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LETTER DATED 20 MARCH 1981 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF
THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Upon instruction from my Government I have the honour to bring to Your Excellency's attention the text of the following message which the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and Information today dispatched to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Mozambique concerning the incident which occurred near Punta do Ouro in the People's Republic of Mozambique on 17 March 1981:

"The Department of Foreign Affairs and Information of the Republic of South Africa presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Mozambique and has the honour to state that, due to a navigational and map-reading error, a small South African border unit accidentally strayed across an unmarked portion of the South African border with Mozambique at Punto de Ouro at 1000 hours on 17 March. The Ministry is no doubt aware that the international border in this area is demarcated by way of beacons which are located considerable distances - up to 8,000 metres - from each other. The possibility that either party might unwittingly stray across the border cannot, in practice, be completely avoided. In fact, as the Ministry knows, Mozambican soldiers have, in the past, crossed into South African territory.

"Owing to the vagueness of the border at this point, a member of the unit, Corporal P. J. Viljoen, proceeded to a higher vantage point to establish his unit's precise position. At that stage, two armed Mozambican border guards appeared from the west along the beach. Two members of the South African unit approached them, with the purpose of establishing from them the location of the border to avoid the unit's crossing into Mozambican territory. Owing to a language barrier, they failed to make themselves understood. While they were still trying to communicate with the Mozambicans several other guards appeared. At that stage, the leader of the unit summoned Corporal Viljoen back. As Corporal Viljoen descended from his vantage point, the Mozambican border guards opened fire and shot him. Thereupon the South African unit returned fire while withdrawing south along the beach.

"In the past, when Mozambicans have crossed the border into South Africa, the South African authorities have avoided such drastic action. They must, therefore, strongly protest against the attack on Corporal Viljoen, which, according to reports, resulted in his death.

"If these reports are correct, the South African authorities would be grateful to learn what arrangements can be made to return Corporal Viljoen's body.

"The Department of Foreign Affairs and Information of the Republic of South Africa avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Mozambique the assurance of its highest consideration".

I should appreciate it if this letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) D. W. STEWARD
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
