

B. AFRICA

S African Foreign Minister on Commitment to Incomati Accord

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South Africa remained unequivocally committed to the letter and spirit of the Incomati accord with Mozambique, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Pik Botha, said today. Speaking during the no confidence debate, he denied claims that South Africa had broken the accord and said any involvement by Pretoria with Renamo [Mozambique National Resistance Movement] had been at the request of the Frelimo government in an effort to arrange a ceasefire in Mozambique. After protracted negotiations, Renamo and Frelimo had been on the point of signing a South African-brokered agreement when the talks were suddenly broken off on the instructions of MNR HQ in Lisbon, Mr Botha disclosed.

Mr Botha said South Africa had been asked by President Samora Machel during the negotiation of the Incomati accord to arrange talks with Renamo commanders in the Mozambican bush. The President had been prepared to offer a general amnesty to MNR guerrillas if they agreed to a ceasefire, with South Africa acting as guarantor. Mr Botha said he had asked the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, for help in contacting Renamo commanders and he had dispatched men to Mozambique.

"SADF officers, in peril of their lives, flew in low over the bush to talk to the Renamo commanders and brought them back to Pretoria against their own wishes. For weeks, messages went backwards and forwards between Pretoria and Maputo and General Malan sent dentists and other personnel to Mozambique to help the people [agency ellipses] to show them the friendship of the West is better than that of the Soviet Union [agency ellipses] to help them get out of Moscow's claws".

Mr Botha said that in October 1984, he and General Malan had succeeded in getting Frelimo and Renamo delegations to visit Pretoria for a week at the same time. "General Malan and I worked day and night [agency ellipses] holding talks with one delegation during the day and then having refreshments late into the night with the other [agency ellipses] and in the end we got the (ceasefire) document prepared," the Minister said. The State President, Mr P.W. Botha, had read the document and all was ready for the signing when Renamo broke off talks after a message from its HQ in Lisbon. "For the first time, South Africa would have played the role we were meant to play in southern Africa - that of mediator. We could have acted as a stabilising factor in the area," Mr Botha said.

After Renamo broke off negotiations, he had tried to visit Portugal but had been informed it "would not be opportune" for the MNR to receive him there.

At that time, the diary of Mr Joachim Vaz, Secretary of the Renamo chief, Mr Alfonso Dhlakama, was made public and serious allegations of South African aid to the resistance movement were made. Mr Botha said he had met Mr Vaz during talks with Mr Dhlakama and Mr Vaz "was always writing".

Entries in the diary of South African Air Force flights to Mozambique and of meetings with Renamo in Pretoria were true, Mr Botha said. However, he denied other claims by Mr Vaz that Mr Botha and senior defence force officers had promised to help Renamo oust the Frelimo government and of large-scale South African arms supplies to the MNR.

After the allegations were brought to his attention, Mr Botha said, he had confronted General Malan and the former chief of the SADF, General Constand Viljoen, who denied the charges. A committee of inquiry had also been appointed to investigate all the claims in the diary and most had been found to be without substance. "Sometimes paraffin was transported to Renamo to power the radio they used to keep contact with us, and the SADF officers who went over carried AK47s for their personal protection," Mr Botha said. "But as General (Bob) Rogers (the former Chief of the SAAF) [South African Air Force] said to me, if you can get onto a Dakota one tenth of the equipment that diary alleges, then I'd like to see that Dakota".

The Minister said the SADF was "a perfect example" of a body serving the best interests of South Africa. The SADF had been at the forefront of reform in South Africa and had performed valuable "psychological work" to make the task of the Department of Foreign Affairs easier. Mr Botha said both South Africa and Mozambique were still bound to the Incomati accord. "This government is fulfilling the terms of the accord in letter and in spirit. We are unequivocally bound to the accord". He asked opposition members to bring to his attention any evidence of the breaking of the accord by South African soldiers and gave the assurance that the matter would be firmly dealt with.

Mr Botha also revealed complaints that South Africa had made to Maputo of alleged Mozambican contraventions of the accord. He said that, in one incident, 10 ANC members had been arrested in Swaziland and had told a court there they had been armed and equipped in Maputo and helped across the border by Mozambique. Another complaint was made when a number of suspected terrorists were arrested in the eastern Transvaal and told a similar story, the Minister said.

Listing earlier claims by Mozambique of alleged South African contravention of the Incomati accord, Mr Botha said these included unfounded charges that arms were transported to Renamo via a vast tunnel dug under the border and that tracks were found by Frelimo troops leading across the border to South Africa.

A Durban fishing vessel that drifted into Mozambican waters after its engines had failed was seized in Maputo and its "innocent" crew interrogated before being released.

Mr Botha also said that, after complaints of uncharted flights from South Africa to Mozambican territory, the SADF had used a radar to monitor all flights to the area. Over a 14 day period, 12 uncharted flights were made, most of which were bound from Harare to Swaziland, Maputo or Inhaca island off Mozambique. One contained a group of Zimbabwean soccer players - "yet it was always our fault," Mr Botha said. Radar experts had discounted another claim of South African helicopters flying into Mozambican air space.

Mr Botha also said that South Africa had, under the accord, provided "large amounts of money" to improve Mozambique's rail network and harbour facilities and had financed "one of the country's few profitable food production factories."

Explaining the background to the signing of the accord, he said that after the Pretoria bomb blast in 1983, he had told President Machel that South African security forces would destroy ANC bases in Mozambique "even if the whole world is against us and if the UN applies sanctions against us".