Neutralising Renamo

IMPROVING RELATIONS between South Africa and Mozambique, are part of Maputo's latest **strategy** to **neutralise** rebels of the Renamo movement.

The strategy, instigated by president **Joaquim Chissano**, seeks a commitment from South Africa effectively to halt all support for the rebels.

In exchange Maputo offers to eradicate **Soviet influences, African National Congress** (ANC) operations in Mozambique, and alter the country's marxist **political system.**

Maputo is currently involved in a major campaign to undermine the rebels, **while trying also** to win over Renamo officials and Mozambican dissidents living abroad.

1. SOUTH AFRICA - President Chissano will meet his South African counterpart **Pieter Botha** shortly, following a "very warm" reply by Botha to an end of April note from Chissano.

The **Mixed Security Commission**, created under the 1984 Nkomati peace accord between the two countries, and practically moribund since 1985, has been resuscitated.

The commission is charged with verifying and investigating border violations and acts of interference by the security forces of either country in the other.

The reactivation of the commission by the Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces of both countries, Generals **Tobias Dai** and **Liebenberg**, was also the moment chosen to discuss South African participation in the idea of a multinational private force to protect the **Cahora Bassa** powerline route to the South African province of Transvaal.

Mozambique has indicated its interest in intensifying economic relations with South Africa. **Gavin Relly**, managing director of the giant **Anglo American** Corporation has visited Mozambique to discuss investments in mining projects.

The normalisation of bi-lateral relations (predicted by IA in March) has resulted in a toning down of Mozambican press hostility towards South Africa. The same can be said of the tones used in public statements.

Two domestic factors are responsible for this change— the **increasing influence** of the ruling Frelimo party's moderate wing (and the corresponding loss of standing by orthodox hardliners), and the unceasing **Western** pressures on Maputo to cement good neighbourliness with South Africa so as to bind Pretoria to the peace process.

There is no doubt whatever that South Africa, through its military organisation, has never ceased to be a **vital** source of supply to Renamo.

In a recent conversation in Lisbon with his Portuguese counterpart, South African army chief **Gen Jannie Geldenhuys** was evasive when tackled on the matter.

The United States has played a major role in pressuring Maputo to reach a genuine understanding with South Africa.

Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for African Affairs, **Charles Freeman** in Maputo recently praised Chissano for pursuing his current policy "because only South Africa can play a **decisive role** in overcoming the Mozambican conflict."

2. POLITICAL OPENING - There are growing signs that South Africa is finally beginning to believe that Mozambique is **"being honest"** about government policy changes, both those already made and those proposed.

The South African military hierarchy has always considered the changes a **bluff**, fuelling the duplicitous South African approach of talking to Maputo while backing Renamo.

The changed South African attitude is due both to current circumstances and Western pressures.

The U.S. has repeatedly stressed to Pretoria, it believes an end to the war in Mozambique would create "ideal conditions" for the withering of current communist influence in the country.

Privately South African officials have commented favourably on changes made in Maputo and the disappearance of certain figures they considered "undesirables".

Pretoria is watching with interest plans to remove **ideologically-charged** terminology from the Mozambiqcan constitution and attenuate the **monolithic** nature of the ruling Frelimo party.

3. RENAMO - Coupled to a policy of improving relations with Pretoria and thus persuading the South Africans to end their support for Renamo, is a secret service offensive designed to undermine the rebel organisation.

The Mozambican secret police **SNASP** is trying to foment a **rebellion** against Renamo leader **Afonso Dhlakama**, and is enjoying some success in Zambezia province where a breakaway group, known as UNAMO led by **Gimo M'Piri** has claimed a number of recent actions. **UNAMO** through Lisbon representatives, denies it is controlled by the SNASP.

Maputo hopes that by destablising Renamo in Zambezia it will be able to drive a wedge between rebel strongholds in the north and south of the country.

Central **Zambézia** province is the richest in the country and virtually the only one with any ethnic unity.

SNASP has also been active in trying to win over Renamo **cadres** based in countries like Portugal and West Germany as well as other non-Renamo figures opposed to Frelimo.

SNASP's current target is the Bonn-based Renamo Secretary for Foreign Affairs, **Artur Janeiro da Fonseca.**

Mozambique has successfully exploited recent U.S.- authored reports on alleged Renamo involvement in widespread atrocities against civilians.

The aim was to create an image of the rebels as being a **merciless terrorist band** - despite attributing some questionable charges to them.

In truth the campaign has had some success with local populations lately fighting shy of support for the rebels.

The recruiting difficulties thus felt by Renamo have prompted the rebels to implement a policy of **kidnapping** candidates for their ranks.