



● Jon Slovo, far left, Communist Party leader and South Africa's main target, and, left, his look-alike, Maputo electrician Jose Ramos. Ramos was the only civilian killed during the raid when his jeep was shot at by troops

SA TROOPS USE RUSSIAN MADE VEHICLES TO STAGE THEIR DARING GETAWAY

IN MAPUTO last weekend I obtained dramatic new information about the South African raid on Matola targets five weeks ago.

From information gleaned from key sources I pieced together a picture of an Israeli-style attack, brilliantly planned and executed with precision and daring.

I learnt, from top people, about:

- The narrow escape of Mr Joe Slovo, leader of the South African Communist Party.
- Previous mysterious attacks on anti-South African targets — including a time-bomb found in the boot of the car used by Ruth First, a lecturer at the University of Maputo and Mr Slovo's wife;
- The South African raiders' command of the area they invaded was apparently so complete that they even performed emergency operations on a person, or persons, under bright electric lights during the attack;
- The daring South African getaway was made not by road, but in ordinary army vehicles driven on the railway line.

It appears that more South African troops were involved in the attack than was generally believed. Eyewitnesses said that 11 or 12 vehicles were used, with about 100 troops participating. They clearly came prepared for every eventuality, including a confrontation with the Frelimo army. It was no hit and run exercise.

The South African troops struck just after midnight at three ANC centres in Matola, a town less than 10km from the huge army headquarters and base in the heart of Maputo.

For two hours — the duration of the operations — the South Africans manned two road blocks on the main Johannesburg/Maputo road — the one between Matola and Maputo, and the other where the two roads leave the main road.

Two homes were attacked in Matola some 1½km from the main road and 1km from each other.

It is here that the South Africans missed Slovo by only three hours at the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) headquarters. The big double-storey, colonial-style house stretches across an open field at least 500m wide.

Apparently it was the first house to be "called on". Until then the SA forces had arrived undetected, after crossing the Mozambican border just south of the Komatipoort border post 130km away.

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