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U.S. PREPARED TO CONSIDER MEDIATION REQUEST FROM MOZAMBIQUE  
(Article on State Department briefing) (390)

WASHINGTON -- The United States says it is "prepared to give thoughtful consideration" to any request from Mozambique to help mediate an end to that government's draining and long-running conflict with RENAMO, the Mozambican national resistance group. State Department Spokesman Charles Redman said February 8.

His comments came in response to remarks made February 7 by South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha, who said South Africa was trying to initiate a U.S.-brokered settlement of the civil war in Mozambique.

Botha said he raised the subject with former Secretary of State Shultz at the December signing of the Namibia/Angola peace agreement in New York.

"We welcome South Africa's expression of interest in ending the tragic conflict in Mozambique that has brought endless suffering and death to hundreds of thousands of Mozambican citizens," Redman said, responding to Botha's earlier remarks. "It is clear that South Africa's long-standing relations with RENAMO give it the ability to play a constructive role in ending the conflict if it is prepared to do so," he added.

"For our part," the spokesman continued, "as evidenced by our role in brokering the Nkomati accords and mediating an Angola and Namibia accord, we retain a strong interest in ending hostilities in the region, including in Mozambique. We encourage the government and people of Mozambique to achieve a durable peace in their country.

"If that government were to ask us to play a role in this regard, we would be prepared to give thoughtful consideration to exactly how we could be of assistance, either as mediator or otherwise," Redman declared.

The spokesman turned aside follow-up questions from reporters, saying it was "far too early" to try to provide specifics.

"The first step would be an expression of interest on the part of the Mozambican government," Redman reiterated. Beyond that, he could not say what U.S. role might evolve, or if the Soviet Union might be able to play a role in a Mozambican settlement.

"That's why I say we would be prepared to give thoughtful consideration to how we could be of assistance, either as mediator or otherwise," he said.