

THE

*The paper for a changing South Africa***WEEKLY MAIL**

Volume 6, Number 9 Friday March 16 1990 to Thursday March 22 1990

Renamo's secret SA bases

- Portuguese-speaking black soldiers living in E Tvl town
- Two Komatipoort men press refugees to join Renamo
- David Webster knew of three mobile Renamo bases

EDDIE KOCH reports

ARMS supplied by local businessmen and members of the South African security forces are being used by Renamo to step up the insurgency that has devastated the southern provinces of Mozambique.

The L-shaped frontier between the two countries — from Phafuri in the north to Kosi Bay in the south — is being crossed so that armed insurgents, weapons and supplies can be pumped in to the rebel movement.

A months-long *Weekly Mail* investigation — based on in-

terviews with national servicemen, priests, businessmen, social workers, medical doctors, refugees and a Renamo deserter — has revealed that intermittent staging points along the 500km-long border have been used to support Renamo bands.

The scale of the evidence suggests there may still exist a clandestine military unit — that deploys secret funds and recruits private businessmen along the lines of the Civil Cooperation Bureau — aimed to destabilise Mozambique, probably without the knowledge of the cabinet.

The *Weekly Mail* has the names of two Portuguese men, a

● To PAGE 3

●From PAGE 1

farmer and cafe owner from the Komatiport area, who informants say dragoon Mozambican refugees into Renamo, train them to use weapons and ferry them across the border so that they can undertake operations in Mozambique.

The names have been passed on to the Department of Foreign Affairs so that the claims can be investigated.

The farmer allegedly supplies Renamo bands with clothing, food produced on his farm and other provisions by making regular clandestine trips across the border.

He is a former Mozambican who lost a large farm after Frelimo took power in 1974. His son is a South African Police reservist in Komatiport.

The *Weekly Mail* has also collected evidence that the electrified fence, which runs for 66km from Komatiport to the South African border, is often crossed by Renamo operatives before and after missions.

The Renamo deserter told the *Weekly Mail* he came into South Africa with another rebel, through a gate in the electrified fence some 20km south of Komatiport, early last year after insurgents had attacked the town of Ressoano Garcia to loot shops.

More than two years ago, residents of Alberts Nek, a village in KaNgwane near this gate, reported to the "homeland" administration that Renamo members had been seen in the area.

Last month an officer in the Mozambican army said he had evidence that a massacre at Moveni, 12km from the South African border, in which a train was blown up and more than 60 people killed, was carried out by a large group of armed men who had crossed the border from South African soil in the Alberts Nek area.

The *Weekly Mail* was told that black members of the South African Defence Force stationed along the fence often cross the border for "discussions" with members of Renamo.

Rebels frequently come to the fence with large amounts of South African currency, as much as R2 000, so that the soldiers can buy goods for them from shops in KaNgwane.

It would appear the money is booty taken in attacks on migrant workers who travel on the train and by road from South Africa to Mozambique.

Other points along the border where there is evidence that support for Renamo has been channelled from South Africa include:

●**Phalaborwa:** Some 18 months ago army helicopters ferried, under cover of night, Renamo rebels, wounded in a major Mozambican army offensive to a hospital near Phalaborwa for treatment. Members

of an SADF reconnaissance regiment were also treated.

The *Weekly Mail* has established there is a township, known as *Skietog* to people who live in Phalaborwa's black township of Namakgale, which houses Portuguese and Shona-speaking black soldiers.

A church worker in Namakgale says the inhabitants of *Skietog* seldom mix with the township residents but are sometimes visited by local women. The *Weekly Mail* has established that the township is a recessed base and its entrance is guarded by SADF soldiers.

In 1986 the people of Namakgale were involved in a skirmish with men from *Skietog*. A number of local people were killed when hand grenades were thrown into a township shelter.

●**Kosi Bay:** It is suspected that human rights activist David Webster was assassinated because members of the CCB believed he had uncovered evidence of a Renamo support network in the Kosi Bay area of northern Natal where he worked as an anthropologist.

The *Weekly Mail* knows Webster had been told by an agricultural officer working for kwaZulu that he had seen three mobile Renamo bases in the area more than two years ago. We are informed that there is still an insurgents' base located at Lake Sibaya, south of Kosi Bay.

A medical doctor working in the area told the *Weekly Mail* more than a year ago that he had established the presence of a Renamo camp in the middle of the Ndumu Game Reserve, which straddles the border with Mozambique. This was confirmed by sources in the Mozambican security forces who said the indications were that this was a mobile base.

It is known that a decision was taken in the Department of Military Intelligence, some time after the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique, to make all Renamo units in South Africa highly mobile so that they could avoid detection.

●**Phafuri:** There is evidence that a Renamo band operates from the far-northern reaches of the Kruger National Park to sabotage the pylons of the Cahorra Bassa hydroelectric scheme which cross into South Africa.

Zimbabwe conservation officials say rebels are poaching elephant and rhino in the Gona Re Zou game reserve, just north of Phafuri, and believe the poachers may come in from the Kruger Park.

The *Weekly Mail* has cross-checked evidence from its sources to verify the accuracy of the information. The picture that emerges is one in which private businessmen and farmers are used to carry out the logistics to support Renamo with extensive back-up from elements in the military.

It is likely that such an army unit would run along much the same lines as the CCB and that the South African government may not be aware of its existence.

The Southern Africa Quaker Peace Initiative, which undertook an extensive investigation inside Mozambique last year, has just released a report which says:

"There is overwhelming evidence that certain elements in South Africa (especially in the defence force — and a number of generals have been named) continue to recruit Mozambicans to support MNR and give material and logistical support to the bandits."