

**Viljoen Interviewed on SADF Involvement with Renamo**

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Excerpts from live interview with SWDF Commander, Gen Constand Viljoen:

South Africa's and especially the SADF's, involvement with Renamo since the signing of the Incomati accord has been questioned here and abroad following the discovery of the so-called Vas diaries in Mozambique. The man who has the final responsibility for the SADF is General Constand Viljoen, who is in our Pretoria studio. Janie Botes, Harald Pakendorf of 'Die Vaderland', and Brian Pottinger of the 'Sunday Times' question him.

[Botes] Gen Viljoen whether it was the Government or the SADF, Renamo has been helped and the Incomati accord has been jeopardised. Why?

[Viljoen] The whole run up to the present situation with Renamo and the SADF can be divided into a number of phases. One must begin by saying that before the Incomati accord, there had naturally been contact between the Defence Force and Renamo. Today this is general knowledge. At the time, we were following a reasonable military strategy. When the accord was signed, this military strategy was replaced by a diplomatic and political strategy. And one has to examine what happened after the Incomati accord, up to the time of the first failure in the attempts at reconciliation. In particular, I want to give you an indication of the role of the Defence Force during that first phase. During that phase, the Defence Force was constantly monitoring events. The purpose of Incomati was to bring about peace in Mozambique and produce certain important results. . . After the signing of Incomati the war was escalating continually and had reached a climax, in fact, in the past three months. So, after Incomati the SADF was involved in the whole process of implementation. . . The role of the Defence Force was initially advisory to the Government. . . Our advice to the Government was that the purpose of Incomati, the real benefits to Mozambique and South Africa, would not be realised unless there was a halt to the war within Mozambique. So, it was our job to advise the Government on this. I, personally, advised Government very firmly that they should press for a cease-fire, during which period negotiations could proceed. . .

When negotiations began we started by moving Renamo people to places where it would be possible for them to make contact with the opposition, Frelimo . . . Our military intelligence arranged two meetings before the major meeting was arranged in Pretoria around September-October. One meeting took place in Europe and one in Pretoria. . . The Frelimo people, the negotiators, who during this process were often in contact with our Foreign Affairs people, specifically asked that the South African authorities keep in touch with Renamo. I was given such an instruction by the Government to maintain communications with Renamo. This, by the way, also explains the presence of some of our radio sets at Renamo headquarters. . .

But while this was going on, a very important facet emerged which affected the whole use of the Defence Force. It soon became clear that Mr Fernandes of Renamo was not a very acceptable negotiator. Mr Fernandes was a very clever person who was brilliant in his negotiations, but who looked for minor points and was inclined to become very difficult with his opponents. It was soon evident to the Defence Force, to Foreign Affairs and also to the Frelimo Government, that this chap Fernandes would cause problems. So it was decided that we had to go and bring the leaders in the bush, the real military leaders, because it was felt that Fernandes was not putting the real facts, the needs, of Renamo on the negotiating table. That is how we became involved in getting the real leaders out of Mozambique. The President of Renamo, Afonso Dhlakama, then decided he would remain at his headquarters at Gorongosa for the time being, so that he could conduct the war, and instead send a team of his generals, his field officers, to Pretoria for the negotiations. We went to get those people. . .

[Botes] General, thank you. I think you have given us a very good chance to see the background from your side. I would like to ask Brian Pottinger of the 'Sunday Times' to go ahead.

[Pottinger] General, let me just ask this. The notebook and the diary of Mr Vas. Do you accept the authenticity of those documents, or do you reject them?

[Viljoen] Mr Pottinger, I would like to enlarge on this, because it is a very important question. Let me begin by saying immediately that it is very clear from this diary that there was definitely a diary, and that the diary was certainly captured at Gorongosa, because there are a number of facts in it. But there are also a number of facts now being used against us which are not true. Now, just to link this let me say that this is a propaganda technique. . . The propaganda scheme in this case is to show that the Defence Force are an organisation which was involved in continued aid to Renamo and that we are opposed to the new offensive of diplomacy and political strategy, and that we are not prepared to accept instructions from the Government in this regard. So we are the destabiliser, instead of helping with the stabilising process of peace in Mozambique. This is something we have to understand clearly in answering the question. . .

