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TEXT: Maputo - Attacks by the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR, or Renamo) have escalated significantly in the last month, following the South African elections in late October. The increase is particularly noticeable in Maputo province, close to the capital and to the South African border.

Power lines to Maputo from South Africa have been sabotaged three times, causing power cutbacks in the capital, although backup power supplies kept the effects limited. Renamo announced from Lisbon that there was a blackout in Maputo, but in fact there were only temporary interruptions to parts of the city.

On November 2 there were eight passengers killed in an attack on the train from South Africa to Maputo, and the line to Swaziland was disrupted by sabotage to the track.

South African authorities deny any responsibility for the attacks, saying that the government is keeping its pledge not to aid Renamo. But observers in Maputo see the move as a South African test of the Mozambican and international response to keeping the insurgency going. The South African government is apparently still divided internally as to how much support to give Renamo, and the hardliners may be seeing how far they can go under the new situation following the South African and U.S. elections.

Meanwhile interviews in mid-November with two former members of the Renamo forces have revealed new details on the Renamo supply network for the southern Mozambican provinces of Maputo and Gaza.

The most extensive evidence comes from Colopes Sitoi, who turned himself in to Mozambican authorities on October 10, accepting the government amnesty under which some 2,000 have turned themselves in this year. Kidnapped and forced into military training in August 1987, he became chief of military intelligence for a sector in Gaza province. He was chosen for this post because of his relatively high level of education - seventh grade. Like other recruits, however, he was closely watched by special 'veteran' units who executed anyone showing recalcitrance or trying to escape. In October, taking advantage of a party when most of the guards were drunk, he escaped with several more recent captives.

In an extensive interview with Mozambican television, Sitoi described, among other details, the supply network for southern Mozambique. Every three months columns of porters were sent from Gaza to the central base in Maputo province, near Goba close to the Swaziland and South African borders. They returned from there with military supplies, medicines, and sometimes clothes and motorbikes. Material arrived there from South Africa, he

said. The same route was used to send groups to South Africa for more advanced military training, including paratroop operations, first-aid, logistics, artillery, and intelligence. They generally returned after spending two months in South Africa, with new uniforms and equipment. The last group he personally saw returned in March 1988.

He had no direct information on how the South Africans delivered material to the Goba base, and said such matters were kept a strict military secret even within the group. But a friend who had been on one of the trips to the Goba base told him that there had been at least three parachute drops of supplies from planes in the month of February. He was also told that there were four South African instructors stationed near the Goba base. He did not inquire further, since showing too much curiosity could easily lead to execution, he said.

Another former member of the group, whom I interviewed in Maputo under the condition that his name not be published, provided significant overlapping testimony. Kidnapped on February 17, 1984, and forced into training, he participated in numerous military operations launched from the Maputo provincial base near Goba referred to by Sitoi. The base, which had over 2,000 armed men, was visited by South African helicopters about twice a month during the entire time he was there - until August 1988. Supplies arrived with the helicopters, he said, and also with groups that travelled to and from South African on foot.

Within the camp, he said, the majority of the fighters had been kidnapped, like him. One of the regular tasks was sending out groups to pressgang new recruits. Once there, dissent or an effort to flee could result in execution. The group of 'veterans' had the tasks of watching the others. Even a small group of 10 sent out on a raid would have one or two veterans, with orders to shoot any of the group showing signs of disloyalty. Even to go to the bathroom in the bush, one was accompanied by an armed guard.

In 1987, Renamo's President Afonso Dhlakama was brought to the camp twice, in a South African helicopters. Dhlakama told the group that the government's offer of an amnesty was a lie, and that those who turned themselves in would really be killed. But, he said, he decided it was Dhlakama who was lying, and took advantage of being sent on a special sabotage mission to turn himself in.