



The South African-made G6 155m self-propelled howitzer with a top speed of 90 k.p.h.: when this and the G5 is operational they will be capable of outranging anything the Mozambicans have

A 'worst-case' security scenario for Mozambique

With Pretoria capable of unleashing an invasion similar to Israel's incursion into Lebanon, President Machel has an urgent task to cope with the twin threats of MNR guerrillas and the South African army's superior fire-power

South African armoured columns striking across the border into Mozambique, seizing Maputo and setting up a puppet administration in the south of the country. This was the scenario which a secret Zimbabwean intelligence report last year reckoned could lead to the overthrow of President Machel within 48 hours.

A "worst case" scenario it might be, but the possibility of a South African invasion of this kind is of real concern to Mozambique — particularly since South Africa's close ally, Israel, invaded Lebanon last year.

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) punched across the border into Lebanon in three fast-moving columns. One moved up the coast, spearheaded by Centurian tanks, followed by mechanised infantry brigades in armoured personnel carriers and getting

close support from ground attack fighter planes. This column also got support from amphibious armour and infantry units shipped up the coast to bypass PLO positions. Another tank-led column seized the bridge over the Litani river in the centre of the area; the third column in the east took the Beaufort Castle using self-propelled artillery and helicopter-borne infantry units to leapfrog over PLO positions as far as the Syrian armour in the Beka'a valley.

The Syrians were neutralised by the destruction of their SAM 6 surface-to-air missile complexes, by the shooting down of nearly 30 MiG fighters and the destruction of dozens of tanks. Five days after the start of the operation a ceasefire was called, with most of the Israeli aims achieved, apart from the removal of the PLO defences in

Beirut, even though it had all taken longer than expected and cost an estimated \$1.5bn.

Subsequently, the IDF was less successful, with its efforts to set up an administration in South Lebanon under Major Haddad and his Christian militia failing to get off the ground.

Nevertheless, in those five days, June 6 to 11, the IDF had smashed through a trained and highly motivated force of some 5,000 PLO fighters, equipped with 80 tanks and over 300 artillery pieces, among them the 40-barrelled BM 21 rocket-launchers and the ZSU 23-4 anti-aircraft guns as well as the more usual guerrilla weapons like RPG7 anti-tank rifles and SAM7s. The PLO had even been expecting the attack. When it came, the Israeli speed, fire-power and numbers (which amounted to 65,000 by the end of the operation), proved just too much.

Mozambique is well aware that South Africa could put together much the same sort of attack. On a number of occasions, notably in Angola, it has shown it is prepared to do so. Six years ago the commander of the South African Defence College was lecturing his students on the specific importance to be attached to Israeli tactics. Only last year a South African Defence white paper drew attention to the need to consider "seriously" conventional warfare possibilities, as opposed to guerrilla-style operations. Early in 1983, conscription in South Africa was drastically extended.

The South African raids on the Matola suburbs of Maputo in January 1981 and in May 1983 by Impala and Mirage jets have tested Mozambique's defences, as did the pilotless drone spy plane shot down over Maputo in June. This was one of the Israeli-made IA1 Scout drones used by the IDF in the Beka'a Valley in 1982 to draw Syrian missile fire so that the missile batteries could be pinpointed and destroyed. Maputo is only 40 miles away from the border; there is the big South African military base at Phalaborwa near the Kruger National Park; and the air base at Hoedspruit is only a matter of a few minutes flying time from Maputo. It would not be difficult for South African columns to cross the border in several places.

Should such a decision ever be taken, South Africa has a formidable force available; and its strike force capacity is steadily being increased. There is the 8th division's 81st armoured brigade, made up of two tank battalions and two mechanised battalions; and the 7th division's mechanised brigade composed of one tank and three mechanised battalions. The other four brigades in the two divisions are technically motorised but they are being upgraded to full mechanised status. In addition, there is the special recce regiment and the three battalion-strong paratroop brigades. The capacity of the two strike brigades at full strength amounts to about 180 main battle tanks and 250 armoured cars and

armoured personnel carriers. When the other four brigades are fully mechanised they will add another 240 tanks and 600 armoured cars and APCs. The total manpower involved would then amount to 40,000 men.

