

Missing MNR Leader Possible Kidnap Victim

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[Text] Information began to circulate in Lisbon yesterday and it was announced by a number of foreign stations that Evo Fernandes, one of the ringleaders of the external wing of the armed bandits in Portugal, could have been kidnapped last Sunday. More details from our international correspondent Teresa Lima.

[Lima] Today, Portuguese newspapers carried the information, giving it major prominence, with all kinds of speculation. According to Tomas Vieira Mario, AIM representative in Lisbon, it was the wife of Evo Fernandes who informed the Portuguese judiciary police about the disappearance of her husband.

[Begin Vieira Mario recording] The wife of Evo Fernandes, who until 2 years occupied the post of secretary general of the armed bandit group, is reported to have told the press that her husband disappeared following a dinner on Sunday with alleged members of Mozambican security at Cascais on the outskirts of Lisbon. The information was carried by Portuguese television last night, which interviewed the wife of Evo Fernandes and went so far as to speculate that Evo Fernandes could have been bundled off to Maputo aboard an Air Portugal flight last Sunday. This speculation by Portuguese television apparently was on the fact that Sunday's flight was delayed by about 5 hours. However, Portuguese television eliminated this possibility after having ascertained that the flight from Lisbon to Mozambique carried only some letters and diplomatic bags.

The Mozambican Embassy in Lisbon told the press that it was completely unaware of what was taking place. [end recording]

[Lima] The speculation on Mozambican security service involvement in the disappearance of Evo Fernandes is based on the statements made by his wife, who claims that her husband had dined with a so-called Alexandre Xavier Chagas, a member of the Mozambique People's National Security Service [SNASP]. Evo Fernandes' wife said that her husband never returned after the dinner.

Meanwhile, circles connected with Mozambique security told AIM that there was no one called Alexandre Xavier Chagas worked for SNASP.

Observers in Maputo believe that Evo Fernandes's disappearance can be explained by the strong contradictions among different factions within armed banditry. These contradictions were broadly referred to by Paulo Oliveira, a former spokesman of the armed bandits in Lisbon, who recently surrendered to the Mozambican authorities. At a recent press conference, Paulo Oliveira spoke of the so-called axes within armed banditry, notably the Pretoria-Bonn axis and the Paris-Washington axis. The attempt by the latter to control banditry had failed, according to Paulo Oliveira, because of the strong South African monopoly over the armed bandits. The mysterious deaths of two ringleaders, Joao Ataide and Mateus Lopes, in Malawi last year also was connected with these strong differences within the bandits, as Paulo Oliveira pointed out.

As a matter of fact, Evo Fernandes had occupied the post of secretary general of the bandits but was dismissed from that post. There are reports that he had embezzled large sums of money and that recently he was rehabilitated, becoming the head of the study research office.

Also, according to observers in Maputo, the disappearance of Evo Fernandes, one of the armed bandit ringleaders in Lisbon, could be connected to increasing conflicts between the Washington and Pretoria circles over control of the armed bandits.