

THE MOZAMBICAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana, known as RENAMO or the MNR, was established in 1977 by Rhodesian intelligence to undermine the Mozambican government's ability to support Zimbabwe guerrillas, led by Robert Mugabe, who were using Mozambique as a base for their war against the Rhodesian regime. From its inception, the movement has had a reputation for cruelty and atrocities towards foes and civilians alike.

As Zimbabwe's independence approached in 1980, responsibility for running RENAMO, including a clandestine radio transmitter, was transferred from the Rhodesians to South African military intelligence in Pretoria. According to knowledgeable South African and American sources, the level of arms and other supplies was significantly increased soon after, enabling RENAMO to step up its activities, particularly in the center of the country.

Just prior to the signing of the Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique in March of 1984, the South African Defense Force poured new supplies into RENAMO strongholds, enough by some estimates to keep the movement fed and armed for two years. Since the agreement was signed, fighting has intensified in most areas of the country.

Artur X. L. Vilankulu and Luis B. Serapiao—who are both claiming to represent RENAMO—both came to the U.S. as students in the 1960s. Vilankulu studied at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania and at Columbia University. Serapiao earned his Ph.D. at American University.

Both also took part in the Mozambican student organization, UNEMO, which initially supported the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).

But UNEMO splintered in 1967 when FRELIMO President Eduardo Mondlane issued

a call for Mozambicans studying abroad to return to Africa for a period on completion of their degree. Mondlane wanted the students to "participate directly in the tasks of national liberation," which some of them resented.

Vilankulu went to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to work for the FRELIMO radio service. Serapiao stayed in the U.S. and supported UNEMO's published attack on Mondlane.

In 1968, Vilankulu returned to the U.S., and during the leadership struggle that followed the assassination of Mondlane the following year, he left the movement. By the early 1970s, he was registered at the Justice Department as a representative of the anti-FRELIMO group COREMO and was publishing a periodic COREMO newsletter in New York.

After the Portuguese coup in 1974, Vilankulu returned to Mozambique during the period preceding independence in September of 1975. He then came back to New York and, in the early 1980s, emerged as secretary for external affairs.

Serapiao was named RENAMO representative in July, just before a new split developed in the movement. Evo Fernandes was ousted as secretary general in a move that apparently reflects continuing conflict over the influence of wealthy Portuguese backers in RENAMO's activities.

Serapiao claims that RENAMO is firmly in the control of black Mozambicans, in contrast to FRELIMO. "You will find that since independence over half the ministerial positions in the government have been held by non-blacks," he says. This, along with FRELIMO's policies and brutality, has alienated many Mozambicans, he contends.

But FRELIMO's biggest shortcoming, Serapiao argues, is that it has not met popular expectations. "During the struggle, FRELIMO raised the hope of a new social structure, but it has not delivered one." ■

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ligence sources, South African planes have been spotted on at least four or five occasions making deliveries to RENAMO outposts in the interior. But most of the supply lines have reportedly been shifted to Malawi, Mozambique's neighbor to the northwest, the only African government that has full diplomatic relations with Pretoria.

Machel visited Malawi last month, accompanied by Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda and Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, to warn Malawi President Hastings Banda that the frontline states plan reprisals if RENAMO continues to operate from Malawian territory. A high-level Malawian delegation paid a return visit to Mozambique where an agreement was announced on the establishment of a joint security commission.

Zimbabwe has approximately 12,000 troops in Mozambique—half of them deployed in the war zones at any one time, and Machel's government is receiving assistance from a number of other governments, including both East and West European powers.

Although RENAMO continues to pose a serious military threat to the government, most experts believe the movement enjoys little popular support. But unless the rebels' activities can be

curtailed, the government will find its own position more and more tenuous.

RENAMO's Serapiao argues that FRELIMO has alienated almost all sections of the population—peasants, the military, black intelligentsia, white settlers, and the religious community—through its policies and actions. "RENAMO is picking up support among Mozambicans here in the U.S. and inside the country," he says.

Allen Isaacman, a professor of history at the University of Minnesota and a Mozambique specialist who supports FRELIMO, says the government continues to have the allegiance of most of its people. And militarily, he contends, Mozambican troops—with "absolutely critical support" from Zimbabwean forces—continue to fight and to make gains in some areas, while sustaining losses in others.

But he concedes there are serious problems. "FRELIMO has lost a lot of capital," he says. "If it can't protect peasants and supply them with consumer goods, why should they support FRELIMO?"

With Mozambique's difficulties continuing, American conservatives—who regard Machel as a Soviet ally—see a new chance to hand Moscow a setback. A Heritage Foundation report entitled "The Resistance Can Win in Mozambique," concludes: "The United States has a rare opportunity to strike a blow against the Brezhnev doctrine (once a communist state, always a communist state) by helping the Mozambican patriots."

RENAMO supporters rate its chances for success as first among anti-communist movements around the world.

Not all conservatives have jumped on the RENAMO bandwagon, however. "Many hardcore backers of UNITA are not supporting the MNR," says one Senate Republican aide. "For one thing, no one is sure just *who* is RENAMO—they have had lots of splits and they don't have a Savimbi that can carry their cause to the world," he said referring to UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, who made a high-profile visit to Washington early this year to drum up American backing.

Conservatives are nevertheless getting more and more interested in Mozambique, says Heritage African analyst William Pascoe. "It's not so much

a call for Mozambicans studying abroad to return to Africa for a period on completion of their degree. Mondlane wanted the students to "participate directly in the tasks of national liberation," which some of them resented.

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