

COUNTING ON COLONEL CHARLIE

[AN] In August of this year, Zimbabwean and Mozambican troops captured the headquarters of the armed group known as the Mozambique National Resistance ("MNR" or "Renamo") at Gorongosa in central Mozambique. There they uncovered hundreds of tons of munitions, sophisticated computer-controlled telecommunications gear, and numerous documents left by those who fled.

Among the documents were a desk diary and several notebooks with minutes of meetings between Renamo officials, including President Afonso Dhlakama, and South African envoys. The notes, most of them apparently the work of Joaquim Vaz, Dhlakama's secretary, provide the most detailed evidence to date of Renamo's much talked about South African connection (see box, page 11). In particular, they reveal how South African military men regarded their politicians' involvement in the diplomatic maneuvering that led to the Nkomati Accord of March 1984. The name of President P. W. Botha (then prime minister) does not appear often in the documents, but those of Foreign Minister Roelof "Pik" Botha and Louis Nel of Foreign Affairs do, as well as the chain of command from Defense Minister Magnus Malan down to Colonel Charles van Niekerk, the Military Intelligence officer who reportedly has directed the Mozambique operation since 1980.

Africa News' William Minter has written extensively on Mozambique and visited Maputo last year to research a forthcoming book. Here he presents key sections of the Renamo papers, along with a short background piece on the group's relationship with South Africa. The excerpts below are from photocopied portions of the documents made available to Africa News, with transcription and translation by the Mozambican government.

[Editor's note: Names appear as spelled in the original. "H.E." refers to President Dhlakama; the "Secretary-General" is Evo Fernandes, a Portuguese citizen; Charles van Niekerk's name appears several different ways; and General Viljoen's name is spelled Visloen. To minimize confusion for the reader, however, the diaries' notations of dates and times have been standardized. The three time periods dealt with here—pre-Nkomati, mid-1984, and May to June 1985—were culled from separate diaries and notebooks.]

The Notebooks: Pre-Incomati

Jan. 16—H.E. receives colonel Charlie and the volunteer at 10h00.

Owing to the undertaking that the South Africans will make to Machel in the light of the talks under way, resupply for the first six months of 84 will come in the first months: 500 pallets in a total of 25 resupplies apart from the resupplies in January 84.

The team of South Africans goes to Zambezia at the end of January—purpose to train soldiers.

Jan. 25—On 30 Jan. 84 there will be three resupplies in the Southern Zone, Inhambane; on 4 Feb. 84 three resupplies: two in the Centre, one resupply for Maputo. ... On 9 Feb. 84 there will be three resupplies for Zambezia.

Feb. 7—H.E. left for Pretoria at 15h00 with the Secretary General for talks with the South African generals, at their invitation. The meeting with the general settled the arms supplies: huge for eight weeks because SA is going to stop giving logistics.

But only the South African military have this strength, while Pick Botha the Foreign Minister is pressurizing the South African politicians to abandon Renamo. He is functioning as if he was a nark for the Soviet Union.

The war materiel that will be carried in these resupplies:

4279 boxes ammunition AK 47 × 1360
210 boxes ammunition G.3 × 1000 b
1730 AK 47s
680 boxes M.60 shells × 10 shells
680 boxes M.81 shells × 4 shells
110 boxes anti-car mines × 5 mines
1112 boxes RPG7 rockets × 6
820 boxes explosive × 20 kg
31 boxes medicines × 100 kg

Feb. 22—On 23 Feb. 84 at 10h00 there was a meeting in Pretoria between H.E. and the general of military intelligence; general of the Special

Forces; Brigadier of Military Intelligence; and Colonel Vaniker of Military Intelligence. Objective: planning the war in the face of the situation taken up by the South African Republic.

The Notebooks: Mid-1984

June 16—From the President of Renamo to Friend Commandant Charles

- My friend Commandant Charles, we no longer have war materiel, mainly in the central and southern areas of our country.

- We appreciate that we received that last consignment but as soon as we unloaded, we had to relieve all the regions in the central area, including Tete region, as they already lacked materiel to respond to the massive offensive that Frelimo had just announced would be launched after the signing of the Incomati Accord.

- So we want to remind our friends of the pledge they gave us of keeping up support to us clandestinely. ... Here in the centre our friends could slip in a ship with a bigger load than we received before, and that would allow us to sustain the war for the whole of 1984.

