

## MOZAMBIQUE: - Accord with S. Africa?

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Two newspapers, the New York Times and the London Independent, reported on May 3 that an agreement had been reached between Pretoria and Maputo on the supply of military assistance by South Africa to protect the power lines supplying electricity from Mozambique's Cahora Bassa dam.

If so, this would mean that South Africa considers its economic interests in Mozambique more important than its military interests and is preparing to abandon the rebel Renamo movement. (There is no doubt that Renamo sabotage of some 500 pylons carrying these lines in the past few years could not have been carried out without South African support.) The reports, it may be noted, came only a few days after the visit to Maputo by the head of South Africa's giant Anglo-American Corporation and the murder of the head of Renamo's political wing, **Evo Fernandes** (see ION N°330).

The two newspapers said their information came from the South African deputy commercial attaché in Maputo, **Timo Beukes**. According to this source, 1,500 Mozambican soldiers will be trained and equipped by South Africa to ensure the defence of the power lines, a form of assistance evaluated at 82 million rands.

South Africa is also said to have promised mine detectors, communication equipment, military vehicles and uniforms, as well as food rations for the three Mozambican battalions which it intends to train.

The aid comes under a planned agreement between Mozambique, South Africa and Portugal to recommence operations at Portuguese-owned Cahora Bassa and supply South Africa with electricity produced in Mozambique. This agreement could be finalised this month in Lisbon.

Also last week, the Mozambican authorities did not deny reports from South Africa that a meeting was planned between Mozambican president **Joaquim Chissano** and his South African counterpart **Pieter Botha** (see ION N°330). This encounter could take place either before or after Mr Chissano's visit to China which begins on May 16.

From these disclosures it is clear that Pretoria is seeking to improve its image abroad wants to assert itself as an incontestable regional power. The talks in London on May 3 and 4 with Angolan and Cuban representatives also serve this purpose.

A number of items of information obtained by The Indian Ocean Newsletter enable this process to be better understood:

1) - Without even waiting for official confirmation by Maputo of the existence of an agreement on Cahora Bassa between Mozambique and South Africa, the United States on May 3 welcomed the cooperation between the two countries to reduce tension between them, and particularly the negotiations on electricity from Cahora Bassa dam.