

SAP probes Maputo rebel leader's death

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POLICE investigations are continuing into the death this week of Mr Orlando Cristina, reportedly a senior member of the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR) who died in a shooting incident near Pretoria.

The shooting is believed to have happened last weekend, but police headquarters in Pretoria withheld information from the Press until yesterday when a report on Mr Cristina's death appeared in a Lisbon newspaper.

A police statement issued yesterday said police were investigating a shooting incident in which a person by the name of Mr Orlando Cristina was shot dead.

No arrest had been made.

The police statement made no mention of where or when

the shooting had occurred, although it is believed to have been at the weekend on a farm near Pretoria.

The police also made no mention of Mr Cristina's MNR connections. Defence Force spokesmen yesterday denied any knowledge of him.

In spite of Mr Cristina's connections with a revolutionary movement in Mozambique, it is believed police are at this stage investigating murder.

Any suggestion of a political assassination is discounted at this juncture.

In Lisbon Dr Artur Villankulu, MNR director for external affairs, initially said a Mozambican "government agent" killed Mr Cristina "inside Mozambique" while he slept, UPI reports.

When told of the newspaper report, Dr Villankulu said his information was "limited" and the "assassination might well have taken place" in Pretoria. He said he had no

further details.

Friends of the dead man were reported to have said it was not known whether he was murdered, committed suicide, or died in an accident.

Sources close to the MNR, however, did not rule out the possibility that Mr Cristina's death was the work of the Mozambican Government, which is said to have regarded the resistance leader as a "big thorn in their side".

MNR sources said Mr Cristina's death was the worst set-back the MNR had suffered since 1978.

In Maputo yesterday the State-run Mozambique News Agency AIM described Cristina as "an adventurer and failed big game hunter" who became "the number-two" in the MNR.

"He masterminded the operation," AIM said, "first in collaboration with the Rhodesians, and later with South Africa."