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SA security assistance to M'bique expected

Weekend Post Correspondent

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa hopes to set up a paramilitary task force to protect transport links and the 900-kilometre Cahora Bassa and Maputo power lines against Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) attacks.

The Star newspaper says it is believed the proposal was the focus of attention in talks in Maputo this week between Foreign Minister Pik Botha and top Mozambican officials.

South African officials are tight-lipped about how they intend to introduce the "special guard" units, how the guards will be recruited and who they will be.

The question of South African security assistance to Mozambique is regarded as "extremely delicate", Government officials say.

● Mr Alvero Soares, one of the leading figures in Renamo, made the startling claim today that the rebel movement would be in control of Mozambique before the end of the year if "outside powers" did not intervene.

Speaking from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the resistance movement enjoys considerable support, Mr Soares said that Renamo was in control of more than half of the rural areas of Mozambique.

He claimed that Renamo soldiers had surrounded Nampula in the north of Mozambique, were in control in most areas in Tete district and were also "very active" on the South African-Mozambique border.

He said that the opposition being met by Renamo rebels, the Mozambique Government forces, were "undisciplined, dispirited, badly fed and clothed" and were deserting.

Mr Soares pointed to the fact that Renamo attacks had halted coal production at a State-owned mine in Tete district this week.

He said that deliveries of coal to be exported through Beira had stopped.

Mr Soares said that in four attacks this week the rebels had halted four convoys leaving Maputo, only 40 kilometres from Maputo, and had also blown up a train near Nampula.

He would not elaborate when asked what he meant by the intervention of "outside forces".

Asked if he meant South Africa in view of the Nkomati Accord, he said: "I leave it to your reasoning."

He was also not drawn into who was backing the rebel movement and where the supply of arms was coming from.

He said: "All I can say is that we have the backing, both in finance and arms, and it would be foolish to elaborate as we would play into the hands of Frelimo, the ruling party."

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