

Mozambican defector flying high with SAAF

Man Correspondent

LIEUTENANT Adriano Bomba, the Mozambican airman who defected to South Africa in July, is living in the officers' mess at Ysterplaat Air Base and learning to fly an Impala ground-attack fighter.

The 23-year-old Russian-trained MIG pilot has been in Cape Town for three weeks, but his presence has been a closely-guarded secret.

However, yesterday he was introduced to a group of military correspondents — apparently to quash rumours among blacks that he is imprisoned and being ill-treated.

In fact, judging from his remarks yesterday, he has the status of a visiting officer at Ysterplaat.

He is on a course for pilots converting to Impalas from other aircraft and, after classroom work and 24 hours of dual-instruction flying, his results are up to the SAAF's requirements, says the Officer Commanding 7 Squadron, Major Thys du Toit.

Between study and training, he has made sightseeing visits to Table Mountain and the Castle and has even gone to Newlands to see a rugby match.

But Lt Bomba does not plan to be a military aviator much longer. He is ineligible to join the

SAAF because he is not a South African citizen. In any case he would prefer a future in "civvy street" and plans to earn his living as a commercial light-aircraft pilot while studying engineering by correspondence.

And if Lt Bomba wants a job in commercial aviation, he should have no difficulty.

The joint managing director of Avex Air, Mr Mike van Ginkel, said yesterday: "I see no problems at our company if Lt Bomba were to apply for a job"

No problem

Mr Van Ginkel said if Lt Bomba were to apply for a job at Avex he would start as a co-pilot doing survey aerial work.

"We have used black crew members before, mainly in South West Africa, and there has been no problem of their being accepted by the other crew members," he said.

But Magnum Airlines operations controller, Mr Tim Ward, said firmly there was no place for Lt Bomba in his company.

"I am sure he is a competent pilot, but with his political background we could never have him here. We fly charter flights to other African countries, and having a political refugee in our employ could cause us to be banned from places like Zambia."

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