

# Zimbabwe army pulls back in Mozambique

Andrew Meldrum in Harare

**Z**IMBABWEAN troops have pulled back from central Mozambique's dense jungle to positions agreed upon earlier this month in negotiations in Rome between the Mozambican government and Renamo rebels.

By today, all 8,000 Zimbabwean troops in Mozambique will be within three kilometres (1.8 miles) of the road and railway tracks linking landlocked Zimbabwe to the Mozambican ports of Beira and Maputo, according to Zimbabwean military sources.

The presence of the well-armed Zimbabwean forces in central Mozambique was the main obstacle in the Rome talks between the Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano's government and the Renamo rebels led by Afonso Dhlakama. The December 1 agreement that the Zimbabwean troops would be restricted to within three kilometres of the transport routes led the way to a partial ceasefire in the 15-year war which has taken an estimated one million lives.

An international verification team will monitor to see that Renamo forces do not attack the Zimbabwean troops and that the Zimbabweans remain within the three-kilometre limit.

There are fears among Zimbabwean officers that Renamo will soon recapture the strategic bases in the thick woods of the Gorongosa area in central Mozambique. Gorongosa was Renamo's main stronghold until Zimbabwean troops captured the rebel headquarters, Casa Banana, last year.

"There is a large concentration of rebels in the Gorongosa area," the Zimbabwean Major Kalisto Gwanetsa told Harare's semi-official Herald newspaper. "There has also been some movement of bandits [rebels] from one area to another to facilitate strength for attacks."

If Renamo extends its control throughout central Mozambique, it is believed the rebels will support a ceasefire granting them power over the key central Mozambican area. Anticipating a Renamo offensive, Mozambican civilians are already fleeing the Gorongosa area.