

Joint Mozambique-Zimbabwe Force Captures MNR Headquarters

Maputo home service in Portuguese (i) 0800 gmt 6 Sep 85 (ii) 1030 gmt 7 Sep 85

Text of report:

The so-called operational headquarters of the armed bandits in the Gorongosa mountains has been taken by assault in a joint operation by Mozambican and Zimbabwean troops. President Samora Machel, who visited the place yesterday, told the press that the capture of the main base of the armed bandits on the Gorongosa plateau was a very important step in these operations to annihilate the armed bandits. We took the base in five hours. We have broken the backbone of the snake and we will continue until we catch its head, said President Samora Machel.

According to our correspondent, the joint Mozambique-Zimbabwe operations started on 1st July, and in addition to the capture of the main base, those armed forces captured other bases in the area. Thus the Muchamba base, south of Chimoio, which protected the sabotage operations in the region of the railway and of the Beira-Machipanda pipeline, was also captured by the joint Mozambique-Zimbabwe forces. An airstrip about 800 m long, which allowed the landing of Dakota planes to supply the Gorongosa base with war materiel, was occupied by our forces, which we verified on the spot. The Rungo [phonetic] base, south of the operational headquarters, also known as the Banana House also fell into the hands of our forces. The quantity of war materiel captured at this and other bandit bases is estimated at hundreds of tons of ammunition, assorted weaponry and transmitters and receivers. This war equipment could have sustained the guerrilla warfare for three consecutive years.

We have just received information from our correspondent in Gorongosa, that the Gogogo base, where the bandits have what they called a military academy, is being besieged by the joint Mozambique-Zimbabwe force while mopping-up operations are continuing around this base to annihilate any vestiges of the bandits.

Yesterday, President Samora Machel met the Chimoio population and he urged them to make Manica and Sofala provinces the graveyard of the armed bandits. In this meeting with about 20,000 people, President Machel explained once more the nature of the armed bandits, and he stressed that we must fight them until the end because only then can we avoid a generation of bandits. President Machel then referred to the meeting with Julius Nyerere and Robert Mugabe in Harare, where they discussed the best way to annihilate armed banditry in Africa. Before this mass rally, President Machel had visited some operational centres in Manica Province; at those meetings President Machel received several donations to strengthen the military capability of the country.

(ii) Excerpt from report of correspondent Rodrigues Bila "who has followed the joint Mozambique-Zimbabwe military operation":

... Well, to describe the operation is a bit difficult to do because I was not there when the operation was launched. I did not watch the taking of the main base. The operation lasted about five hours. It started at 0500 and by 1000 the base was taken. During this period many bandits were killed and many fled. The information we have is that there are many bases around the mountain and those were taken. The Gogogo base, which the bandits call the military academy of the MNR, is to the north of Maringue district. We also had the information that at that base there were many white people, but we could not verify this. We also confirmed that Afonso Dhlakama fled. He was in the base but

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apparently he fled on a motorcycle, leaving his glasses behind. He ran away with his assistant. They ran in the direction of (?Guarda) where we presume he has his family. What I can say is that in no time this base will be taken because it has been encircled.

There is an important detail about the armed bandits that we found in the main MNR base. We found 40 transmit and receive radios, and these radios work with the help of a generator, as was explained to us by Brig (?Candeia) of the Zimbabwean forces. He said that the accumulators that we saw had a label on them with the date 2nd July 1984, therefore this must be South African equipment which the MNR received on 2nd July 1984. Curiously the Zimbabwean troops (?have been using the same type of equipment) since 4th July 1984, thus we can see the coincidence that this supply was made at the same time, some months after the signing of the Nkomati accord. This is further proof of the South African involvement in this war.

I don't know the total number of bases destroyed. I cannot give an exact number, but I must add that there are many bases around this area that were destroyed and when we left Gorongosa, helicopters were taking off on search and mopping-up operations.

Note: AFP (in English 1509 gmt 7 Sep 85) reported that the MNR spokesman in Lisbon, Jorge Correia, on 7th September had denied Mozambican reports that the MNR's main base in Gorongosa had been destroyed by Mozambican and Zimbabwean forces. Pro-government forces had attacked the base but had been "energetically repulsed", the spokesman said.