

## **Account of 20th January “bandit” attack and murder of bus passengers**

Maputo in Portuguese 1700 gmt 24 Jan 84

Twenty seven people were murdered and about 20 others injured in an attack launched by armed bandits against a Romos express bus which regularly travels the route from Inhambane to Maputo. The attack took place at 0850 [local time] last Friday, 20th January, about 300 meters from the small village of Cumbana, which is almost 40 km from Inhambane, along national highway No 1. One of the survivors told AIM [Mozambique agency] that the attack was carried out by two small groups of armed bandits who began firing at the tyres of the bus, which rolled over on the same side as the doors. Over 60 panic-stricken passengers attempted to escape through the windows under intense fire from the murderers. It was at this point that most of the passengers were either murdered or wounded. One survivor [said] [...] he saw bandits beating in cold blood children and women who had been shot in the head. He also said that he saw between 18 to 20 people escaping unscathed, fleeing into the bush [...] This action by the armed bandits is typical of the small groups of desperadoes who have been forced to operate in isolation after last year's military offensive. Their despair is increasing with the possibility that they may be abandoned by South Africa as a result of the talks with our Government. A Government source told AIM that the action of the armed bandits would not cease immediately, and it was necessary to step up military actions and the people's vigilance.