[Pakendorf] Good evening, General. It seems to me, if we have to get right to the point I am aiming at, is the credibility of the Defence Force not affected? I refer back to the events in 1975 in Angola, when it was first said we were not inside, then we were inside Angola. Recently it was said by two Ministers, Foreign Affairs and Defence, that we had not violated the accord. Yet now we find that recently a commission of inquiry was set up which found that we had in fact violated the accord. It seems to me that the credibility of the Defence Force has been called into question and that is something which should concern all of us in the country. Does it worry you, General?

[Viljoen] Mr Pakendorf, naturally I worry about it. That is why I am here. As you know, our President and my Minister put the matter very clearly. They made the denials that were necessary in the matter, but it became clear later that as a result of the new accusations, we had to do something more. So I am concerned about the credibility of the Defence Force. But remember, that is precisely the aim of our enemy - to attack the credibility of the Defence Force. And, as explained to you, this is done by using a set of facts and lies to present a propaganda scheme.

[Pakendorf] But General, did you not first deny that you were there, and later you had to admit that you were? Did you not yourself create that credibility crisis?

[Viljoen] No, we did not deny anything about the role of the Defence Force following the Incomati accord in this whole matter. Under no circumstances did we deny that we made certain flights in and out, and that we were helping Renamo to get to the meeting. We have never denied it, and we will not deny it, because it is the truth.

[Pakendorf] But, General - [interrupted]

[Viljoen] But it was all in order to assist the negotiations.

[Pakendorf] But General, what you are now speaking about only became known later, the violations. But therefore that, over the past year, the Frelimo government has been saying that the accord was being violated, and all we were told was that this was not true. But now we have been told that these violations did happen. In the view of the people with whom you work, at least, the question must arise: Where do we stand? Now, let me follow that up with a difficult question. At present it is being said that - [interrupted]

[Viljoen] Will you allow me to answer that?

[Pakendorf] No, the next question is directly related to that. We are at present being accused - and you may say that is part of a propaganda campaign - that we are in fact busy fighting in Angola against forces under Soviet command. You will deny this, because up to now it has been denied. But if it does begin to seem that we are really there, then we will be in serious trouble.

[Viljoen] You know, you are now speaking about the large number of accusations made against the Defence Force recently. This is precisely the thing that I was explaining to you just now. As far as I can remember, there were about 22 false, unfounded allegations made by the Frelimo elements in the joint security commission, every time with an absolutely absurd allegation. . . Take for example, the violations of air space. At first they claimed the Defence Force was violating their air space. We found that this was not so. Then they came back and said these were private aircraft being used by civilian organisations - a reference to the Portuguese community in South Africa. . . So we used radar over the National Park for three months, at a cost of 180,000 rand per month, just to prove that this was not true. We proved it, we presented the evidence at the meetings, but they were not interested in it. All that they were interested in was the fact that they had come with important statements which caused a sensation, which enjoyed wide coverage in all the media, which were totally untrue, and that was the effect they

[Pakendorf] General, you are referring to a number of smaller things that we do not have here. I think you should admit the more important issues, such as the 1975 presence in Angola. I think that the Defence Force has admitted that it was badly handled. I have already mentioned the other major events. These are the ones the public remembers.

[Viljoen] I would like to take you further on the presence in Angola in 1975, but we would be wasting time instead of dealing with the important elements we would like to cover in this interview. I would like us to discuss those matters later. You are very welcome to do so -

[Pakendorf interrupting] I just want to ask one more question before Mr Pottinger asks his. At the very time it was being denied that we had violated the accord, it was announced that five officers - [changes thought ] it was said - I cannot remember - they were dismissed, but in any event, they were not doing the same work any longer, because they had been found to be in favour of Renamo and were assisting Renamo. This was done at the same time that denials were being made. You see, there was that internal matter as well, which had nothing to do with propaganda from outside.

[Viljoen] Yes. I am very glad you mentioned this issue. . . I can assure you that those persons had not been guilty of contact with, or assistance to, Renamo. But we removed them from all the posts where there could even be the possibility that they would overstep the line in this regard, just in order to remove any suspicion. So, in fact, there were no punitive measures against those people. They behaved honourably, and we only removed them in order to ensure that nothing could be said about us, so that it could not be said that we had violated the accord. . .

