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PRETCRIA NEWS

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Russian navy menace to SA growing

TREFWOORDE

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Military Correspondent

THE Soviet Navy has definite plans for extending its activities in southern African coastal waters, says the new Chief of the Navy.

As part of this plan it had

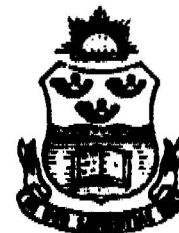
moved an 8 000-ton dry dock into Luanda harbour, matching one in Maputo, acting Vice-Admiral Dries Putter said today.

These were clearly part of a "meaningful presence" in the Indian Ocean and south Atlantic, he said.

This could be compared to the situation in the Red Sea before the Ethiopian revolution.

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"In so doing they occupied the Red Sea area, denied anybody else a meaningful naval presence in the area and projected an image in their favour.

"This tipped the balance of power in their favour in the land conflict as well.

"If the situation in southern Africa warrants it in the future, they may be able to do so in these areas as well," said acting Vice-Admiral Putter.

Western navies were also not big enough to play the role they played in the past -- to protect the routes their trade ships sailed.

"The south Atlantic vacuum is an example of a situation in which people take an active interest in vital areas, but do not have the resources to cover them properly.

Budgets cut

Developments over the past two decades, with the South African Navy changing its strategy to the protection of South Africa mean it no longer plays a meaningful role in the south Atlantic where the gap is widening.

"If we lose our Shackleton reconnaissance aircraft and cannot replace them, we will not be able to extend our 'hand across the ocean' role at all," he said.

The cuts in the Defence budget, resulted in a cut in the navy's budget. There have also been cuts in the budgets of the other arms of the Defence Force and each have been proportional he said.

The cut in the navy's budget would only be of concern if it extended for a number of years and this was dependent on length of the recession.

"If the financial situation continues for long the navy could find itself in difficulties, in trying to rearrange its strategy to meet the long term requirements of the force," said acting Vice-Admiral Putter.

Explosives found

JOHANNESBURG. — A quantity of explosives had been found at a railway bridge spanning the Orange River at Upington, a spokesman for the Railway Police at the town confirmed.

The spokesman said the explosives had been removed without causing any damage, and that it had presumably been a sabotage attempt.

No one has yet been arrested in connection with the incident. — Sapa.

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