

Chissano gets Tanzanian backing

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South Africa's direct and indirect destabilisation of Mozambique is a threat to Tanzania's security, President Mwinyi said on 12 December. Speaking at an official banquet marking the start of a three-day visit to Tanzania by President Chissano, Mwinyi said that Tanzania, like Zimbabwe, would now be centring its defence strategy on Mozambique.

In the wake of former president Machel's death in October and the subsequent increase in attacks by the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), in north-central Mozambique, Tanzania sent troops into the country to support government forces. Chissano's visit to Dar es Salaam — his first trip outside Mozambique since assuming the presidency — is viewed as aimed at co-ordinating and extending this involvement.

His visit coincided with reports from Harare of a further escalation in fighting in recent weeks in Tete and Zambezia provinces adjacent to Malawi. Informed Zimbabwean sources say MNR leader Alfonso Dhlakama has moved into the recently captured town of Milanje to take command of operations, reinforced by an expeditionary force of up to 2,000 whites, mostly believed to be South African and Portuguese mercenaries.

Allegations of Malawi government support for the MNR have also resurfaced, despite continuing denials from Lilongwe. Harare-based African diplomats visiting southern Malawi recently have reported seeing South African-marked aircraft flying into Milanje on supply missions. There have also been reports from Mozambican refugees, according to the Harare sources, of Malawi army units fighting alongside MNR troops inside Mozambique.

Dhlakama confirmed in an interview with the Lisbon daily *O Seculo* on 17 December that the MNR's aim is now to close the Beira corridor. MNR troops, he said, were making daily sabotage raids on the railway line, which is crucial to front-line states' plans to reduce South Africa's transport stranglehold. Although indications are that the attacks have so far done little more than cause temporary delays, Dhlakama threatened that "however many foreign troops are sent there (it) will be prevented from working."

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