[Pottinger] General, some of the supplies provided to the Renamo forces included fuel, landing strips, that kind of thing. How does that agree with the statement that it was humanitarian aid to the Renamo movement?

[Viljoen] Mr Pottinger, let us take, for example, the issue of the landing strips. If I had to go into the second phase, for example, of having to take Deputy Minister Nel into

Mozambique in order to persuade the Renamo people for a second time to come to the negotiating table, then one has to have a place somewhere to land. During the first phase, as I have already explained, we had to go in to fetch the real leaders of Renamo in the bush. To do that, we had to have landing strips somewhere. . . We sent two men, who went in for 10 days, examined the landing field, removed a number of trees along the edges, and made certain the security situation was such that we could land safely, and that was the so-called preparation of this so-called South African air base inside Mozambique. There was never a South African air base inside Mozambique. It was a temporary landing strip that we used for the specific purpose of promoting the Incomati negotiations. To go on to the second issue - the fuel - it can rightly be asked why we took fuel to such a place. But, as I said, we had to fetch all the Renamo leaders, not only the few from their headquarters. To do that, we had to be able to reach them. They had to be fetched with motorcycles and the like: that is why we took in fuel. When we took Deputy Minister Nel in, he had to travel about 30 km from the landing strip to reach the place where he could negotiate with the various Renamo leaders. They had to use a motorcycle to do that. . . That should explain the few points you mentioned. . .

[Pottinger] General, let us leave those details for the moment. What is the relationship now between the Defence Force and the Department of Foreign Affairs? It has been suggested to us that there are elements in the Defence Force that are not satisfied with the way the foreign affairs people have handled the Mozambican Government's charges.

[Viljoen] Mr Pottinger, that is exactly the aim of our enemy. The aim of our enemies is to drive a wedge - [changes thought], and now I want to explain to you briefly how this situation arose. The Defence Force was originally linked to Renamo. At the time of Incomati the Department of Foreign Affairs was linked more and more closely with Frelimo. During the first negotiations in Pretoria, the situation was this: We went to fetch the Renamo people and brought them safely to Pretoria. We looked after them. We accommodated them. Foreign Affairs made arrangements for the Frelimo people. This caused the perception during that meeting that the Defence Force was on Renamo's side and Foreign Affairs on Frelimo's side. And this led to the situation where I personally appealed to my military delegation and said: You have to work against this tendency, you must mix more readily with the whole group. I did not take part personally in the negotiations. I did not take part for the very reason that I feared that such a situation would arise. . .

[Pakendorf] Let me ask you, are you now saying that the Defence Force and Foreign Affairs now see eye-to-eye on the Incomati accord and that you now fully support the Incomati accord?

[Viljoen] There was never any question about it. Before the Government went over to the Incomati accord, it had already been accepted by the Defence Force. . . The Defence Force totally accepted the responsibility of assisting the Incomati accord in the political and diplomatic initiatives. . .

[Botes] General, one last question from me. Let us return to the diary. If the diaries are genuine, if they are correct, then they indicate that there is a great difference between the Defence Force and Foreign Affairs in their thinking and actions. If the diaries are not genuine, then they indicate something else; namely, that the Russians, the KGB, or whoever, have a detailed knowledge of military and diplomatic actions in South Africa. What is your comment?

[Viljoen] What worries me about the diaries situation is, first, why was the entire diary not made available? Why are certain parts being kept back? Why are some parts that have now been made available in the press being erased or even, with the aid of paper (?which was treated with sophisticated equipment) being completely obliterated?

[Botes] But, General, you are not answering my question, whether or not it is true -

[Viljoen interrupting] Now, I am getting there. The basic fact in answering this question directly, with the little time we have, is: There are certain things about all this that are

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12 Oct 85

undoubtedly true, and that is just how propaganda works. They use facts. The truth is that we took Deputy Minister Nel to Gorongosa. Another truth is that I sent a message to Renamo. The purpose of that message was to convince Renamo to agree to negotiations, despite their strong military position - because at that time they were in their strongest military position ever. I - [changes thought] In the statement, for example, I was quoted as saying we were having problems with the South African politicians. This was not true. I had said we have problems with politicians, meaning the politicians in Frelimo and Renamo who were making too much propaganda during the negotiations.

[Botes] General, unfortunately I have to interrupt you there. . .