

Rebels offer truce to Mozambique, challenge Zimbabwe

By Rita McWilliams W.T.
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Boosted by recent military victories, Mozambican rebels offered a peace plan to the Marxist Mozambique government at a Washington press conference yesterday while at the same time in Lisbon, Portugal, they declared war on neighboring Zimbabwe.

A spokesman in Washington for the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) offered a ceasefire and amnesty to the government in return for free elections and expulsion of foreign troops propping up the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo).

It was the first peace proposal by RENAMO in more than 10 years of civil war with the Marxist government.

However, in Lisbon, Reuters News Service quoted a RENAMO spokesman as declaring war on Zimbabwe in answer to a vow made by Zimbabwean Prime Minister Robert Mugabe on Sunday that his country would fight to the last man to prevent RENAMO from taking power in Mozambique.

An estimated 12,000 Zimbabwean troops are helping the Mozambican army in its war against RENAMO.

Reuters said the rebel spokesman read a statement from RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama that said, "We have declared war against Zimbabwe."

The spokesman said the rebels would attack military and economic targets.

A spokesman for the RENAMO office in Washington could not verify the Lisbon statement.

At a Capitol Hill press conference earlier, RENAMO proposed its peace plan in another statement quoting Mr. Dhlakama.

"This is Frelimo's last chance to avoid total military defeat," Mr. Dhlakama warned in a letter read by his Washington representative, Luis B. Serapiao, a professor at Howard University. "If Frelimo rejects these reasonable conditions, RENAMO has no option but to press on with the final conquest."

RENAMO also launched an all-out appeal to the Reagan administration to cut off aid to the Mozambique gov-

ernment and recognize RENAMO as a democratic freedom-fighting group.

"Mozambique will be the first country to defect from the camp of Soviet slave states and take her place among the free nations of the world," Mr. Dhlakama said in the letter.

"But where is America at this historic turning point? As the Frelimo regime is toppling to its knees, this administration is being caught with the pants of its Mozambique policy around its knees."

RENAMO, which receives no U.S. aid, recently has scored impressive victories against the embattled Frelimo forces, exerting control over much of the countryside. The rebels said more than 3,000 Frelimo soldiers have fled into neighboring Malawi.

Frelimo is supported by an estimated 2,500 Soviet-bloc military and security advisers and up to 13,000 Zimbabwean and Tanzanian troops.

Mr. Dhlakama appealed for non-lethal aid such as medicine, text books and clothing.

Mr. Dhlakama asked President Reagan to dispatch a special envoy

to "liberated Mozambique" to make an independent assessment, and to visit communist Mozambique as well.

He assured the Reagan administration that RENAMO is preparing to establish a democratic government. He said RENAMO has set up an internal national council composed of 12 members, a military council composed of 10 provincial generals and two headquarters staff generals and a civil cabinet with positions for agriculture, education and other public concerns.

"RENAMO as a military entity is winning the war," the letter says. "RENAMO as a political entity is increasing its legitimacy. RENAMO is the de facto government of free Mozambique. For this reason, I find it difficult to understand why certain American officials with responsibility for Mozambique policy will not recognize RENAMO as a national resistance in Mozambique."

Instead, Mr. Dhlakama said in the letter, the United States government "has dealt exclusively with the unelected, Soviet-backed, communist faction in Maputo. They have re-

jected out of hand democratic alternatives from Mozambique."

"I therefore call upon the author of the Reagan Doctrine to repudiate this travesty of administration in his own house and that he remove obstructionist bureaucrats with an interest in propping up the Marxist status quo."

Conservative groups such as the Heritage Foundation and the Conservative Caucus have been urging the Reagan administration to aid the guerrillas as it has the anti-communist rebels of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

"Without direct combat support from the Soviet bloc, the [Frelimo] regime will be forced to negotiate with the rebels," according to a Heritage Foundation report released at the press conference.

The Heritage Foundation has asked President Reagan to warn the Mozambique government and other Marxist regimes in the region that the introduction of Cuban, Ethiopian or other East bloc combat forces into Mozambique would exacerbate an already unstable situation and

likely force an invasion by South African forces.

If Frelimo ignores such overtures, the Heritage Foundation said, the United States should consider providing direct military aid to RENAMO.

The United States has been trying to woo the Marxist government away from the Soviet bloc. Some State Department officials say Mozambican President Samora Machel, who died last week with other top Mozambican officials in an airplane crash, had been making reforms. Mr. Machel's successor has not been announced.

The Reagan administration has asked the Mozambique government to negotiate with the guerrillas and has continued developmental aid programs to the government, which received about \$39 million from the United States last year.

The officials have said that RENAMO has been charged with grave human rights violations and has failed to demonstrate that it would replace the Frelimo government with a free and open dem-

ocratic society.