

Mataveya admits stealing AK rifle

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Court Reporter
THE alleged MNR bandit, John Mataveya, had admitted stealing an AK rifle from a Frelimo soldier in Mozambique and committing armed robberies in the Chipinge area when he appeared before a trial magistrate, the High Court heard yesterday.

Under cross-examination by Mr Ray Goba, for the State, Mataveya (22) told the court that he had entered Zimbabwe by evasion in 1981 and took three days on foot using secret routes back to Mozambique in 1986.

Mataveya said that when he returned to Zimbabwe in June last year, he had brought with him fish and cigarettes, not an AK rifle.

"When I left, there was war in Mozambique between the Matsangaise and Frelimo," he said.

"Do you know who leads the MNR?" asked Mr Goba.

"To lead them to where?" Mataveya asked. "We only know them as Matsangaise and I do not know what that means."

"Andrew Matsangaise was

the founder member of the MNR," Mr Goba said. "I think so," Mataveya replied.

Mataveya, of Mozambique, has pleaded not guilty to two counts of murder, one of attempted murder, three of armed robbery, and one of possession of arms of war.

Mataveya told the court that when he went to Mozambique he lived in an area protected by Frelimo soldiers. He denied that when he returned to Zimbabwe he brought an AK rifle stolen from one of the soldiers.

Mr Goba produced a warned-and-cautioned statement confirmed at the Chipinge magistrates' court last year. The court heard that Mataveya had admitted the charge and that he had stolen the AK rifle with the intention of robbing people "since I was poor".

Mataveya replied that he had been forced into making admission statements and that he even suspected the trial magistrate and police officers of trying to incriminate him for the alleged offences.

Mataveya said that he had been forced to admit during recordings of all the warned-and-cautioned statements.

He said that on the initial remand he did not even know whether they were going to court and that on the way he had been coerced into stating that he had made the statements freely and voluntarily.

Mataveya claimed that a colleague of his was the principal offender and that he had "only followed him" during the armed robberies. "I knew it was an offence but I did not know what my colleague was going to use the rifle for," he said.

Mataveya, who was identified by witnesses in connection with the murders, the armed robberies of Musabalka Bus Service and at Devora Store, said that he could not recall what he had said to the investigating officers when he led them to the scenes of crime.

Mr Bruno Mugabe of Mugabe, Mutezo and Partners appears for Mataveya. The trial continues.