

Pretoria's peace moves spell trouble for insurgents

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THE fate of two anti-Marxist guerrilla groups with links to South Africa is in the balance as a result of the moves to end the conflict between Pretoria and its Portuguese-speaking neighbours, Mozambique and Angola.

Spokesmen in Lisbon for the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita) bravely assert that, despite detente, little has changed and the struggle will continue.

But Portuguese officials in Lisbon say the reality is quite different.

Nowhere is this truer than in Mozambique, where the resistance movement (known by its Portuguese acronym of Renamo) is heavily dependent upon South Africa.

It was first set up by white-ruled Rhodesia's security forces before independence.

Frelimo claims it is now being used to destabilise Maputo's Marxist regime.

Renamo's actions have also affected other black-ruled neighbours like Malawi and Zimbabwe, whose road, rail and oil supply routes run through rebel areas in Mozambique.

Closer than ever

In Angola, it is claimed, South Africa has been largely sympathetic to Unita rebels led by Dr Jonas Savimbi, who has been operating through a broad piece of territory in eastern Angola.

The past few months of intense diplomatic activity, often with Lisbon as broker, have brought South Africa closer than ever before to a regional non-aggression pact with its ideologically opposite neighbours, and peace is in the air for the first time for nearly a decade.

For Renamo, peace could spell death.

Guerrilla activities are not

LISBON

KEN POTTINGER looks at the future of two guerrilla groups



Dr JONAS SAVIMBI
Less support is likely

expected to cease overnight, mainly because the rebels have stockpiled sufficient supplies to stretch through the next two years.

But vital support that permits the rebels to train and transport themselves could become more problematical if the trend towards detente and rapprochement is maintained.

Until now Renamo has nominally been controlled by colonial expatriates, and the current secretary-general is Senhor Evo Fernandes.

Today, despite strong Frelimo government counter-offensives, the Renamo guerrillas have extensive influence.

They are present in force in three key central provinces - Sofala, Manica and Zambezia - and claim to be active in nine of the country's 10 provinces. The Mozambican army says it has surrounded upwards of 3 000 well-armed rebels in the Gor-

ongoza area and is preparing for an onslaught to wipe them out.

Indeed, recent reports from Mozambique indicate that the winds of war may now be blowing in the government's favour.

And the amount of rebel counter-propaganda surfacing presently in Lisbon may be a measure of the pressures Renamo is facing.

On the Angolan front an end to a debilitating conflict seems to be in sight.

If the ceasefire between South Africa and Angola holds, conditions could be created for commitments by both sides to drop support for guerrilla groups.

South Africa will cut off backing for Unita and Luanda will end support for Swapo fighters in southern Angola seeking independence for South West Africa/Namibia.

In preparation for the day, Unita has been busily shoring up support through Zambia and Zaire.

Areas of influence

It was seen as significant in Lisbon that a recent group of foreign journalists which visited Unita zones travelled via road links to Zaire.

But a mere halt in South African sympathy to Unita will not be nearly as devastating as a similar move against Renamo.

Unita is a tribally based group with acknowledged areas of influence in the south and centre of the country.

Most Angola watchers in Lisbon believe that, unlike Mozambique, the Luanda government will sooner or later be forced to a political settlement with Unita involving either a sharing of power or, more radically, a division of the country.