

Mozambican "Relief Agency" in Durban Denies MNR Link

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Text of dispatch datelined Durban, 18th June:

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Pik Botha's, announcement of efforts by his department to trace a man allegedly associated to the Mozambique guerrilla movement have surprised the man, who says his address is widely known. Mr Pedro Buccellato, Durban-based representative of an organisation which is allegedly aligned to the Mozambique Movement of National Resistance (MNR) and which aims to aid Mozambique immigrants in South Africa, expressed surprise today at the announcement by the Foreign Minister, Mr Pik Botha, in parliament yesterday.

Mr Buccellato returned to Durban yesterday after a week-long trip to the eastern Transvaal. He said from his home that the Department of Foreign Affairs had contacted his uncle, saying they wished to speak to him. No one had been to his home, he added, although his address was widely known. He said he would be contacting the department today.

The issue of MNR representation was raised in parliament yesterday by Mr Peter Soal MP (Progressive Federal Party - Johannesburg North). Mr Pik Botha told Mr Soal that efforts made by his department to contact Mr Buccellato had been unsuccessful. He added that no request had been received by his department for the Mozambique resistance movement to open an office in South Africa.

Mr Buccellato denied that he was "a self-appointed Renamo representative" and said that his attempt to open an office in Durban had not been for Renamo representation in Durban. His organisation had been named the Mozambique National Relief Agency, after the controversy surrounding allegations that he was linked to MNR. "We never had a name. Mozambique people who are not Marxists are Renamo or side with Renamo. Renamo is synonymous with free Mozambique", he said.

Earlier this year, he told the media his organisation aimed merely to provide an information and welfare service for Mozambique immigrants in South Africa, with special emphasis on refugees in border areas. "The whole issue is being manipulated politically (internally). It is really none of my business and I'm not getting involved", he said.

Mr Buccellato's original plan to open a relief office at his business premises in Durban fell through, after problems with the landlords. "We are looking for alternative premises, but it's not easy, and we haven't had much co-operation from landlords, who are afraid of damage to their property. We are not even sure if a physical address is necessary or whether embassy representation as such is necessary. If we do open an office, we are not going to make a big fanfare of it, especially with the state of emergency. Anything [words indistinct] could be regarded as subversive", Mr Buccellator said.

[Note: On 17th June SAPA had reported (in English 1526 gmt): (Text) House of Assembly, 17th June: No requests to open an office of the Mozambique National Resistance movement (MNR) in South Africa had been received, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Pik Botha, said today. Replying to a question by Mr Peter Soal (PFP Johannesburg North), Mr Botha said efforts by his department "to establish contact with the person concerned have been unsuccessful". He said his department had also not received any representations about an alleged announcement by the MNR that it intended opening an office in South Africa.]