

SA raid 'aimed to foil Machel'

Gdn 18/10/83

By Jonathan Steele

South Africa's raid yesterday morning on a building in the centre of Maputo was mainly aimed at undermining President Machel's current tour of Western Europe, according to senior Mozambican officials.

The Frelimo leader arrives in London tomorrow for a three-day visit, his first to Britain.

He arrived in Paris yesterday and said he had received a pledge of French military aid. Mr Machel said after talks and a working lunch with President Mitterrand that he had asked for, and obtained assurances of, "all kinds" of military support for the defence of his country.

A French presidential spokesman said later that Mr Machel had made no such request directly, but that France would study sympathetically any Mozambican appeal for military support.

The spokesman said that Mr Machel would be shown military material during his visit.

The President's tour is designed to demonstrate that Mozambique is a nonaligned country, under threat from South Africa, and which feels entitled to look for political and military cooperation from East and West.

Mozambican officials believe that the time has come, eight years after independence, to

remind the West that their country is on the frontline in the growing conflict with Pretoria and that the West cannot avoid taking sides. There is an escalating battle in Southern Africa which will eventually destroy the West's commercial interests if South Africa is not restrained.

In coming to Europe to establish Mozambique's credentials, President Machel is bringing with him three other members of the Frelimo Politburo. While remaining committed to a strategy of Marxist development Mozambique is trying to encourage Western investment in key areas of the economy and to break down Western resistance to any requests for military supplies.

The bulk of the country's weapons comes from the Soviet Union and China, but Mozambique is considering purchases of Land-Rovers, field radios, and tents. On the economic side, Mozambique has committed itself to joining the Lomé Convention governing EEC relations with African countries. Its entry had been blocked by a disagreement about the legal status of West Berlin.

Mozambique is planning to introduce an investment code to clarify the conditions under which Western companies can take part in the socialist economy. The main Western investors so far are Italy, France, and Portugal.