

[Text] Mozambique's foreign minister, Major General Joaquim Chissano, is in London this week, trying to drum up private investment in his country's shattered economy. He has been talking to international conglomerates such as Lonrho, the sugar firm (Tate and Lyall), chemicals giant ICI (International Chemical Industries), and British Petroleum. But Gen Chissano's visit comes at a time when there seems to be no letup in the guerrilla war in Mozambique being waged by the anti-Frelimo MNR. Julian Marshall asked Joaquim Chissano what reassurances he has been able to offer potential investors:

[Begin recording][Chissano] We assured them that we are doing the best in order to create fair conditions and we will not oblige them to invest where there is danger. For instance, there are many projects which we decided in mutual accord to suspend until we deal with ... [changes thought] we create peaceful conditions in the area, and we think that we will do that. The situation is improving in the sense that our people are mobilized, we have international support both in the East and the West, and we have the cooperation of all our neighbors. So, we think that the conditions are good to eliminate the acts of terrorism at least to an extent which will allow us to move ahead in our development plans.

[Marshall] From a distance, one gets the impression of Mozambique at the moment of Maputo as the last remaining government stronghold and vast areas of the country where government troops just do not have access on account of rebel activity.

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[Chissano] Well, I don't come from Maputo myself, though I work in Maputo, but I have my home, where I go everytime, whenever I like.

[Marshall] How far away is that?

[Chissano] It's 250 km away from Maputo and, well, my relatives live there and we enjoy it there day and night, so this that you see from a distance is the wrong impression. Actually, the bandits are trying to create this impression in the world by staging spectacular acts of terrorism like burning buses in places near by Maputo, 5 km, 10 km, 20 km from Maputo, just to create this impression that they are very much strong and ...

[Marshall, interrupting] But they do seem to operate with some degree of impunity, do they not?

[Chissano] Some degree of impunity, yes, you say. Well, always this some degree of impunity. We would like that they are punished completely for it and this is what I'm saying. We are organizing ourselves to reach that end.

[Marshall] How is it that a group such as the MNR or Renamo that has no apparent ideology, no political goals other than the overthrow of the government, has managed to spread in the way that it has?

[Chissano] I even don't believe that today they believe that they can overthrow the government and that's why we call them bandits, because they are actually bandits who were recruited by non-Mozambicans, foreigners who had interests in Mozambique, who had interests in Mozambique in the colonial days, and who think that they can recover them and so they are financing and recruiting bandits, marginal people, unemployed people, and so forth, to stage these acts of terror.

[Marshall] But I mean, there is a difference getting external support like that and actually being able to operate inside the country, to move around as they do, to attack at random, to attack at will. How are they able to do that?

[Chissano] The same way as the terrorists in Britain are able to do it. They do it, don't they? In Britain and in Italy, you have terrorists in all these areas. They act exactly the same way.

[Marshall] There have been reports that the Zimbabwean Government is going to increase its military assistance to Mozambique. I mean, there are a number of Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique already guarding the pipeline and the road between Mutare and Beira. But could you just clarify how many troops more you are expecting from Zimbabwe and what their role will be when they arrive in Mozambique?

[Chissano] Well, I guess that I'm speaking to a radio which is going to be listened to by everybody, including the bandits. Do you want me to tell them how many soldiers are coming from Zimbabwe, and what they are going to do, and what they are going to attack? I can only tell you that they are going to fight the bandits. That's all that I can tell you.

[Marshall] Zimbabwean troops, that is?

[Chissano] Yes.

[Marshall] And this will be the first time that they will have had a purely offensive role in Mozambique?

[Chissano] Well, yes, in one sense, yes. This will be the first time.

[Marshall] You couldn't tell me how many, but can you tell me when, perhaps?

[Chissano] That's worst, if I tell you when. But they are coming.

[Marshall] Do you believe that this is a war that you can win ultimately?

[Chissano] We will win this year.

[Marshall] By 31 December?

[Chissano] By 31 December. [End recording]