

Mozambique's *Rand 14/6/82* 'defecting' envoy is back

Mail Correspondent

LISBON. — Johannesburg newspaper reports claiming the defection earlier this week of Mozambique's ambassador to Lisbon have proved incorrect.

The envoy, Mr Joao Ataíde da Silva — he flew into Lisbon from an official trip to Brussels and Paris on Friday — looked bewildered at being the focus of so much attention.

He was met by five embassy officials and a number of newsmen — but dismissed reports of his alleged defection. These had followed hard on the heels of an earlier move by Mozambique's

national security director, Mr Antunes Costa, who sought asylum in South Africa last Monday.

He told journalists his country had no diplomatic representation in France or Belgium, and he made regular trips on government business to these and other Western European countries.

He said he had kept in frequent contact with his embassy while away, especially after learning of the South African reports of his "disappearance".

He also said it was "common South African" practice to make claims aimed at disturbing the Mozambique regime. He would be in early contact with his government to learn the full details.

On Tuesday, a Johannesburg paper reported that Mr Ataíde da Silva had abandoned his post and was thought to be "somewhere in Western Europe".

The report was followed by unofficial confirmation from Lisbon government sources and backed up later by apparent confirmation from Maputo.

A Lisbon-based spokesman for the anti-government Mozambique National Resistance Movement claimed at the time increased guerrilla activity and the imminence of a government collapse had prompted the spate of defections.

Excluding Mr Ataíde da Silva, there were three defections last week.