August 23, 1988

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM

TO: MSN

FROM: Prexy Nesbitt
Consultant, Mozambique Government

RE: Urgent New Developments in Mozambique

1. Attached is a very critical memorandum from Alan Isaacman based on his recent trip to Mozambique.

2. Please give very careful attention to what Alan has shared. Our friends in Mozambique felt it very important that we be fully briefed and prepared in advance for critical meetings which will take place in the near future between President Chissano and Botha of South Africa.

3. It is of the utmost importance that we fully understand the situation in which Mozambique finds itself. It is also imperative that supporters and friends of Mozambique be prepared to interpret and explain that situation to others throughout the United States. What may take place in Mozambique can be a positive step forward for Mozambique and we must prepare ourselves to go on the offensive showing how diplomacy and negotiations are also weapons in the struggle to end apartheid's domination.

4. Please call Alan and/or Roberta if you have any further questions. I will share more information when I return September 20. Thank you. A Luta Continua.
CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert Washington, Co-Chair, MSN
Prexy Nesbitt, Consultant, MSN

FROM: Allen Isaacman, Co-Chair, MSN

August 22, 1988

As you know, I have just returned from Mozambique. During my trip I had extensive conversations with officials at the highest levels of government. The situation in Southern Africa is extremely fluid. The South African setback in Angola and Pretoria's apparent willingness to enter into negotiations over the independence of Namibia have far-reaching implications for the stability of the region in general and Mozambique in particular. In regards specifically to Mozambique, there are three likely scenarios. Let me emphasize that what follows is my assessment based on rather detailed conversations in Maputo.


Pretoria's claim that it no longer provides military and logistical support to the MNR is a propaganda smokescreen which lacks any credibility. Since 1985 there have been more than fifty documented cases of direct South African assistance (see attached document) and this is only the tip of the iceberg. Pretoria continues to train, arm, re-supply and coordinate major MNR attacks in Mozambique. In the past three months there have been at least three major air or coastal drops to re-supply the MNR after they had suffered substantial losses of arms in battles with Mozambican and Zimbabwean troops. In the same period at least two South African soldiers, accompanying the MNR, were killed. On July 28th, a black member of the South African Defense Forces was shot in Maputo province. While there are some indications that South Africa may be reducing the amount of overt military assistance, there is also evidence that Pretoria has developed a less visible network by which to continue to transmit arms and strategic information to the MNR. South Africa also continues to recruit and train terrorists who are based just across the Mozambican border. In light of the relatively low cost of maintaining this war in which "blacks kill blacks," and of the opportunity to destroy billions of dollars in economic and social infrastructure, it may be in Pretoria's interest to pursue this current policy.

2. South Africa May Escalate the Conflict

Pretoria suffered a major military setback in Angola which is likely to produce a right-wing backlash in local South African elections scheduled...
for October. Negotiations over the independence of Namibia will, no doubt, reinforce this tendency. One way for P. W. Botha to appease the far-right, which is closely connected to the state security apparatus, would be to lash out at the surrounding African nations. Mozambique is the obvious choice. Given Mozambique's inability to patrol its long coastline, protect its airspace or guard its vast frontiers, it would be relatively easy for Pretoria to expand its involvement. This could take the form of new and more sophisticated weapons to the MNR (including SAM missiles), a major invasion of MNR forces stationed in South Africa into southern Mozambique, and greater involvement of South African troops, particularly black forces who have played an increasingly important role in Namibia and Angola. Such a policy, however, would incur substantial opposition from Western nations who have increasingly come to view the struggle in Southern Africa as a battle against apartheid and apartheid-sponsored terrorism and not primarily as part of the "Cold War."

3. Increased and Highly Visible Negotiations Between Mozambique and South Africa

Since the end of last year, the pace of negotiations between Mozambique and South Africa has increased primarily around the issue of Cahorra Bassa Dam and the reimplementation of the Nkomati agreement. Each side has something to gain if these negotiations were to prove successful. Therefore, this scenario should be treated quite seriously.

For Pretoria the advantages are obvious. In light of the "peace overtures" in Angola and Namibia, a highly visible meeting between Botha and President Chissano would reinforce South Africa's "new-found policy" of flexibility and its claim that it would like to live in peace with its neighbors. There are also compelling economic reasons which the South African business community is pushing. Mozambique is not only an important market for manufactured goods, but a major source for cheap energy. Consider the fact that the Cahorra Bassa Dam has the potential to provide South Africa with 1,400 megawatts of electricity which is critical for South Africa's future economic development. If South Africa cannot get the electricity from Cahorra Bassa, whose power lines have been destroyed by the MNR, Pretoria will have to invest more than $1 billion to build a new thermo-nuclear plant. Repairing the powerlines would, on the other hand, cost only about $30 million. As a result, South Africa has been pressing for a new agreement on Cahorra Bassa since the end of last year.

In the aftermath of Nkomati, Mozambique's leaders have good reason to be skeptical about entering into highly visible negotiations with Pretoria. And they are. Nevertheless, under certain conditions they probably would agree to such negotiations which the Western countries have been urging them to enter. Before any meeting were to take place, South Africa would have to meet a number of conditions which would probably include the following: 1) that South Africa would dramatically reduce its military and logistic support to the MNR; 2) that South Africa would take whatever means necessary to prevent the MNR terrorists from attacking the reconstructed powerlines which South Africa would underwrite; 3) Pretoria would guarantee that the MNR terrorists would not attack critical transpor-
tation and communications lines which are the key to Mozambique's short-term recovery; and 4) South Africa must agree not to reduce the number of Mozambicans working in the South African mines from the current level of 60,000. These workers are a major source of hard currency. In the past, Pretoria has threatened to reduce their number to 30,000, thereby squeezing Mozambique's battered economy.

Any possible meeting between President Chissano and P. W. Botha necessarily would invite comparison with the Nkomati negotiations. However, there would be a number of fundamental differences which need to be stressed. Unlike the Nkomati accord, prospects for these negotiations already have the support of Front-Line nations who see such negotiations as well as those between Angola and Pretoria as diplomatic weapons against the apartheid regime. Were such negotiations to take place, they would be appreciably different in style and tone from Nkomati. Whereas the South Africans have wanted any encounter between the heads of state to be either in Pretoria or Maputo to maximize publicity, the Mozambicans are likely to insist that it take place in the remote town of Songo, home of Cahorra Bassa. Moreover, the Mozambican government would probably demand that leaders of the South African military be present since they control the MNR. Finally, Mozambican officials emphasize that if such a meeting did take place, it would not be with all the pomp and circumstance of Nkomati and "that Botha will not be received as a friend." Moreover, they insist that just as Chissano has used the visits of Bishop Tuto, Alan Boesak and other opponents of the apartheid regime to criticize South Africa, so he would not hesitate to publicly raise similar issues in Botha's presence.

Let me conclude by re-emphasizing that this report represents my personal assessment of how events are likely to unfold. Should the last scenario take place, it would reflect Mozambique's belief that it must continually demonstrate to the world community that it is committed to regional peace and that it has been held hostage by a terrorist state. Given its vulnerable military and economic position, Western-backed negotiations may be a vital part of Mozambique's struggle for survival.

AI:sh
Encl.