

# Mozambique: Unkept Promises

There is still no sign that Pretoria is ready to carry out its promise to curb the activities of the "Mozambique National Resistance."

By Paul Fauvet



Military equipment supplied by South Africa to MNR terrorists captured by the Mozambican armed forces.

Anyone who thought that the Nkomati accord on "non-aggression and good neighbourliness" signed with South Africa on March 16 would bring instant peace to Mozambique must have been sadly disappointed by recent events close to Maputo.

Far from a slackening of the war, the weeks since the accord was signed have seen stepped-up operations by rebels of the "Mozambique National Resistance" (MNR) on the very doorstep of the capital. There can be little doubt that this tactic was carefully laid down by the MNR's masters in Pretoria.

Knowing that the accord (if properly implemented) would prevent any further supplies being flown in to the MNR bands inside Mozambique, Pretoria made sure that its men were well-supplied before the agreement was signed. In the six weeks or so before P.W. Botha and Samora Machel met at Nkomati, fresh equipment was ferried by air and by sea to the MNR units in central Mozambique, while dozens, if not hundreds, of newly-trained rebels were pushed across the South African border into Maputo province.

This injection of fresh manpower led to a spate of attacks on buses, cars and trains, uncomfortably close to the capital. Commuter trains that carry workers into the city

from the rural districts of Marracuene and Manhica have come under fire. For the first time, Maputo's power supply has come under attack. On two occasions within a week in early April, pylons were sabotaged near the South African border. The city of Maputo imports much of its electricity from South Africa, which in turn buys electrical power produced by Mozambique's Cahora Bassa dam.

The Mozambican authorities do not regard these acts as militarily significant. Maputo is not "surrounded" or "besieged," and MNR claims that it is about to launch a "final assault" on the capital are pure fantasy. The MNR push into Maputo province, according to the daily *Noticias*, is intended to create "an atmosphere of fear and instability in the capital."

Frelimo-party organizations in the city have been calling for increased vigilance and captured MNR members have been brought before a series of meetings in city suburbs. One of them, José Amose Botao, had joined the MNR in 1979. He had been wounded in the arm during an engagement with the Mozambican army and had been flown out to South Africa for treatment. He had stayed there for three years and then, at the end of 1983, he was sent back over the border into Maputo province. His

group had the specific task of infiltrating the Mozambican capital.

At the meetings the crowds have demanded the death sentence for the MNR captives and have tried to stone them. Mozambican troops intervened to save the prisoners from the wrath of the people.

There are indications that the infiltration of MNR groups across the border has continued since the Nkomati accord was signed. Sources in Maputo believe that this is due to splits and rivalries within the South African armed forces and that some of those (such as the "Reconnaissance Commandos") involved in the training and supplying of the MNR have not accepted the Nkomati accord.

## "Operation Accord"

Apart from the particular circumstances of the area around Maputo, the military situation in the south of the country has, in general, continued to improve. In Inhambane province, the local military command launched "Operation Accord," immediately after the Nkomati agreement. This had its most spectacular results on March 30 and 31, when two major MNR bases near lakes (very important in this drought-stricken province) in the district of Homoine were overrun.

The Mozambican authorities claim that the Nkomati accord has led to an increased rate of defection from the MNR. But since the MNR relies on force rather than ideological conviction to recruit, it has always had a high turnover. Figures released since Nkomati do not suggest a great change in the pattern. There have always been MNR recruits who hid their guns and slipped back to their home villages, or who handed themselves over to the FPLM. Such cases have been given greater prominence in the aftermath of Nkomati.

Well informed sources in Maputo believe that the MNR may have enough weaponry to sustain low-intensity warfare for up to two years. It is not at all clear that the Nkomati accord will last that long. Mozambique has shown very publicly, through such acts as the searching of homes of ANC members living in Maputo, that it intends to carry out the provisions of the accord. No such demonstration has been forthcoming from the South African side, and the veil of silence surrounding the MNR camps in the eastern Transvaal has yet to be lifted. Questions raised by South African journalists on this topic have met with evasive replies. It seems that any withdrawal of support for the MNR by Pretoria is purely tactical, and that the organization will be held in reserve until such time (perhaps after the elections in the United States) when the apartheid regime again decides that it is appropriate to export the violence inherent in South African society to neighbouring states. ▲▲▲