

Attacks force plea to allies
for military and diplomatic aid

Mozambique seeks help ^{Gdn.} as SA puts ^{11/1} on pressure ⁸³

From Joseph Hanlon
in Maputo

Mozambique is looking for urgent military and diplomatic help in the face of growing South African pressure. In a meeting with senior Frelimo leaders, the first for more than a year, the South African Foreign Minister, Mr Pik Botha, made it clear that he wants the African National Congress out of Maputo, according to diplomatic sources. To stress the point, South Africa has stepped up its attacks into Mozambique.

The meeting, in the South African border town of Komatipoort, last month was between Mr Botha and the Mozambican Security Minister, Mr Jacinto Veloso, and the Frelimo security head, Mr Sergio Vieira. Diplomatic sources say South Africa was annoyed that Mr Botha's counterpart, Mr Joaquim Chissano, was not in the delegation, and that the Mozambicans offered no concessions. More talks are to be held.

Mozambique hopes to get increased military help from its traditional allies, and it also hopes that Western countries will put diplomatic pressure on South Africa to reduce its attacks.

Although South Africa's immediate demand concerns the ANC, neither diplomats nor Mozambican officials are convinced that the ANC represents a serious threat to South Africa. Many feel that a successful socialist, multiracial state on its border represents a bigger long-term threat, and the ANC is being used as an excuse for attacks on Mozambique.

The Komatipoort meeting came just a day after Swaziland succumbed to South African pressure and rounded up 25 ANC leaders, and a week after the raid on ANC houses in Lesotho. In South African eyes, this leaves Mozambique as the main remaining source of infiltrators from the ANC military wing, Umkhoto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation).

South Africa wants South African refugees and ANC members moved from Maputo to remote areas of Mozambique, far from the South African border. Some diplomatic sources say that South Africa is even demanding to approve a list of "genuine refugees" allowed to stay in Maputo.

South Africa has backed its demands with its most explicit attacks on Mozambique in more than a year. The oil depot raid on December 9 is believed here to have been the work of South African commandos, and the South African backed

National Resistance has been making raids across a section of the border which is closely guarded by South African security forces.

In mid-December, a series of raids destroyed cattle stations along the Mozambican side of the border, 100 miles from Maputo. This month the MNR struck 90 miles north of Maputo, attacking traffic on the main road and destroying part of Mozambique's most important state farm.

The raiders were eventually repelled by the Mozambican army. But the incidents make clear that South Africa is pushing the MNR across the border closer to Maputo than ever before.

Frelimo's response to the South African pressure must be conditioned by how much additional help it receives. There are already 600 to 1,200 Zimbabwean troops here, plus 400 Tanzanians providing basic military training, and 500 to 1,000 Eastern Bloc (Cuban, Russian, East German, Hungarian, and Czech) advisers, according to diplomatic sources.

Further Cuban involvement is a central issue, and must have been discussed when the Cuban Vice-President, Mr Juan Almeida Bosque, was here.

The US Deputy Under-Secretary of State for African Affairs, Mr Frank Wisner, who was here last month, is said to have warned President Machel not to "internationalise" the war, which means no Cuban troops. But Mr Wisner also made it clear that further help from neighbours such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe was acceptable to the US.

The US also appears to back South Africa's demand to move the ANC out of Maputo. Nevertheless, Frelimo hopes that the US preoccupation with keeping Cuban troops out is so strong that it will put pressure on South Africa to wind down the war.

President Machel now puts considerable weight on the role of the UN Security Council. At a reception for diplomats recently, he spoke informally with the ambassadors of the five main powers, stressing their countries' responsibility to respond to South African aggression against Lesotho and Mozambique, to prevent the conflict expanding into a "generalised war."

For the past year, Mozambique has been trying to build warmer relations with Britain and the United States. President Machel hopes to visit Britain in May. Three Mozambican ministers visited the US last year, and President Machel met Mr Wisner in Mozambique.