The South African army uses Oliphant tanks, an adaptation of the British Centurion which carries a 105mm gun. It is slower than the Russian-made T34s and T54s used by Mozambique but it can out-gun either and the latest models have been re-engined to give greater speeds. The armoured cars and APCs available to South Africa are various. They include the AML Eland Mk IV (a South African version of the French Panhard AML) armed with either 90mm guns or 60mm mortars. The brigades have powerful artillery support with Sexton 25 pounder (88mm) self-propelled anti-tank guns with 12,000 metre range, as well as the South African-made G5 155mm guns and the latest G6 155mm self-propelled howitzers, though these last have yet to become operational. When they do, they will be able to out-range anything Mozambique has. They are, in fact, claimed to be better than anything comparable in the world and were specially developed to deal with the 122mm guns used by the Cubans with great effect in Angola in 1976/1977 against the South Africans. The G6 has a range of 40,000 metres, a speed of up to 90kms-an-hour on good roads and a fire rate of four shells a minute.

Air support for all this armour includes the Impala (South Africa's version of the Italian Aeronautica Maachi MB 326 K light attack-plane) which carries bombs and air-to-surface missiles; and the Mirage F IAZ ground-attack fighter. The South Africans also have four helicopter squadrons, two with 316/319 Alouette 111s which can carry half a dozen troops but which are mainly used as helicopter gunships being armed with air-to-surface missiles, canon and machine guns and 68mm rockets. The other helicopter units fly Puma armed transport machines which can carry 20 men apiece and Super Frelon heavy-duty helicopters which carry 30 men each.

Mozambique's forces cannot compare with this weight of firepower. There is a tank brigade and its main force of seven infantry brigades is organised in a sophisticated mix of tank, mechanised, artillery and air defence battalions in each brigade. But the tanks are mostly the outdated T34s, only armed with 8mm guns and most recently the T54s and T55s which still suffer by comparison with the Oliphant.

The tank battalions are not yet up to full strength, nor are the mechanised units though they have a variety of useful APCs, including BTR 60s and 152s as well as the BRDM reconnaissance vehicles and the BTR 40s armed with Sagger anti-tank guided weapon systems.

Air support, too, is limited, to the MiG 17s, though MiG 21s are expected, and a

handful of troop-carrying Mi8 helicopters.

In artillery, Mozambique does have the formidable BM21 rocket launchers which have a range of 20,000 metres as well as the 122mm and 130mm guns which range up to 23,000 and 27,000 metres. Anti-tank capacity is also provided by M101 105mm howitzers.

Air defence is provided by ZSU 23-4 considered one of the best weapons available; and by SA3 and SA6 missile systems. Both are low level/medium-range missiles — it was the SA6s which suffered so much at Israeli hands in the Beka'a valley in 1982. There are also SAM7s which are operator-aimed, infra-red, homing missiles which operate up to about a quarter of the range of the others, about 6,500 metres.

Mozambique's military problems since independence have been two-fold. After independence Mozambique decided to move away from the guerrilla-type force which had won the war against the

Machel arriving in London recently: he got agreement to send Mozambican officers to Sandhurst Military Academy



Portuguese and try to organise a conventional army in the face of what it saw as the main threat — from Rhodesia and South Africa. So the present army is the result of a slow process to that end. It still has a long way to go although in October 1979 it performed very creditably in blunting a Rhodesian invasion force; and the artillery battalion sent to help Tanzania in the war against Amin in 1979 proved its worth against the Libyans and at Kampala.

The army could not defeat any major South African invasion using the forces mentioned above; but it could perhaps give it unacceptably high casualties. Casualty rates, as the South African operations in Namibia and Angola have demonstrated, are a political factor in South Africa and the White population is sensitive to them. It is, therefore, vital for Mozambique that it keeps at least this capacity to damage any South African incursions seriously.

But the army's efforts to build up a strong conventional force have been distracted over the last couple of years by the resurrection of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), the most immediately apparent threat, and one the reorganised conventional army has been largely unable to meet.

The original operations of the Rhodesian organised MNR came to an end in late 1979 when its leader, Andre Mutade Matsangai, was killed. The subsequent loss of Rhodesian support as Zimbabwe became independent and an internal power struggle virtually broke the MNR. Only massive South African support revitalised it in late 1980/81.

The continued extent of South African involvement was again underlined last August when a major MNR base at Tomé in Inhambane province was captured. Only a couple of weeks earlier South African helicopters had brought in some nine tons of arms and ammunition. Evidence was also found that South Africans had come into Tomé to train radio operators and to seek out recruits for training in South Africa. By the end of 1981 the MNR was operating in Manica and Sofala provinces, in Inhambane and in Gaza on a considerable scale. It had about 3,000 men under arms and as many more training.

