

# SA HEEDED DHLAKAMA CRY FOR HELP

MAPUTO.

**SOUTH African arms supplies saved MNR bandits from almost certain defeat in the second half of 1984.**

This is one of the conclusions drawn from the documentation captured at Casa Banana in Central Mozambique, and released to the Press on Monday.

By June 1984 the MNR was running out of ammunition. It had virtually exhausted the supplies which the South African military had pumped in immediately preceding the signing of the Nkomati non-aggression accord in March.

One of the MNR notebooks shown to newsmen contains a desperate message from bandit chief Afonso Dhlakama to his main contact in South African military intelligence, Colonel Charles van Niekerk.

The message, dated June 16 1984, begins: My friend, Commander Charles, we no longer have war material, mainly in the central and southern areas of our country.

"We appreciate that we received that last consignment, but as soon as we unloaded, we had to relieve all the regions in the central area, including the Tete region, as they already lacked material to respond to

## How Pretoria saved MNR from defeat

the massive offensive that Frelimo had just announced would be launched after the signing of the Nkomati Accord."

Dhlakama added "we want to remind our friends of the pledge they gave us of keeping up support to us clandestinely".

"As we are now without war material to fight him (President Samora Machel), he will recover and that will force us to shift our bases about as they go on chasing us all over the place," lamented Dhlakama. "This could cause a bad situation to occur for us identical to that of 1980 when we were so badly hit by Rhodesia abandoning us."

The message suggested that the South Africans "could slip in a ship with a bigger load than we received before, and that would allow us to sustain the war for the whole of 1984".

Van Niekerk responded four days later. He was having difficulty acquiring further arms for the

MNR, and so ordered that "Renamo must continue to squeeze Machel, but in such a way as to use as little war material as possible. Avoid combat with the FAM (Mozambican Armed Forces), giving more attention to destroying the economy, infrastructures and controlling the population.

"Renamo has to survive longer until Machel reaches an agreement with Renamo, but never let Frelimo see that we have no more material."

Van Niekerk said he was "doing a study with my chiefs", and would let Dhlakama know how the problem had been resolved. By mid-July it appeared a solution had been found.

Van Niekerk sent a message to Dhlakama on July 20 reading: "The MNR secretary-general and two of our men with 26 tons of baggage will jump from 18/8/84 onwards at the DZ east of Inhaminga" (DZ is short for dropping zone, and Inhaminga is in the central province of Sofala). "Baggage" is clearly a

euphemism for military equipment.

● South African Deputy Minister of Information, Louis Nel, visited MNR Casa Banana on at least two occasions this year before the base was stormed by Mozambican and Zimbabwean forces on August 28.

Nel made the visits when he was deputy minister of foreign affairs.

A message transcribed in the notebook from Van Niekerk to Dhlakama said that "this coming here would be without the knowledge of his chief Plok (sic) Botha" the South African foreign minister.

Dhlakama replied that Nel could visit Casa Banana on June 7, and presented a shopping list of goods that Nel should take with him.

On June 5, Van Niekerk was in Casa Banana again. He told Dhlakama "Renamo must never guarantee to Louis Nel that he can come here alone whenever he likes. You must give him to understand that should he need to come here, it is always necessary for the military to come here first".

Van Niekerk explained that his main concern was to ensure the continued influence of the South African military, over Louis Nel. "For us South African military, Louis Nel is the most honest of the South African politicians," he said. — Ziana-AIM.