

SOUTH AFRICANS COVER FOR MNR ATTACK

By WILLIAM MINTER

Eyewitness reports from Mozambique say South African soldiers provided cover for a recent attack by the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) on the border town of Ressano Garcia.

Approximately 250 Renamo soldiers attacked the town on the night of April 27, killing 10 civilians and wounding 22. They destroyed four locomotives and damaged the immigration post, as well as looting four shops and kidnaping an unknown number of civilians to carry the stolen goods. Damages were estimated at over \$6 million.

The border town is the principal transit point for Mozambican migrant miners working in South Africa, and six miners returning from South Africa were among those killed by the attackers.

Witnesses told the Mozambique Information Agency (AIM) that South African soldiers on the other side of the border cooperated with the attack. Lucas Chirute, who owns a local disco, said he saw at least 15 Renamo "bandits" get out of a South African armored troop carrier. Alexandre Alves, head of the Portuguese company that owns the foreign-exchange shop that was looted, told the Lisbon weekly *Africa* that the attackers had crossed the border in vehicles identical to those of the South African police.

Another eyewitness told AIM that South African soldiers shone huge search lights from across the border on the store being looted and shot at townspeople who were trying to flee. Meanwhile, the lights on the South African side of the border were extinguished while Renamo crossed. AIM reporter Cassimo Ginabay, who spoke to townspeople the day after the attack, said they "unanimously agreed there was South African involvement."

A South African Defense Force spokesman in Pretoria denied any involvement in the attack, and said 147 Mozambican refugees who fled across the border during the fighting would be returned after being interrogated.

The attack, which apparently received little

or no international news coverage, was in many respects typical of Renamo attacks, which have been increasing in recent months. But some observers in Maputo are saying that the blatant complicity on the South African side may have been a deliberate signal by pro-Renamo forces within the South African regime.

South African officials deny their government is still involved in aiding Renamo, and the supply operations are generally cloaked in secrecy. The lack of concealment in the border town attack, in an area so close to Maputo, might be an advertisement that they are not worried about pressure from Western countries that have criticized Renamo or about reaction from colleagues in the regime who repudiate the Renamo connection.

Two weeks after the attack, a South African delegation led by Deputy Foreign Affairs Director Glenn Babb met Mozambican Cooperation Minister Jacinto Veloso and Labor Minister Aguiar Mazula in Maputo. No details were released from the talks, but Babb said they were concerned with "economic cooperation and security" and added that he would like to see more traffic on the Ressano Garcia line between Maputo and South Africa.