- Friend Commandant Charles should not forget that our enemy will do everything possible to disorganize us in the centre of the country. He will recover and that will force us to shift our bases about as they go on chasing us all over the place. This could cause a bad situation to occur for us, identical with that of 1980 when we were so badly hit by Rhodesia abandoning us.

- However, after the message, I feel that friend Commandant Charles will be very sympathetic, as he has always been the South African Government's official representative to Renamo, and I in particular as President of Renamo appreciate the valuable duties you fulfill, appreciate the work you have done and are doing, with all affection and incomparable devotion. However the war you have always represented and still represent has not yet been won, and even if your government has cut

off the support it gave us, our friend Commandant Charles, according to the promise you made us, we are still assured.

June 21—Reply to our message ... of 16 June 84 from C/Charles-Vaniker.

- The political climate here, internationally, is still bad for continuing to supply Renamo. Any violation of the Incomati Accord on our part will prejudice South African attempts at peace in Southern Africa.

- Renamo must continue to squeeze Machel but in such a way as to use as little war materiel as possible. Avoid combat with the FAM, giving more attention to destroying the economy, infrastructure and controlling the population.

- Renamo has to survive longer until Machel reaches an agreement with Renamo, but never let Frelimo see that we have no more materiel.

July 17—Message of 20 July 84 from C/Charles to Supreme C-in-C and President of Renamo.

- The Secretary-General and two of our men with 26 tons of baggage will jump from 18 Aug. 84 onwards at the D[rop] Z[one] east of Inhaminga where the volunteer made his last jump in March 84.

Aug. 6—[On] 11 Aug. 84 we disembarked at 20h00 in the military harbour at Durban, Natal. We then took a light plane to Pretoria together with the Commodore, Chief of Secret Operations for the Navy. We arrived at Pretoria at 23h15 on the same day where we were received by Brigadier Van Tonder of Military Intelligence, SA's Chief of Secret Operations, in the military installations in the Centre of Pretoria.

[On] 13 Aug. 84 we had the expected meeting with the South African Government delegation headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Pick Botha and including the Defence Minister, General Magnus Malan, the Military Intelligence General Van Der West Huizen and Colonel Vanierkerke, as well as Minister Pick Botha's Private Secretary.

Pick Botha stressed that the Maputo Govern-

ment is still accusing SA of going on supporting Renamo and that on this very day the Frelimo Government put the following charges against SA before Prime Minister Pieter W. Botha:

1. After the Incomati Accord the South African government went on supporting Renamo, with the indication that in May, June and July they sent a total of 14 aircraft full of war materiel to Renamo. 2. That there are officers in South African military circles directly linked to this support, with a mention of Colonel Vanikerke as one of them.

Aug. 16—We had a meeting with Brigadier Van Tonque, at our request, where we explained our request nel Vanikerfor war materiel. They gave us the following reply:

As regards war materiel, AK-47 ammunition, we have this for you, and ... will send it, but at the moment there are transport difficulties. We can no longer use the C-130 aircraft, as these aircraft are under Air Force control, nor can we use the Navy, as there might be an information leak as well as involving many people. And in the event ... we were caught, this would imply a heavy sentence for General Van Der West Huisen, Brigadier Van Tonder and Colonel Vanikerke, as it would constitute a serious violation of the Incomati Accord, which is vital at this moment for our South African Government. ...

To overcome this difficulty we are going to use civilian aircraft that will land. So Colonel Vanikerke will go to Gorongosa on 22 Aug. 84 to meet the President of Renamo so as to organize landing strips. ...

Sept. 3—IMPORTANT:

31 Aug. 84—We left Gorongosa for SA where we arrived at 21h30 in the city of Pretoria.

1 Sept. 84—At 11h30 we had a meeting with Brigadier Van Tonder and Colonel Charles. At this meeting the following points were raised:

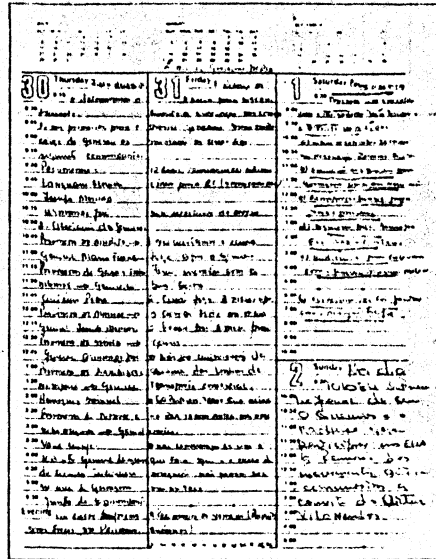
- Evacuation of the generals from the South and North to Gorongosa in accordance with His Excellency's plan. As this request was granted, Brigadier Van Tonder was to inform us how the withdrawal operations would be done.
- Separate meetings were arranged with the Chief of Staff Visloen; with the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, and with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pick Botha. With the first two it is for us to request "humanitarian aid," and with the last-named to sound out his point of view about the expected talks with Frelimo.

