

MNR rebel base on S.African border falls

SCAN 1/6/90

MAPUTO/ What has been described as one of the principal bases of the Mozambique National Resistance rebels in the south of the country has been taken by government troops, according to the news agency AIM.

Ngungwe is 180km northwest of Maputo, but less than one and a half kilometres from South Africa.

Ngungwe's main function for the MNR was a reception point for weaponry coming in from South Africa, which was then distributed to rebel groups operating throughout the southern three provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane.

The rebels had built a dirt road linking the base to South Africa, presumably in order to facilitate the transport of war material from the other side of the border.

The news of the base and its purpose appears to buttress reports of continuing support for the rebels coming from South Africa, despite Pretoria's statements denying official involvement.

The Mozambique government says it believes the pledges from Pretoria.

A senior Mozambican government official last week told visiting Western academics (including *SouthScan*) in Maputo that material support for the rebels had decreased a great deal, and that Mozambique continued to believe in the sincerity of the South African government on the issue.

The base fell into the hands of the Mozambican armed forces on May 14, after bombardment by the air force and by heavy artillery.

Five counter-attacks have been launched by the rebels, and South Africa's minister of defence, Magnus Malan, claimed recently that the Mozambican airforce had violated the South African border.