

Zimbabwe Foreign Minister on Cost of S Africa's "Destabilisation and Sabotage"

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Text of report:

Southern Africa's independent states had been faced with an annual bill of more than R2 billion [two billion rands] since 1980 incurred through Pretoria's acts of destabilisation and sabotage. This was said in a speech read on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Witness Mangwende, at a farewell luncheon for the outgoing Netherlands Ambassador, the news agency Ziana reports.

"Destabilisation, stabotage and economic blackmail by the Pretoria regime have cost the independent nations of southern Africa more than R3 [as received] billion each year since 1980 and have thus adversely affected our development and economic growth", he said. Mr Mangwende said Zimbabwe "foots an annual bill of more than R1.1 billion in extra transport costs" for shipping goods through South Africa.

This money could be saved for other projects by shipping goods through Mozambique, but attacks on that route have rendered it useless, he said.

The violence "has also put a severe strain on the sub-region's communications network, which we regard as a vital means of economic liberation", he said.

The Netherlands was the first country to work on the improvement of the Beira corridor to help Zimbabwe become less dependent on the South African economy and transport system, the outgoing Netherlands Ambassador, Mr Abraham Schneider, said. "Since 1981 my government has invested about R1.2 billion in the rehabilitation of the port of Beira", he said. The Netherlands have also contributed about R170 million in grant for humanitarian aid during the struggle and for development assistance after independence, he said.