Meeting Outcome 'Positive'

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[Excerpts] The joint operations by Mozambican, Zimbabwean, and Tanzanian forces against armed banditry in Mozambique were evaluated by the respective defense ministers at a meeting held recently in Quelimane.

National Defense Minister Army General Alberto Chipande, who returned to Maputo today, told our correspondent that as a result of a joint military operation, several districts and localities in Zambezia, Tete, Sofala, and Manica Provinces have been freed of bandit criminal occupation:

[Begin recording] The joint operations began in August 1986 with the occupation of Gorongosa. [date as heard] We resumed operations in November. The first phase was conducted jointly by Mozambican and Zimbabwean forces, when Gorongosa was occupied.

The second phase was carried out with the participation of Tanzanian forces. This culminated in the liberation of Mocuba, Mopeia, (?Chimuala), Morrumbala, Caia, Sena, and other districts along the Zambezi Valley.

Operations were interrupted at this stage for a number of reasons. First, we had to consolidate the liberated areas. This meant that party and government organs had to play a role in those areas by resettling people and reconstructing infrastructure that had been destroyed. This permitted the three joint forces to carry out operations to consolidate the areas where there were still sporadic armed bandit actions. [passage omitted] [end recording]

The minister of national defense disclosed in his interview that new search and destroy operations against the armed bandit groups were planned at the meeting with his Zimbabwean and Tanzanian counterparts. The groups began operating in certain areas of Inhambane Province, and in Nampula and Niassa Provinces, as well as in southern Cabo Delgado, following their flight from Zambezi Valley. He said:

[Begin recording] As a result of operations in the central Zambezi Valley, some of the bandits stepped up their operations in the northern area, namely in Nampula and Niassa Provinces, and in southern Cabo Delgado. We have resumed operations involving all these provinces, in the south and north of the country accordingly. Thus the need for the bilateral meeting.

It was an important meeting in which we evaluated our cooperation and joint operations not only in the Zambezi Valley but also in Mozambique as a whole. We evaluated the effects of the operations launched by the Mozambique Armed Forces-FPLM in areas in which they operate on their own, and in areas where we operate jointly with the Zimbabwean and Tanzanian forces.

The outcome of the meeting was positive because we have thwarted the intention of the enemy to divide the country. The enemy does not stand a chance of dividing our country. [end recording]

Asked to comment on the military situation in Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane, Alberto Chipande said:

[Begin recording] As in Zambezia, we have the initiative in Maputo, Inhambane, and Gaza Provinces. We are operating without problems or shortcomings. What we must do now is to occupy the liberated areas and resettle the population. Party and government organs must organize the people in order to rebuild what has been destroyed. People must be reorganized following the disruption of their lives by the armed bandits. This is what remains to be done. [end recording]