

AS THE leaders of southern Africa's frontline states met at Arusha this weekend to ponder the implications of South Africa's pacts with Mozambique and Angola, the question in many of their minds was probably not so much "What next?" but "Who?". Who will be the next target for Pretoria's effort to destroy not just the substance but even the symbols of African independence?

Ironically, it is Zimbabwe, which has long had the closest economic ties with South Africa, that is now becoming worried. Suddenly it finds itself the odd man out, the only frontline state which does not accept public ministerial encounters with representatives of the apartheid regime. While the world has had to become used to pictures of South Africa's ministers shaking hands with their former enemies — the most dramatic symbol of the failure of the African attempt to isolate and contain South Africa — Mr Robert Mugabe has so far resisted the pressure.

Now there are many people in Harare who fear their turn has come, and that South Africa's strategy of regional destabilisation may now focus on Zimbabwe. On the eve of this weekend's Arusha meeting, the Zimbabwean Foreign Minister, Mr Mangwende, poured more cold water on the Nkomati accord between South Africa and Mozambique than most other frontline politicians have yet done. He said he doubted whether South Africa would respect it, since Pretoria had not become reconciled to the possibility of creating a peaceful and non-racial region.

His scepticism may have been based on the fact that the vital pipeline bringing oil from Beira in Mozambique to Zimbabwe has been blown up by South African-backed rebels on three separate occasions this month, even though there are an estimated 5,000 Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique to guard it. The news has not yet been published in Zimbabwe, and the pipeline was quickly repaired each time. Officials here believe that the rebels from the Mozambican Movement for National Resistance, who carried out the sabotage, are still directed from South Africa.

Other evidence of South Africa's secret war against Zimbabwe is a radio station known as Radio Truth which has been beaming anti-government propaganda from South Africa for almost a year. But the most serious component is the military training and flow of arms which South Africa provides to the so-called dissidents in the predominantly Ndebele areas of Zimbabwe.

Until now, Mr Mugabe's government has been reluctant to supply much detail on the destabilisation campaign, perhaps for fear of highlighting Zimbabwe's vulnerability. Compared with South Africa's support for the MNR in Mozambique or the Unita rebels in Angola, it is still a low-level insurgency. But last week, as an image of instability in Zimbabwe swept through the western media as a result of atrocity allegations from Matabeleland, Mr Emmerson Munangagwa, the Minister of State for Security, agreed to

show the Guardian some of the files on the secret war.

The testimony of captured rebels, as well as tests on abandoned arms and ammunition, reveal the existence of a carefully-planned operation by South Africa's military intelligence department, using supply lines through Botswana.

The rebel group has no official name, presumably because its controllers hope to hide behind the separately motivated dissident unrest in Matabeleland. But officials in Harare have dubbed it "Super Zapu" because nearly all its members have had links with Joshua Nkomo's organisation, Zapu, in the past.

The Zimbabwe government has discovered traces of South African involvement in at least 48 incidents of violence last year. There have been several more this year. They include ambushes of government troops, attacks on a bridge and a mine, as well as the shooting of three white farmers, one of them a senator, together with his daughter and an English visitor staying with them.

Two of Super Zapu's military leaders were captured by the Zimbabweans last year. George Thebe, who was a commander in Zapu's military wing, Zipra, in the Wankie area during the liberation war, was caught in May. Hillary Ndlovu, a Zipra officer in the Tsholotsho area, was caught in December. They confirmed that the first contact by South Africa was made at Pretoria's initiative in October 1982 when they met in a motel in Francistown, Botswana, with three white officers in military intelligence.

One of them was a Malcolm Callaway, a member of

the Rhodesian Special Branch, who joined Mr Mugabe's newly-created Central Intelligence Organisation after independence. He was stationed briefly on the Zimbabwean border with South Africa at Beitbridge, where the two countries' military officers maintain little-publicised contacts in order to deal with border violations by cattle rustlers. Apparently recruited by South Africa there, he emigrated and later emerged in South African military intelligence.

Two months before his meeting with the former Zipra people, South Africa had sent three white ex-members of the Rhodesian security forces on a cross-border sabotage mission aimed at an important railway depot at Nyala, about 30 miles inside Zimbabwe. The men were spotted and killed by the Zimbabwean army.

After that, South Africa appears to have decided to use only black saboteurs, and to operate exclusively in the areas where there is dissidence. With Callaway as the main link, South Africa has sent several vehicle-loads of weapons through Botswana for pick-up by Super Zapu. The arms are almost all Warsaw Pact weapons, probably captured in Angola and Mozambique. They include AK-47 rifles, RPG-7 rocket-launchers, machine guns and, since July, landmines. But no mines have yet been used.

South Africa has also manufactured Zimbabwean National Army camouflage uniforms for use by rebels masquerading as the official army. It has printed badges showing Joshua Nkomo with

the caption "Father Zimbabwe"—a copy of an original Zipra badge worn by guerrillas during the war, but now made with a sophisticated laminated plastic which is not available in Zimbabwe.

In December 1982 the Zimbabwean forces captured two rebels who had been trained in South Africa and had with them new AK rifles and bullets marked with the head-stamp "22-80." The stamp means they were made in Romania in 1980. Zipra had not received any weaponry since 1979, so that the bullets could not have been left over from the war but must have come from a new supplier—in this case, South Africa. Since then, cartridges with the "22-80" head-stamp have been found all over Matabeleland.

Super Zapu's political leadership centres on three men, one of whom had connections with Mr Nkomo as recently as last year. He is Makatini Guduza Moyo, still listed as a member of Zapu's central committee, who helped Mr Nkomo escape into Botswana last year before the Zapu president's self-exile in London. He is thought to be Super Zapu's chief recruiter at the Dukwe camp for Zimbabwean refugees in Botswana, where he screens young men for transfer to one of the five training bases for covert operations which South Africa has in the Northern Transvaal.

The founder and president of Super Zapu is Abel Vela, who was Zapu's chief representative in Botswana during the liberation war, where he played a key role in sending men to Zambia before they re-entered Rhodesia as trained guerrillas. Vela never

returned to Zimbabwe after independence.

According to the Zimbabwean Security Minister, Mr Munangagwa, the South African-armed rebels number about 100 men in operating inside Zimbabwe at any one time—about a third of the total dissidents. "They are the most active group," he says. The damage they have caused is nothing compared to the havoc wrought by South Africa in Mozambique and Angola, but Super Zapu is kept in place, it is thought, as a perpetual warning.

That warning is reinforced by Radio Truth, which used to broadcast from a clandestine base in South Africa in Sindebele and English, but is now in English only. Often using a white woman announcer, nicknamed Flame Lily, and interspersed with pop songs, the broadcasts adopt a tone of menacing cheekiness, full of allegations of corruption and inefficiency in Zimbabwe's government.

One of their favourite targets is the Foreign Minister, Mr Witness Mangwende, precisely because of his strong anti-South African stand. A typical broadcast in January called him "witless" and described him as "one of the youngest members of the government" who "actually called on the frontline states to attack South Africa and force her to remove the troops protecting South-West Africa."

"Has he no idea of the might of South Africa," the broadcast jeered. "Doesn't he realise he is playing with fire?"

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"Zimbabwe's secret war against South Africa"
Cuba Review - 8/84