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:EC-SAFRICA-TALKS

South African government, black radicals in talks

GABORONE, March 2, Reuter - Talks between the South African government and one of its most implacable foes, the radical Pan Africanist Congress, opened in Botswana a day late on Tuesday after the arrival of black guerrilla commanders from Zimbabwe.

South Africa's Law and Order Minister Hennis Kriel told reporters he hoped the talks would focus on the PAC's refusal to repudiate armed attacks by its armed wing, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA).

"The first item on the agenda is APLA's armed activities. This has to be dealt with before we can move to other items on the agenda," he said.

Three APLA guerrilla chiefs arrived in the Botswana capital surrounded by bodyguards late on Monday night after confusion over flight arrangements delayed their departure from Harare and the start of the day-long talks.

The PAC has said it would refuse to agree to government demands that the APLA, blamed for the murders of black policemen and several white South Africans last year, should "go on holiday" to improve the climate for discussions.

Pretoria, which suspended talks with the PAC following the killings of whites at a country club and restaurant, said the Gaborone talks were a bid to get rid of obstacles to planned multi-party talks leading to South Africa's first non-racial elections.

The discussions are one of a flurry of bilateral meetings to prepare for Friday and Saturday's first multi-party planning meeting since negotiations collapsed last May.

The nine-man government team is headed by Kriel and the 10-member PAC-APLA delegation by PAC executive member Gora Ibrahim and the APLA's Romeo Daniels.

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