

MOZAMBIQUE

Killing of Russians troubles Machel

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REBELS seeking to overthrow Mozambique's Marxist Government introduced a new element of cold war politics into the conflict last week with their bold killing of two Soviet technicians and the kidnapping of 14 others.

The Soviet Embassy in Maputo has confirmed that the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR) overcame Government militia forces in a dawn raid on the Morrua Mine in Mozambique's Zambezia Province, killing and capturing the Soviet technicians.

The Mozambique Defence Ministry said two Mozambican workers, members of the militia guarding the mining site, were also killed and four Mozambicans were kidnapped with the Russians.

Diplomatic sources in Maputo

called the raid "a very surreptitious attack" that seemed to single out the Russians deliberately. The operation appeared unusually well planned, they said.

There are several thousand Western and Soviet Bloc specialists and technicians attempting to aid Mozambique's development programmes. An estimated 800 to 1 000 Soviet, East German and Cuban military and security advisers are also there.

Most released

There are no indications that the 24 Soviet captives had a security roll. The MNR has taken hostage more than 50 foreigners in the past three years, but this is the first time they have seized Soviet advisers.

In the past most hostages have been released unharmed, some after as long as eight months' captivity, although six Portuguese were killed. Six Bulgarian captives were reportedly freed last November by Mozambican troops.

The raid on the Morrua Mine, which netted the largest number of hostages yet taken by the MNR, was a clear embarrassment to the Government of Mr Samora Machel.

Earlier this month, it was reported that the Morrua site was being developed to produce tantalite, a metallic ore used in the production of nuclear reactors and aircraft and missile parts.