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LETTER DATED 25 AUGUST 1978 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF  
THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

At 01h15 on 23 August 1978 an attack was launched from Zambia on the towns of Katima Mulilo (Caprivi) and Ngwezi and on the South African military base at Katima Mulilo and the South African military post at Wenela. One hundred and twenty-two-mm rockets and mortars based at the town of Sesheke in Zambia and on the west bank of the Zambezi River were fired at the South African installations, causing the death of 10 members of the South African Security Forces, with eight injured. The fire was returned.

The South African Government is satisfied, on the basis of confirmed information, that the Zambian military authorities, both at Sesheke and in Lusaka, were fully aware of the nature, timing and extent of the attack. Furthermore, the Zambian military authorities were fully informed of the participation of the Zambian unit at Sesheke in the attack when they fired mortars on Katima Mulilo between 02h00 and 04h00 on 23 August 1978 and directed anti-aircraft fire at a South African helicopter at 14h15 on 23 August 1978.

In addition, the following circumstances lead clearly to the conclusion that the Zambian military and police authorities were aware of the planning and the execution of the unprovoked bombardment, by SWAPO terrorists and Zambian soldiers, of the above locations, which include civilian settlements:

(a) More than 600 SWAPO terrorists were situated in and around the small village of Sesheke in Zambia at the time of the attack. Their presence on Zambian soil and their violent intent could not have been unknown to the Zambian military authorities. (A unit of the Zambian Defence Force is based at Sesheke.)

(b) Several large (five-ton) trucks were used by SWAPO terrorists to transport personnel and equipment to the positions from which the firing took place. These massive movements along roads and across the Zambezi River by pontoons (controlled by Zambian police) could not have taken place without the knowledge and consent of the Zambian military and police authorities.

(c) Likewise, the large rocket launchers from which the 122-mm rockets were fired could not have been moved into position without Zambian knowledge and approval. Neither could the aggressive purpose of this equipment have escaped the Zambian military and police authorities. (This equipment must have been

transported over Zambian territory over long distances to the sites at which it was deployed.)

(d) Zambian reports on 24 August 1978 of civilian casualties at Sesheke provide proof that Lusaka was informed of developments there. (Sesheke was one of the locations from which the bombardment was launched on Katima Mulilo, and it was unavoidable that civilians would be hit in the return of fire.)

(e) SWAPO terrorists were captured by the South African Security Forces in follow-up action, and they have confirmed that the Zambian military authorities knew beforehand of the attack on Katima Mulilo.

The South African Government wishes to express the strongest possible objection to this action, which clearly took place with the knowledge and concurrence of the Zambian military and police authorities. Not only does it threaten the security of the people of South West Africa, but it endangers peace in the entire southern African area and places in serious jeopardy efforts to find a peaceful solution in South West Africa.

In conclusion, I also wish to inform Your Excellency of the protest which my Government registered with the Zambian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 17 August 1978. That protest concerned an attack on 13 August 1978 in which South African Security Forces were fired on from across the Zambian border at 17 degrees 30 S, 24 degrees 14 E (approximately 2 km north-east of Wenela). Six mortar bombs and automatic rifles were used in the attack. In that communication to the Zambian authorities, the South African Government expressed its earnest hope that appropriate action would be taken to prevent any recurrence.

I should be grateful if this letter were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) J. Adriaan EKSTEEN  
Chargé d'Affaires