

# Maputo's dossier on 'SA attacks'

A MAJOR highway is cut, a bridge and a vital oil pipeline attached to it have been blasted into the muddy Pungue River by saboteurs.

Slightly downstream, a railway bridge is out of action, an other casualty of clandestine warfare rippling through Mozambique.

Fifty kilometres to the east, the Indian Ocean port of Beira, of strategic importance to the southern African region but of little use without rail and road links, is recovering from a night commando assault on its navigational system.

Mozambique and its black neighbours blame South Africa for the attacks and accuse the Pretoria Government of trying to strangle at birth their attempts to achieve economic independence.

## Destabilise

The white-ruled Republic denies the charge, but the attempted coup in the Seychelles has

President de Mack Africas' belief that South Africa is active by trying to destabilise the area.

Minister Prime Minister Robert Magabe declared after white mercenaries from South Africa had been beaten off from the Seychelles. "A racial racist regime (that) goes wild in our neighbourhood..."

Mozambique is of particular importance to eight other black nations of southern Africa — Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi, Tanzania, Lesotho, Swaziland and Angola. They have joined Mozambique in the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADC), a rudimentary economic community aimed at gradually reducing their reliance on southern countries, particularly South Africa.

## Biggest port

Six of the SADC nations are landlocked and depend on South Africa's railways, roads and ports for their trade routes. Mozambique ports — Nampula is the biggest in Africa apart from Durban — offer the only viable

alternative to independence of the white republic whose racial policies they oppose.

Few economic analysts and diplomats in the area believe the SADC can succeed unless Mozambique's ports and transport networks are secure and working peacefully.

The director of Beira port, Mr Rui Fonseca, said: "The development of Beira is vital to the region. The South Africans intend to stop it. If we succeed, we will take a lot of business from South Africa."

The Mozambique government is being attacked by rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), a shadow organisation said by black governments to be equipped, trained and directed by South Africa.

"There is strong circumstantial evidence of South African involvement," said one diplomat. "Africanas writing was intercepted on the side of a wooded estate of ammunition captured by the Mozambicans."

## 12 000 men

The MNR, supported by the former white regime in Rhodesia during its war against nationalist guerrillas based in Mozambique, operates over large areas of central Mozambique, according to diplomatic sources. Estimates of its total strength range up to 12 000 men, but most of the sources agree on about 4 000 operating at any one time.

The diplomats rate the movement largely as a bandit force, an irritant to the Mozambique government rather than a threat.

Mozambique President Samora Machel earlier this year accused South Africa of seeking to maintain white minority rule in the region through support for surrogate — the Rhodesians and former Portuguese colonial forces.

But after the independence under black rule of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 and of Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, in 1980, the Republic was forced to behave as a direct aggressor, he argued. "It no longer has countries to die fighting for it," he declared.

"It (South Africa) violates our air, land and sea borders. It infiltrates agents, spies and saboteurs, some by parachute. It forges money, prints passports and distributes them by air, along rivers and by sea," said President Machel.

## Buoys sunk

Western diplomats say they believe the Pungue River and Beira roads indicate the involvement of a sophisticated military apparatus unlikely to have been created by a force of bank rebels without outside aid.

At Beira port, Mr Fonseca said 18 of the 12 giant buoys marking the artificial channel leading into the harbour from the ocean were sunk in a series of explosions in the night of November 12-13. Explosives on two buoys failed to go off, he said, adding: "We know the explosives were made in South Africa."

He and Western diplomats

said the buoys were between 200m and 400m out to sea and that skilled navigators would be required to pinpoint them.

"We think the attack could have been carried out by a submarine using small boats or a very fast gunboat type of vessel," Mr Fonseca said.

The road bridge on the Pungue River appeared to have been expertly blown up on the night of October 20. Charges had been placed along the western bank of the river, where a 100m span of concrete suspended from an arch of steel girders met the roadway. The explosion nearly severed road and bridge, sending the arch nosediving into the river, dragging its attached oil pipeline with it.

## Pipeline

The 300mm pipe from Beira to the eastern Zimbabwe town of Umtali closed when sanctions were applied to rebel Rhodesia in 1980, was due to have reopened this month, ending Zimbabwe's reliance on South Africa for most of its fuel.

Experts say the attack has delayed the reopening by at least a month and has also undermined the feasibility of the lifeline.

Engineers from the Campanha De Pipelinas Mozambique, owned by the British multi-national company, Loatis, are working furiously to lay a new section of line 50m upstream from the wrecked bridge, including 11 in concrete below the river bed.

One site worker estimated it would take until almost the end of December to complete the job if the weather remained dry. But the rains of the Southern Hemisphere summer are due to start at any time now.

Meanwhile local traffic jams up on either side of a makeshift ferry. "God only knows what will happen here when it rains and the river swells," a Mozambique official said gloomily, conceding the bridge would have to be completely rebuilt.

## Rail bridge

The rail bridge runs down river and is expected to be in use again by next week, after being only slightly damaged by an explosion, officials said.

Many white Rhodesian commandos from the Selous Scouts and Special Air Service (SAS) quit Zimbabwe for South Africa when Mr Magabe, whose Mozambique-based guerrilla forces they had fought against, came to power 20 months ago.

A group of guerrillas was surprised trying to blow up the Beira-Zimbabwe railway line inside Mozambique on October 14 and six saboteurs were killed, according to Mozambique's official news agency, AIMP.

Local reporters said they had seen evidence that one of the dead men was white.

He had carried a notebook indicating he was writing of his experiences with the British army in Northern Ireland. No official confirmation of the report was available. — Sapa-Review.

RAND DAILY MAIL  
Friday, December 11, 1981