

Pretoria denies Machel claim on rebel arms

From Ray Kennedy, Johannesburg

South Africa is urgently studying the text of a speech by President Samora Machel of Mozambique, in which he accused it of continuing to "sustain, develop, equip, infiltrate and supply" the Renamo rebels.

The rebels claim they are operating within two and a half miles of the capital, Maputo, and have blocked road and rail links to the city.

Mr Machel's categorical charges are seen as the most serious challenge so far to Pretoria's bona fides since the signing of the Nkomati accord nine months ago.

Mr R. F. ("Pik") Botha, the South African Foreign Minister, told a press conference that South Africa has scrupulously complied with both the spirit and the letter of the accord but said he will not respond to the Mozambique leader's accusations until he has studied the full text of his speech.

He said there would be further discussions soon "to see

what extent we can be of assistance to each other to bring about the cessation of hostilities in Mozambique."

In the past three months Mr Botha has travelled to Israel, West Germany and undisclosed East African countries on missions believed to have been concerned directly with efforts to stop the supply of equipment to Renamo.

In Maputo, the Government-owned newspaper *Noticias* claimed that local journalists were told by a South African National Party MP, that supporters of Dr Andries Treurnicht's ultra-right Conservative Party have been responsible for breaches of the accord.

It has long been suspected in Maputo that elements within the South African Defence Force which support the Conservative Party have been clandestinely aiding Renamo. A Conservative Party spokesman said the party viewed the newspaper's claims in a very serious light.