

New front: eyes on Mozambique

SOUTH African troops could soon be fighting on a new front — and the Mozambique border is on the cards.

This is the inference drawn by a military strategist from this week's statement by the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, and it is probable the extended operations will be carried by members of the Citizen Force and commandos.

Although Gen Malan did not

By DON MARSHALL

specifically state the zone of the second front during his address to the Cape National Party Congress, strategist Dr Mike Hough suggested last night it would be along the frontier with Mozambique.

Dr Hough, director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the University of Pretoria, said the Mozambique and Angola situations were almost identical.

This was not the first time Gen Malan had drawn attention to the opening of a second front.

During his Defence budget debate last month, he said the next five years would be crucial for South Africa, because the onslaught against it was intensifying, and added that a second front was being opened against South Africa.

In neither speech did he specify where this threat would come from, but Mozambique appears to be the most likely source, with Zimbabwe a possibility in the future.

Gen Malan's Army will require a larger force to carry out these additional operational duties, but he has already given the assurance that he will not extend national service in order to meet the demands.

He gave a strong hint in this week's

speech, however, when he said that the contentious issue of credit to call-up duty was still being investigated.

Credit for annual camps has long been an issue among members of the Citizen Force and commandos, who are liable for call-up for 30 days a year for eight years after completing national service.

Members of infantry units, in particular, have found themselves serving many more days than they should. They are called up for 30-day camps in the South West African operational area and end up serving up to three months, for which they receive only 30 days' credit.

It appears the Defence Force will try to eliminate this source of contention by extending the number of days members of the Citizen Force and commandos have to serve (from 240 to 300 days, for example) but then take into account every day a soldier actually serves.

The formation of the SWA Territory Force and the introduction of national service in SWA was designed to ease the burden on the South African soldiers.

Raid

Dr Hough said last night that it appeared from Gen Malan's statements that South Africa would soon be forced to conduct a second "Matola-type" raid in Mozambique.

"Gen Malan has already suggested that the second front will not be in Namibia, and I have a good idea that he must be referring to Mozambique."

ANC activity in Mozambique had increased since the Matola raid in January and the Soviet naval task force that rounded the Cape after lying off the Cunene River during Operation Protea had called at Maputo on its way north.

Dr Hough said Mozambique could be forced into an "Angola situation".

And the existence of an internal anti-government resistance movement could bring the introduction of a Cuban military presence in Mozambique.