

O.F.S. PILOT SHOT AT BY MOZAMBIQUE

A FICKSBURG pilot, Mr Hayward Hurter (34) has claimed he was fired on by Mozambican troops when flying his damaged Thrash Commander crop-spraying aircraft over military bases in the Tete district.

Mr Hurter, who runs his own crop-spraying business in Ficksburg, was flying the aircraft from Malawi, where he had a spraying contract, back to South Africa for repair, last Sunday, his wife Mrs Kottie Hurter said last night.

His husband had been given permission to fly over Mozambican territory, he said. Bad weather forced him to fly low and as he passed over the military base he was fired on.

Explosions

Mr Hurter told Sapa he saw a stream of anti-aircraft shells passing his plane. He tried without success to contact the base by radio.

A few kilometres further on, near Can Cuna, he flew over another base. "I suddenly heard dull explosions around me."

He later touched down near Nyama Panda in Rhodesia, close to the Mozambique border where he was questioned for almost six hours by Rhodesian authorities. Mrs Hurter said.

Rhodesian soldiers told him the Mozambicans had probably fired on him with a 12,7 mm anti-aircraft machine gun.

He was later told how to get to Salisbury. From there he made his way back to South Africa, Mrs Hurter said. The trip was made more eventful by a forced landing on a road near Fort Victoria when the aircraft ran out of fuel.

Mr Hurter returned to South Africa on Thursday and had since flown back to Malawi, Mrs Hurter said.

She said she did not know if her husband had reported the Mozambican attacks to the South African authorities.