

Nkomati peace pact suffers serious setback

A FRAGILE peace pact between Mozambique and South Africa has suffered a serious setback with Mozambican government charges that South African special forces attacked targets in Maputo five days ago, political analysts said.

The Nkomati accord, signed in 1984, has been put to its biggest test by the latest in a series of Mozambican allegations that Pretoria has violated the agreement, they said.

"Radicals in the Mozambican government are likely to demand that the pact be abrogated, but president Joaquim Chissano is likely to seek international support in pressuring Pretoria to stick to its side of the bargain," said one analyst who asked not to be named.

DIALOGUE

Under the pact, the two neighbouring states pledged to resolve their problems through dialogue and to prevent guerrillas fighting the other from using their territories as launching pads.

"What happened in Maputo on Friday only proves how far you can trust South Africa," said another analyst in the Zimbabwe capital, who also declined to be identified.

Mozambican foreign minister Pascoal Mocumbi, briefing diplomats

on Friday, said three people had been arrested in connection with the simultaneous raids on four houses in Maputo's Polana residential area in which three people were killed.

ARRESTS

According to one western diplomat present at the briefing, Mocumbi did not specify the nationality of those arrested or indicate whether they had been part of the attacking force.

Pretoria last openly attacked Mozambique in May 1983, bombing and strafing Maputo's Matola suburb in an air raid it said was aimed against African National Congress (ANC) guerrillas fighting for majority rule in South Africa.

The white-dominated Pretoria government has not categorically denied responsibility for Friday's early morning attack, which would be the first direct South African attack on Mozambique since the Nkomati pact was sealed.

"Material" evidence

abandoned by the attackers during their flight, as well as statements by a number of witnesses, conclusively prove that this was criminal action by the South African special forces in line with other actions against other countries in southern Africa," the Mozambican government said in a statement.

ACCORD

Mozambique, condemning the latest attack, said: "This action is all the more serious because there is a non-aggression accord in force between Mozambique and the republic of South Africa. Our country has scrupulously observed this accord."

One analyst interpreted this statement as an appeal to Pretoria to honour the Nkomati pact.

The United States, which played a key role in bringing about the accord, swiftly condemned the attack saying it showed the futility of Pretoria's attempts to deal with its internal crisis by violence against its neighbours.

ANC officials in Maputo linked the attack to the swing to the right in the recent whites-only elections in South Africa.

"President Botha is increasingly trying to look tough to avert further

losses to the right," one official said.

Shortly before the May 6 South African general election, Pretoria's commandos raided the Zambian tourist town of Livingstone, killing four people.

Earlier this month, Zimbabwe linked Pretoria to two separate bomb blasts in Harare.

Mozambique said of Friday's raids: "this criminal action... fits in the framework of the apartheid regime's policy of destabilisation and intimidation against the free countries of southern Africa."—Reuter