The government was apparently taken by surprise. It certainly reacted slowly. Military effectiveness was hampered by the switch going on to conventional military thinking and also by problems within the armed forces after independence which persisted far too long. In the euphoria of victory some guerrilla commanders wanted more than they got. For example, in 1977 just after the third party congress, a number of high-ranking officers had to be arrested. They were charged with causing "a separation" between the people and the armed forces. Among them were the commanders and deputy commanders of two of the infantry battalions. It was in part because of this that a special party

secretariat for defence and security was set up. It has not been a total success. In February 1981 Machel himself admitted that the previous month's raid on Maputo had been possible because of army corruption and incompetence. Vital messages were delayed and it took 10 hours for General Mabote, the Chief of Ground Staff, to get the news of the border crossing. Eight traitors were subsequently identified, one being the head of General Mabote's own office.

A few months later, Machel was publicly admitting there had been many complaints about the army, comprehensively accusing it of intimidation, repression, armed robbery, rape, torture and bribery. In mid-1981, 92 members of the Ministry of Defence's own workshops went on trial for corruption.

Even in April 1982, Joao Phalembe a former top guerrilla commander and Governor of Gaza, was sacked for immoral conduct and President Machel later spoke of ambition, individualism, intrigue, abuse of power and sexual corruption. Examples could be multiplied.

It was not until 1982 that the administration and the army really began to pull itself together and look for a coherent strategy to deal with the MNR threat. Efforts were made to rebuild the guerrilla ethos of the armed forces and the army's political awareness. It was at this time that the USSR's head of political administration in the army, General Alexei Yepichev, paid a visit to Mozambique. Old FRELIMO veterans were recalled to the colours and significantly a number were elected to the central committee of the party at the fourth congress in April 1983. These included some like Manuel Manjicke who had previously been expelled for arrogance and corruption in 1978. Candido Mondlane, a brilliant guerrilla commander, who had been dismissed for "high living," was brought back in 1982; last May he was appointed major-general for his part in the operations against the MNR in the south.

There have been a number of military shake-ups. Former guerrilla commanders were appointed to be provincial military leaders in March 1982; but the process has not finished. Last August, Brigadier Ajope (who commanded the operations against the Rhodesians in 1979) was appointed to head military operations in Zambesia; seven other top officers were also appointed to the same task force. At the same time a number of senior officers were sacked, accused of incompetence and more seriously of failing to fight over the previous six months.

More important has been the decision to organise a local militia. Training started in 1982 and over 400 Tanzanians have arrived to help; and Portugal provided some 17 tons of guns and uniforms.

President Machel has been emphasising the old guerrilla virtues of the army producing its own food, not taking it from the people, and of organising the local

population politically.

Army training has also been adapted. Special commando units have been set up. North Korea has trained an anti-guerrilla brigade which became operational in late 1983. In the light of the activity of the North Korean-trained 5th brigade in Zimbabwe and its operations in Matebeleland, this might seem counter-productive. But the unit will be commanded by Fernando Honwana, one of Machel's top advisers, and it is unlikely to get out of control. Zimbabwe itself is being approached to provide NCO training. On his recent visit to Britain, Machel got an agreement to send Mozambican officers to Sandhurst Military Academy.

The results of the new policies and of new tactics first began to be visible in late 1982 and early 1983 when General Mabote, now Vice-Minister of Defence, took personal charge of operations in Gaza province. Bringing in several extra battalions, and with the aid of the 1,000 Zimbabwean troops who help patrol the rail and oil pipeline links to Zimbabwe, a string of MNR bases were wiped out. The MNR pulled out of Gaza early in 1983. But successes like these, while possible, will be fragile while South Africa continues to provide the support it does for the MNR, and while the army's discipline remains fragile.

Mozambique needs much more weaponry for a proper counter-guerrilla strategy; and it needs heavier material to deter South Africa. The two problems are indivisible. General Mabote put in a bid for more planes (MiG21s and Mi8 helicopters) and for T54 and T55 tanks when he visited Moscow in mid-1982. But the shopping list is not confined to Moscow, though there are some 1,000 military and security advisers from socialist allies in Mozambique at the moment. On his recent trip to Europe, Machel found both Yugoslavia and France indicating their willingness to help. France in particular is important as Machel would like Alouette 111s, which are very versatile anti-guerrilla weapons which can be used either as troop transports or as helicopter gunships. Other vital aspects of anti-guerrilla operations are ground mobility and communications. Mozambique is getting radios and land rovers from Britain.

It all adds up to the need for a substantial and comprehensive package with which to carry out the more flexible strategy needed to cope with the twin threats of South Africa and the MNR. So a highly mobile and politicised army is needed, backed up by local militia, to deal with guerrilla attacks but which still has sufficient fire-power to deter any invasion by conventional South African forces.

With the purges and restructuring of the armed forces some progress has been made. But as President Machel knows, there is a long way to go; and with incursions so popular these days, he may not get the time Mozambique needs ●