

RENAMO appears to be facing a crisis following shoot-outs between rival bands of rebels inside Mozambique and the eruption of inter-cine fights within the organisation's external wing.

According to a Portuguese newspaper, *Africa Confidential*, at least 12 deaths have been reported recently in Mozambique's Zambezia province as a result of armed battles between rebel groups inside the country.

Renamo commander Gimo M'Piri is reported to have established a new autonomous force (Unamo) opposed to domination of the rebel movement by Afonso Dhlakama's Ndau tribe. The Ndau, a Shona-speaking grouping, occupy almost 70 percent of the chief positions in the movement but constitute only two percent of the population of Mozambique.

The organisation has also lost international credibility in the wake of the report, published recently by the US State Department, which holds Renamo responsible for the murder of more than 100 000 civilians in the last two years.

Meanwhile Renamo's external wing has been left without an effective head after the murder of its leader, Evo Fernandes, near Lisbon in April this year.

Renamo's operations are surrounded by a web of secrecy and intrigue that makes it difficult for observers to identify the groups and issues responsible for the infighting.

The splintering of Renamo

Renamo's biggest enemy today may be itself. Observers close to the secretive movement tell of multiple factions at war with one another in an elaborate international intrigue involving accusations of embezzlement and murder.

PAUL MUSKER
reports from Lisbon



Renamo leader Evo Fernandes' widow, Ivete, at his funeral

But the *Weekly Mail* has been able to piece together a profile of the movement and its multiple factions after conducting a series of interviews in Lisbon around the issue of Fernandes' murder.

A high-level source in the Direccao General de Combate ao Banditismo, the Portuguese police department investigating Fernandes' murder, told the *WM* they are considering the possibility that faction fighting in Renamo led to his murder.

According to this hypothesis the American office of Renamo, which has been keen to rid the movement of its terrorist image in a bid to obtain official US support for the organisation, disapproved of Fernandes' close links with Dhlakama, the Renamo military chief responsible for the campaign of terror inside Mozambique.

The US office of Renamo is headed by Luis Serapiao and Francisco Nota, who have close ties with the

ultra-right Heritage Foundation run by Tom Schaaf and the conservative Senate lobby headed by Jesse Helms. Fernandes' murder took place days before the release of the US report whose author, Bob Gersony, likened Renamo's activities to Khmer Rouge atrocities in Kampuchea.

Portuguese police are also investigating the possibility that alleged shady financial dealing by Fernandes led to his murder by those who feared his knowledge of such deals. The Washington leaders had accused Fernandes of embezzling \$1-million destined for arms purchases.

The police source stressed the faction fighting theory is only one of a number of possible explanations for Fernandes' murder.

But Ivete Fernandes, widow of the Renamo leader, alleged during a *WM* interview that the Washington faction of Renamo collaborated with Mozambique's secret service.

"SNASP (Frelimo's secret service) killed my husband," she said during the interview, held in her small flat in a working class district of Lisbon. "The so-called Washington faction is not part of Renamo. Serapiao and Nota are only interested in Schaaf because he is paying for their good life in the States ... Schaaf is working in conjunction with SNASP to undermine the organisation."

Another aspect of Fernandes' theory is that Paulo Oliveira, a leading Renamo figure who defected to Maputo after losing a leadership battle within the Lisbon faction last year, provided SNASP with the information to carry out their assassination plot.

"I accuse Oliveira of being morally responsible for the murder of my husband ... I have no doubt whatsoever that he gave SNASP the information necessary for the operation in which my husband was kidnapped and eventually murdered."

Fernandes has no evidence to back her claims and it is extremely unlikely the Heritage Foundation, which has consistently opposed Frelimo's Marxist policies, would co-operate

with SNASP.

But her views are significant because they indicate how bitter the infighting within Renamo had become before her husband's death.

Ironically Fernandes' claims of a deep split between the Washington faction and the Lisbon-based leadership of Renamo coincides with claims made by Oliveira soon after he accepted Frelimo's amnesty offer and defected to Mozambique.

In a press conference in Maputo on March 14, Oliveira told reporters Renamo was characterised by contradictions and conflicting directions, with each faction based in a different capital, under the influence of political figures in the host country.

The major split, he said, was between the Washington-Paris axis of Renamo and the Lisbon leadership, which has close ties to supporters in Bonn and enjoys the support of Dhlakama.

Oliveira said Fernandes, leader of the Lisbon-Bonn-Mozambique axis, was also backed by elements in the South African Defence Force, who allegedly shaped and supported Renamo's policy of destabilisation through terror.

The South African government has consistently denied allegations that it is continuing to support Renamo in defiance of the 1984 Nkomati Accord with Mozambique.

Oliveira also claimed the Washington faction had attempted on a number of occasions to oust the Lisbon group in a bid to clean up Renamo's image and present the movement as a *bona fide* group of anti-communist freedom fighters.

Portuguese police are not only concentrating on the faction fighting theory about Fernandes' murder. The source said they were also considering the following hypotheses:

- Frelimo's secret police planned and carried out the assassination.

- Elements in the Portuguese army and secret service did not favour the prospect of a rapprochement between Portugal and Frelimo and staged the murder in the hope of implicating SNASP and sabotaging improved relations between the two countries. After the murder relations between the two countries did indeed deteriorate and Portugal's prime minister, Cavaco Silva, cancelled a planned visit to Maputo.

The aspect of the case not in dispute is the identity of the last person seen in public with Fernandes: Alexandre Chagas, a Portuguese citizen who arrived in Lisbon on March 1 with some R60 000 in South African bank notes.

Chagas left Portugal for Casablanca the next day and police believe he handed Fernandes over to the eventual assassins. Until Chagas is deported from Morocco little more can be ascertained.

But what emerges from the murder, and recent events in rebel-controlled territory within Mozambique, is that Renamo is experiencing a grave crisis as its warring factions threaten to tear the organisation apart.