

Mozambique: Plausible deniability

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The United States government appears to be sponsoring not one but two covert operations in support of the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO or MNR). The allegation is denied by US officials.

To use the jargon of the trade, the operations have 'plausible deniability'. They make maximum use of personnel and funds outside official payrolls and budgets. The RENAMO operation is, in fact, a relic of the world-wide semi-private network put in place by the late Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director **William Casey**.

Senior US intelligence sources confirm that Casey encouraged his friends to build a network of support for RENAMO. The aim was not just to destabilise Mozambique, but also to divert some of the money raised to other parts of the world on the same basis that monies raised from the sale of arms to **Iran** went to fund the **Nicaraguan Contras**. Some money has gone into private pockets, the same sources say.

Of the two US networks operating in support of RENAMO today, one seems to be sponsored by elements in the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) – US military intelligence – working through civilian contacts. The second operation bears the CIA hallmark. Serving US officials say that the DIA and CIA have differing views on Mozambique. There are signs of mutual support between the rival camps in the USA and **South Africa**, US military men inclining towards their peers in South Africa, and civilian siding with civilian.

The logic behind Washington's limited support for RENAMO – which is not known to have included the provision of weapons – is that Mozambique was a **Soviet** client until 1982, when Moscow's grip began to weaken. The main reason for the change, it is argued, has been RENAMO. The Political Bureau of the ruling **Frelimo** party contains most of the same faces now as it did in the old days (AC Vol 29 No 6). The view of military hardliners in Washington is that it is therefore in the US interest to maintain RENAMO on a war footing to ensure there is no backsliding. This is the view of South African military intelligence chiefs, too.

The chief vehicle for DIA hard-liners is **Freedom Inc.**, an association founded in early 1988 and chair-

red by newsletter-editor **Larry Abraham** and unorthodox financier **Harry Schultz**. In a recent tour, Abraham shared a platform with Lieutenant-Colonel **Oliver North** before heading off to **Chile** and **South Africa**. Schultz has worked on security projects with General (retired) **Daniel Graham**, former director of the DIA, former adviser to Pretoria on psychological warfare, and deputy chairman of the US branch of the World Anti-Communist League (AC Vol 29 No 23).

The second and more subtle approach emanating from Washington starts from the same premise as the first, but holds that Mozambique is not currently in need of further destabilisation. The aim of this faction is to co-opt RENAMO, wresting it from the hands of South African military intelligence. This is also the view of the South African foreign ministry. Some elements in the CIA have had a special grudge against Maputo since the CIA station there was shut down as a result of pressure from **East German** intelligence in 1981.

The USA is having it all ways at once, since the State Department is still maintaining a staunch pro-Frelimo line. In 1984, the State Department persuaded **Britain's Margaret Thatcher** to talk **Ronald Reagan** out of supporting RENAMO.

The most visible instrument of the CIA-favoured co-option approach is **Thomas Schaaf jr.**, head of the Washington-based Mozambique Research Center which he set up in 1986. Until then the main RENAMO public relations office, set up and run by South African military intelligence, had been in Lisbon, **Portugal**. RENAMO press releases were written in the operations room of Five Reconnaissance Commando in Phalaborwa, Transvaal, run by **José Bento**. They were then sent to Lisbon for distribution on behalf of RENAMO. The operation, then as now, was commanded by Brigadier **Charles van Niekerk**, an old hand who had been attached to Portuguese forces in the defence of their colonies in Mozambique and **Angola** before helping establish the RENAMO in **Ian Smith's Rhodesia**.

Since 1986, Schaaf has set up a new set of RENAMO representatives responsible to Washington, not Phalaborwa. This has given rise to a deadly

struggle between Washington and Pretoria, which other organisations watch from the wings, occasionally playing a minor part – the West German secret service siding with Pretoria, the Mozambican *Serviço Nacional de Segurança Popular* (SNASP) being more sympathetic to the US approach. The ubiquitous British company Lonrho has maintained a discreet relationship with Schaaf through an intermediary whom Schaaf introduced to contacts as an authentic RENAMO liaison officer during 1986.

The most spectacular manifestation of the Washington-Pretoria struggle was the murder in Malawi in November 1987, at South African behest, of RENAMO spokesmen **João Ataíde** and **Mateus Lopes**. Both were close to Schaaf. According to senior officials of the Mozambican secret service and other sources, Lopes was also in the service of Maputo. He was in effect a joint CIA-SNASP agent.

