

UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY
COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

S/12580
1 March 1978

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

NOTE VERBALE DATED 1 MARCH 1978 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to bring to his urgent attention the information contained in the document annexed to this letter which relates to the latest attack perpetrated against the Republic of Botswana by the armed forces of the illegal régime in Southern Rhodesia resulting in losses of life and property.

This attack, like several others before it, was launched without the slightest provocation from the Botswana side, and was perpetrated inside Botswana, thus once again flagrantly violating the territorial integrity of the Republic of Botswana.

Indeed, by launching these attacks the Ian Smith régime is not only challenging the international community, but is also arrogantly demonstrating its refusal to accept a negotiated solution of the Rhodesian problem. Furthermore, by continually violating the territory of a sovereign State, Ian Smith intends to internationalize the conflict between his illegal régime and the people of Zimbabwe.

The international community cannot be indifferent to this situation. Rather, it should rally behind Botswana in her hour of greatest need in the spirit of Security Council resolutions 403 (1977) and 406 (1977) which, inter alia, appeal to the international community to come to Botswana's assistance in the face of Rhodesian aggression.

The Government of the Republic of Botswana would be grateful if this communication were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Annex

Statement made by the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana,
Dr. Q. K. J. Masire, to the National Assembly on 28 February 1978
relating to the attacks by the armed forces of the illegal régime
in Southern Rhodesia against the Republic of Botswana

It is with deep sorrow that I have to inform this Honourable House of the death of 15 of our young soldiers near Lesoma, which is about 13 kilometres from Kazungula, yesterday evening. Eight others were injured, of whom three are in a critical condition, and seven are still missing. Two civilians were also killed.

Thirty soldiers were sent in three vehicles from Kazungula to investigate a report that a large number of Rhodesian soldiers, predominantly white, had been seen in the area. The report had been made by two young men who accompanied them. Our soldiers did not come across any Rhodesian soldiers where they were reported to be. On their return to Kazungula along the main Nata/Kazungula Road about one kilometre from the Botswana/Rhodesia border, they were ambushed by members of Rhodesian security forces while travelling in their vehicles. The Rhodesian statement that our soldiers were fighting on the side of the Zimbabwe freedom fighters in the area is a blatant lie. No freedom fighters were seen by the Botswana Defence Force. As a result of the attack the three vehicles were destroyed by fire. Some of the survivors managed to return on foot to Kazungula. Reinforcements were sent to recover the remaining wounded and the dead.

Subsequent reports say that a large number of Rhodesian troops have been moved to the Rhodesian side of the border at Kazungula today and the situation is extremely tense.

Mr. Speaker, all members of the Botswana Defence Force have been issued with explicit orders that they are not to enter Rhodesia, that they are not to provoke any incidents with the Rhodesian security forces and that they are to shoot only in self-defence. These orders have been meticulously adhered to. We have also maintained our well-known policy of not permitting our country to be used as a springboard for attacks against our neighbours. I am, therefore, at a complete loss to understand the reasons for this brutal and unprovoked attack. This can only be the act of an insane régime which is purporting to negotiate a peaceful settlement in Salisbury while its agents are massacring nationals of neighbouring countries in those countries.

Mr. Speaker, we have adhered to our policies in spite of the frequent and continued violations of our sovereignty by the illegal régime. Not even our harshest critics can accuse us of lack of forbearance. However, the time has come for us to reconsider our policies and our entire approach to the Rhodesian problem and we will do so without delay. As an immediate measure, we have decided to close the border post on our border with Rhodesia at Kazungula.