6 Sept. 84—At 17h00 we had a meeting with the Chief of Staff of the South African Armed Forces, General Visloen; General Van Der West Huisen, Br. Van Tonder and Colonel Vanikerke were present at the meeting. The following was discussed:

- General Visloen agreed to send us "humanitarian aid" in Air Force C-130 planes.
- He recommended us not to lose military strength and control, in the face of these negotiations.
- He said that the cease-fire mustn't be effective, he agreed with the plan of two to three months maximum.
- He recommended us not to accept the amnesty.
- The General recommended us not to be fooled by the schemes of Pick Botha because he is a traitor; he even agreed with Chester Crocker's idea of Frelimo offering an amnesty to Renamo members.

General Visloen went on to say: I agree with a joint strategy for putting Machel out. Because we want to remove the Russians from our region of

Southern Africa, we have to employ a joint strategy to be able to defeat communism. In such a way as not to let the outside world ("USA") perceive it. Because the world is convinced that Machel is changing, because he doesn't seem to them to be entirely communist. The USA has its way of fighting the Russians, like South African politicians too, who have their way of fighting communism. And we soldiers have our way of fighting the Russians.



Photocopy of a page from the Renamo journals.

Finally, General Visloen guaranteed us that he is on our side until final victory. C-130 planes for Mozambique, humanitarian aid. Common strategy to defeat communism in southern Africa.

Sept. 17— They will install microphones in the negotiating room to listen in on the talks between Pick Botha and the Mozambican delegation; it will be very advantageous for us. In this way we will know Pick Botha's plan and Frelimo's; this was guaranteed us with Vanikerke.

The Notebooks: May-July 1985

Colonel Vanikerke explained the reasons that led him to meet the President of Renamo in Gorongosa on 26 May 1985. ... The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louis Nel, is still interested in the search for peace in Mozambique. ... In my view, I think a visit by him here in the interior is highly feasible and desirable for Renamo given the current situation. ... He said in addition that

his coming here would be without the knowledge of his chief, Pick Botha.

Some of the points that Minister Louis Nel will raise with the President are as follows: the Cahora Bassa power lines, the SA Maputo high tension lines, the SA Maputo railway and the SA Maputo road. He will later ask Renamo not to attack these targets. But the most important point that brings him here is to ask for the resumption of Renamo-Frelimo talks.

A message from our Armed Forces Chief, General Visloen:

Greetings to His Excellency. I assure Mr. President that Renamo still has friends in the South African military. I hope that Mr. President understands the difficulties that we South African soldiers have with our politicians.

Conversation between H.E. and Colonel Vanikerke on 5 June 85:

Charles: Renamo must never guarantee to Louis Nel that he can come here alone whenever he likes, otherwise it will put our friendship in doubt (South African Military). You must give him to understand that should he need to come here it is always necessary for the military to come here first. ...

General Visloen will send the head of the army with Louis Nel, or the deputy-minister of defence and police who is 100% in favour of Renamo. ... But the basic idea is for the military to get influence over Louis Nel.

For us South African military Louis Nel is the most honest of the South African politicians.

Second Visit by the Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs Louis Nel to our capital Gorongosa on 2 July 1985:

Nel: I shall tell [Frelimo] if they do not accept talks the war will go on for many years. ... I do not want to give you advice but you must understand, you must hold peace negotiations to make it seem to the world that the President of Renamo wants peace in Mozambique. I shall mention [to the international press] the proposal of negotiations not saying that Machel refused the negotiations, since S.A. could appear in a bad light. S.A. wants to play a very important role. We want to make Frelimo enter into negotiations.

President: I believe that 100% of the points you focussed are the problems that Renamo has. ... This conversation will go down in our history. For me it opened up a vision. I was impressed, it makes me say that we have friends in South Africa, this conversation guarantees friendship. ...

The ANC having left Mozambique does not mean that Frelimo doesn't support it, it supports actively. Therefore Renamo is a friend of South Africa's. I will certainly follow the advice the minister gave me—our problem is diplomacy. ...