Ataíde was shortly to set up as a RENAMO representative in France, thus extending Washington's empire. Only weeks before President Reagan had met President **Joaquim Chissano**, a heavy blow for hardliners in Pretoria. They had to strike back. This ongoing feud eventually led to the murder in early 1988 of former RENAMO secretary-general **Evo Fernandes**, South Africa's man.

Ataíde and Lopes had set up a channel for supplies, personnel and intelligence originating in Washington to reach RENAMO through Shire and other refugee camps in Malawi. Support also came through some US fundamentalist churches doing missionary work in Zimbabwe, Malawi and RENAMO-infested parts of Mozambique.

As a result of the covert propaganda offensive from Washington, South Africa's men have lost ground, as has the handful of US ideologues who see RENAMO as a genuine cause and not just a cynical means to an end. South African front-men such as **Artur da Fonseca** (based in West Germany), have lost ground to Schaaf protégés such as **Francisco Nota Moise**, the RENAMO information secretary, who lives in Canada. Before becoming a RENAMO militant, Nota worked with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) at its Nairobi monitoring-station and with the US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) in Swaziland.

Both strands of US covert action use techniques of deception perfected by William Casey, CIA director from 1980 to 1987. As the world now knows, he built a global network of surrogates to combat Soviet influence wherever it might lurk. Fund-raisers for the secret network included governments such as those of **Brunei** and **Saudi Arabia** and wealthy US citizens operating out of self-interest or idealism. Operations involved using private citizens with contacts to US intelligence, including retired generals, ex-Special Forces officers and former CIA men, foreign nationals and mercenaries. The World Anti-Communist League acted as a cover for official action on occasion.

It looks as though Gen. Graham and others are still acting as proxies or lightning-conductors today. Others collaborating with RENAMO are also using the old Casey techniques. Investment writer Harry Schultz, for example, is an experienced fund-raiser. Thomas Schaaf works from an office lent to him by

Howard Kull, a share-tipster and newsletter-editor of similar ilk, who is also a strong RENAMO supporter. Officials of the US Mint complained earlier this year that Ruff was selling commemorative medals which he wrongly claimed had official backing. In fact, the medals had been produced without authorisation in a private mint owned by Ruff, who later publicly said this had been done without his knowledge.

The truth about these activities lies in Casey's 1984 trip to South Africa. Casey is believed to have made a comprehensive deal for cooperation on the Middle East, Central America and Angola. It resulted in South African pilots flying cargo for the Nicaraguan Contras, South African-arms-for-Saudi-oil swaps, and South African cooperation in channelling US aid to **Jonas Savimbi**, which was then in violation of US law. Did Casey also do a deal with Pretoria on Mozambique?

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Just as US and South African military men tend to see eye to eye, so the South African foreign ministry appears to give discreet encouragement to Schaaf's efforts to undermine military men in Pretoria and Phalaborwa. Callers at the South African embassy in Washington who want to make contact with RENAMO are directed not towards Pretoria's men, but towards Schaaf and his colleague **Neil Blair**.

A man to watch is **Dr Stefan Halper**, who has been active on African affairs in **George Bush's** entourage. He could get a plum Africa job in the new administration, to the consternation of foreign policy staffers and others who not rate him highly. Sources suggest he is more likely to get a post at the National Security Council than at the State Department. Halper was until recently the Southern Africa programme director of a powerful think-tank, the United States' Global Strategy Council. Its president is the legendary former CIA operations chief **Dr Ray Cline**, who is also Halper's father-in-law. Co-chairmen include **Jeane Kirkpatrick** and **Donald Rumsfeld**.

Bush has called for negotiations between RENAMO and Frelimo. However, in 1986 Bush was instrumental as Vice-President in persuading Reagan to meet the late **Samora Machel**, against the advice of William Casey.

It seems most likely that the pro-RENAMO lobby will push hard to legitimise its subject in the new administration. Some supporters do so out of genuine belief, most out of a calculation that it is in the US interest to control such a body rather than to help destroy it. They still want that vital insurance against a revival of Soviet interest in Mozambique.

The hardliners close to the DIA and the South African Directorate of Military Intelligence are fighting back. In September RENAMO chief **Afonso Dhlakama** visited Bonn. There he met RENAMO representatives **Manual Franck** and **Ascencio Freitas** (from Portugal), **Artur da Fonseca** and **Horacio Leven** (West Germany), and **Luis and Simon Serapiao** (USA), and **Nota Moise**. Dhlakama persuaded all except **Nota Moise** to boycott Schaaf, who now appears isolated. There is still plenty of mileage left in RENAMO ●