African troops stopped operating in Rhodesia early this year after the effort by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and South African Prime Minister John Vorster to force Smith into a peaceful settlement with moderate black Rhodesian leaders.

Smith has claimed he has assurances of U.S. military support in the event black African nationalists cause the Geneva talks on Rhodesia's future to fail. U.S. officials have denied any such assurances were ever given.

Mozambican authorities say they will not fall into the trap they claim Smith is trying to set for them. Despite their claims to the contrary, however, it appears the Rhodesian attacks have cost Mozambique dearly. The Rhodesians have found that it is not difficult to sneak small and medium-size units through the dense forests along the 700 mile border with Mozambique for such raids.

**AT FIRST** THE Rhodesians used small units made up of mostly black soldiers wearing Mozambican army uniforms. A large percentage of the infiltrators were Portuguese-speaking Mozambican blacks who fought with special commando units of the Portuguese colonial army but fled to Rhodesia when Mozambique won its independence.

Mozambican authorities say these raids were intended to demonstrate to the local population that the government in Maputo was incapable of protecting them.

In recent weeks the Rhodesian attacks have taken on a bolder nature, with no pretense of disguise and use of armored cars, aircraft, artillery and mounted troops. The targets appear to have remained primarily civilian, although the Rhodesians have begun attacking Mozambican army bases as well.

The Rhodesians say the raids are directed against base camps used by the Zimbabwe People's Army, known as ZIPA. Mozambican sources as well as ZIPA officials claim the guerrillas have not been affected.

**THESE SOURCES SAY** there are no good ZIPA targets in Mozambique for the Rhodesians to attack. They say there are only two, rather small, permanent ZIPA facilities in Mozambique and these are located far from the border in areas considered secure.

The only ZIPA targets hit by the Rhodesians are said to have been "transit camps" near the border, "nothing more than clearings in the bush" used by guerrilla units for rest stops on the way into Rhodesia.

ZIPA sources say there is a standing rule that no more than 40 guerrillas may be in a transit camp at any one time. The guerrillas are highly mobile and, it is claimed, are long gone before any Rhodesian raiding parties reach the camps.

The large ZIPA training facilities are in Tanzania, which has no border with Rhodesia. ZIPA sources say guerrilla candidates recruited inside Rhodesia are sent across the border into Mozambique and then flown to Tanzania, where they undergo three months of training under Mozambican, Tanzanian and Chinese instructors.

**WHEN BASIC TRAINING** is completed, the guerrillas are flown back to Mozambique and marched across the Rhodesian border using the network of transit camps.

While Mozambican officials are confident the setup makes it impossible for Rhodesian forces to harm ZIPA, there is concern for the safety of the 28,000 Rhodesian refugees currently in camps in Mozambique.

In September Rhodesian forces reportedly attacked one of the refugee camps, at Nyazonia in central Mozambique, on the pretense it was a guerrilla camp.

Following the first Rhodesian attacks, Mozambican public opinion strongly favored massive retaliation. In response to public demands Machel promised that in the future "fascist attack will be answered with people's attack" and that if Rhodesian provocations continued Mozambican forces would drive all the way to Salisbury.

But so far Mozambican retaliation has been confined primarily to small-scale rocket and mortar barrages against Rhodesian border towns.

**THERE ARE** numerous reasons for the relative restraint exhibited by the Mozambicans. Foremost is the Mozambican belief in the political value of guerrilla warfare. The Mozambicans consider the political consciousness of the Rhodesian nationalist guerrillas to be relatively low. Machel has spoken about the advantages of a protracted guerrilla war in Rhodesia that would "liberate the minds" of the population. It is believed a Mozambican army marching into Salisbury would not result in the radical regime that Mozambican officials want to see come to power in Rhodesia.

Equally important is the fact that Mozambique lacks the capability for large-scale retaliation. While the People's Forces for the Liberation of Mozambique, known as FPLM, are made up of black Africa's most highly trained and experienced fighters, they lack armor or air power.

Mozambicans are training in the Soviet Union to handle armor and Mig fighter planes, but it will be an estimated two more years before they are ready for action.

Meanwhile, the Mozambicans feel time is on their side and there is no need for panic.