

MNR Military Leader Killed

M10 News Rev. (138) 7/10/88

One of the top military leaders of South Africa's MNR bandits died on 11 September in a clash with the Mozambican armed forces, military sources told AIM on 12 September. The bandit, Calisto Meque, who called himself a 'general', died while leading a MNR group that was trying to reoccupy the town of Gile in the central province of Zambezia.

Meque was the MNR's top leader in Zambezia and played a major role in the bandits' massive invasion of the Zambezi valley from Malawian soil in late 1986. In the 1987 counter-offensive, carried out by Mozambican and Tanzanian forces, Meque managed to escape. In June 1988, when Mozambican forces re-occupied the district of Milange, on the Malawian border, Meque again made a successful escape. He managed to slip through the forces besieging his base at Mulumbo, just outside Milange Town, and according to local residents, he took refuge inside Malawi.

The military sources say that Meque and 29 other bandits died on their second attempt in the same day to retake Gile. The Mozambican army occupied Gile on 11 July, after the town had been in bandit hands for almost two years. After the clash, local people recognised Meque's corpse among the dead.

Meque is one of the few bandit chiefs who became known in the West: he gave several interviews to Western journalists who crossed illegally into Zambezia in 1986 and 1987. He is the second top MNR leader killed in battle this year. The first, known as 'General Gomes', died in April when Mozambican and Zimbabwean troops overran his base in Mabalane, less than 50 kilometres from the South African border, in the southern province of Gaza.