

Mozambique rebels keep up attacks

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from GODWIN MATATU in Maputo

MOZAMBIQUE rebels are keeping up their attacks around the capital, Maputo, where two Britons were murdered last week. Scores of people have been killed in ambushes and power supplies have been interrupted.

Workers in the capital have been formed into militias to defend factories and government buildings. There are fears that guerrilla units may infiltrate the city to assassinate Ministers.

As President Samora Machel struggles against the mounting threat from the anti-government Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), the United States has come forward with offers of military support. Washington plans to give him \$1 million-worth of 'non-lethal' supplies, including army vehicles and uniforms.

Until now, Machel has relied on the Soviet Union and China for military aid. His acceptance of US help will consolidate his political switch from East to West.

Although the United States says its aid is not to support Machel's troops in the fight against the MNR, the rebels have brought Mozambique to the point where help is desperately needed. They are operating in all the country's 10 provinces, Maputo is virtually surrounded.

Mozambique intelligence revealed last week that the MNR commander, Alfonso Dhlakama, has committed a large new contingent of his guerrillas to the fighting around Maputo.

The local guerrilla leader, Calisto Makuluve, calls his men the 'President's Guard.' This is a mocking title, underlining the MNR's threat to topple Machel.

The overthrow of Machel would be a severe blow to the United States, which has been encouraging the political defection of Mozambique from Marxism. This has gained pace since Machel signed the Nkomati non-aggression treaty with South Africa last March.

This year, Mozambique has been given more emergency food aid by the Americans than any black African country. The

proposed military aid is unlikely to tip the scales during the present rainy-season campaign.

The Mozambique Ministry of Defence said yesterday: 'The military situation is better than it was six months ago, but the security situation is growing worse because of the new MNR tactics.'

The entire Mozambican army is now employed on a counter-offensive against the guerrillas and 150,000 civilians have been put under arms.

The guerrillas' source of supplies is still largely South African, claim Mozambique intelligence sources. Other military help comes from the Middle East by way of the Comoros Islands, as previously revealed by *The Observer*.

There are divisions in Pretoria between the advisers to Foreign Minister 'Pik' Botha and the hawks in South African Military Intelligence (SAMI). The Foreign Ministry believes that SAMI, headed by General van der Westhuizen, is still giving covert help to the rebels.

Under the Nkomati agreement, South Africa agreed to stop this.