

Radio Truth on Zimbabwe's Role in Mozambican Conflict

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Excerpts from commentary by anti-ZANU-PF radio:

Zimbabwe is being sucked deeper and deeper into the civil war in Mozambique. As more and more of our troops are committed to the defence of our economic lifelines, and in direct battle against Renamo [Mozambique National Resistance Movement], it is imperative that every Zimbabwean is fully informed about what is happening in that forlorn country. Our media and the ZANU-PF quarters have little to say about the real news from Mozambique and for very obvious reasons. They want to hide the truth from the people of this country in an effort to blunt adverse reaction and criticism of our Government policy on this vital issue.

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Radio Truth is determined to keep you properly informed, and we will relay on a regular basis the intelligence which comes to hand. . .

Let us take a look at the details of activities over a period of one month that have been fed into the station by our correspondent. South of the Sabie River, Renamo launched assaults on some 15 bases occupied by the armed forces of Mozambique [FPLM]. Among these was the FPLM provincial headquarters in the Gaza province and a battalion base south-east of Chokwe. Ten foreign convoys were attacked, one of them only kilometres from Maputo. Sabotage missions were carried out against the Maputo-Ressano Garcia rail line, three different factories in the Maputo area, a water pipeline, and the telephone lines between Maputo and Manica.

In counteractions, FPLM mounted attacks on 10 Renamo bases. They also carried out house-to-house raids in some of the Matola suburbs, during which some light weapons, ammunition and uniforms were confiscated. In these searches Government troops robbed the inhabitants of food and personal possessions.

There was less overt activity in the central provinces of Mozambique. Two FPLM convoys were ambushed by Renamo and the resistance movement occupied an airfield in Beira. In this action the Zimbabwean troops guarding the airport were driven off. The power lines to Beira were sabotaged on a number of occasions and the city had virtually no power supplies for two months. FPLM anti-aircraft units have been ordered to shoot down any light aircraft flying in this region because this is the method by which Renamo units are being resupplied. These aircraft are said to come from the permanent airfield Renamo have established at their main base in the Gorongosa area.

Because of the poor security situation and persistent Renamo harassment, FPLM troops in Manica and Tete province are being supplied via Zimbabwe. In northern Mozambique a number of coastal towns have been subjected to Renamo assaults. Half a dozen FPLM bases received the same treatment. These reliable reports suggest that a few Renamo members were executed in Nampula province, including some who had accepted an amnesty offer.

In general the statistics available to us show that Renamo retains control of the military initiative. Some two thirds of the contacts between opposing forces are initiated by the MNR. In similar vein, the number of FPLM soldiers killed in battle are more than double the casualties suffered by the insurgents. The low moral in the Mozambican Armed Forces is highlighted by the serious level of desertion. This is averaging close on 100 a month.

It is true that the volume of incidents in Manica and Sofala provinces, where Zimbabwean troops are stationed, is relatively low. However this will not save Frelimo from defeat. By far the greatest concentration of activity is in Maputo province, in line with Renamo's declared intent to seize the capital before the end of this year. To grant even a temporary respite to the hard-pressed Frelimo forces, ZANU-PF would have to commit our troops on a much wider and more intensive scale. This, as we have pointed out before, is an extremely dangerous game. In the eyes of the Mozambican population, we may well be supporting a lost cause.

In the current month the war has hotted up still further. Despite the presence of about 8,000 ZNA [Zimbabwe National Army] troops engaged on essential guard duties, the Beira-Mutare oil pipeline was blown up on 13th August. During the past week Renamo launched a lightening strike against the capital city itself. Overall, Frelimo appeared to be on the defensive, and the outlook for its survival is grim indeed. This reinforces our view that Zimbabwean military activity in that country should be confined to the protection of our key lifelines. To become embroiled in a civil war is something we cannot afford in lives or money.