

Coralita's crew plundered valuable metals – Mozambique investigator

Graham Spence

THE Mozambique Government claims it has concrete proof the crew of the Richards Bay-registered yacht Coralita, which escaped under the nose of Maputo officialdom last week, plundered valuable silver off a local wreck.

The yacht, with skipper Allan Ubsdell, a Pretoria businessman, and brothers Mike and Richard Bailey made a dash for freedom last week after being held under "boat arrest" for more than a month. They claim they only had "souvenirs" from a wreck, the Danae, which sunk off Inhaca Island, 25 nautical miles off Mozambique, in the 1940s.

But according to official documents leaked to the Sunday Tribune this week, the Mozambicans found 200kg of metal, mainly bronze and silver, on board when they arrested the crew.

The investigating officer, Mr Migas Filipe, said in the documents that when they boarded the Coralita on January 8 Mr Ubsdell said the crew had only salvaged a "cooldrink bottle", and were on a fishing and photography expedition.

When they searched the boat however they found silver, bronze and another 34 bottles.

Mr Ubsdell could not be contacted for comment yesterday, but in a previous interview with the Tribune he said most of the metal confiscated had been salvaged from wrecks in South African waters and the "artefacts" from the Danae were "pub souvenirs."