

Richard Allen And '73 Massacre In Mozambique

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In July, 1973, news reports appeared of a brutal My Lai-style massacre of native villagers the previous December in Mozambique, then a Portuguese colony stirring with aspirations for independence.

The dictatorial regime in Lisbon denied the reports. So did the \$60,000-a-year U.S. agent for the Overseas Companies of Portugal, a government-linked consortium of firms with heavy investments in Mozambique and Angola, Portugal's other colony in Africa.

The agent was Richard V. Allen, the national security adviser to President Reagan who is now on administrative leave.

From Washington, Allen closely monitored the news and periodically filed reports to his worried employer in Lisbon.

As part of his campaign to convince the public that the "alleged" massacre by Portuguese troops never occurred, Allen also arranged for Rep. Philip Crane (R-Ill.) to visit the Portuguese colonies. Crane subsequently pronounced the Portuguese clean. As recently as August, 1980,

Allen told *The Washington Post* that the tale of a massacre appeared to have been "a Czech disinformation report."

But my associate Lucette Lagnado has obtained secret State Department cables that make clear there was indeed such a massacre, or that American Foreign Service officers at least found the evidence persuasive.

The first reports of the butchery—hundreds of men, women and children beaten or shot to death and set afire in a place called Wiri Yamu—came from Catholic missionaries in Mozambique. The Vatican was notified, and the U.S. embassy in Rome learned of the story from Vatican sources.

One secret cable from Rome to Foggy Bottom was sent in June, 1973. "Vatican was horrified by reports of an extensive massacre of Africans which took place recently in Mozambique," the embassy reported. It added that the reports, "which have not yet hit the media, come from local priests and indicate that a number of villages have been annihilated."

The following month, the Wiri Yamu massacre story did "hit the media," and was met by categorical denials from the dictatorial regime in Lisbon.

Secretary of State William Rogers signed an urgent cable to our posts in Portugal, Mozambique and Rome,

asking for any information on Wiri Yamu. The consulate in Lourenco Marques, the colonial capital of Mozambique, responded promptly: "Despite sparsity of evidence, there is reason to believe that some incident involving death of civilians south of Tete last December did occur," the cable stated. It added that such a massacre was not typical of the Portuguese colonial troops.

The Lourenco Marques consulate cabled that while it could not confirm the massacre reports directly, it had obtained indirect confirmation. "Attorney for Spanish priests [who are] presently in prison awaiting trial . . . tells us church does have evidence of 'massacre' which allegedly took place near Tete last December," the consulate reported.

According to the accounts given to U.S. officials, "Bishop of Tete overflew alleged site and saw 'many' unburied bodies lying around; priests were subsequently allowed into the area to bury the bodies after bishop had threatened he would . . . bury them personally."

The secret cable added that survivors told missionaries that the Portuguese air force had first fire-bombed Wiri Yamu, which was "subsequently entered by GEPS [all-African volunteer paratrooper unit] who reportedly lined up villagers and shot them."

Footnote: Allen did not return repeated calls from my office.