

Expert identifies AK rifle ^H₂₆¹⁰₈₈ allegedly used for murder

THE weapon the State says belongs to the alleged MNR bandit now before the High Court was used in two cases of murder and one of armed robbery, a forensic ballistics expert told the court yesterday.

Chief Inspector Donald Haley of the Forensic Firearms Identification Office of the Zimbabwe Republic Police was the 39th and last State witness in the trial of John Mataveya, a Mozambican national facing two counts of murder, one of attempted murder, three of armed robbery and one of possession of arms of war.

He has pleaded not guilty to the charges before Mr Justice Ebrahim sitting with assessors Mr Patrick Musengezi and Mr Misheck Nyandoro.

Eight expended cartridge cases picked by police at Ratelshoek Tea Estate in Chipinge where Elias Mahemu and Edward Maphosa were shot dead in April last year compared positively with the cartridge cases of test bullets fired from the weapon, an

Court Reporter

AK 47 rifle, now before the court.

Another expended cartridge case picked up from where Musabaeka bus was robbed in May last year in the same area was also fired from the same weapon, Mr Haley said. He presented micrographic photographs showing the similarities.

Extractor claw marks and ejector marks, which are marks made on the cartridge case as it is pushed out of the gun chamber after the bullet has been fired, are distinct to each particular weapon, the forensic ballistics expert said. When he tested the weapon he found, in each case, more than eight points of similarity between the test cartridge cases and the crime cartridge cases.

Bullet heads found from the crime scenes also

showed that they were fired from an AK 47 rifle or an AKM rifle. However, they were too damaged to trace them to the particular weapon, Mr Haley said.

Mataveya is alleged to have led police to the place where the crime gun was recovered. However, he insists that the gun belonged to one Simon who is still at large. In his warned and cautioned statements which were confirmed by a Chipinge magistrate, Mataveya allegedly admitted to stealing the gun from Frelimo soldiers in Mozambique and to the armed robberies.

The State led by Mr Ray Goba of the Attorney-General's Office, closed its case yesterday. It brought in 39 witnesses and 36 exhibits.

Mr Bruno Mugabe of Mugabe, Mutezo and Partners, representing Mataveya, will open the defence case tomorrow.