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'U.S. SEEKS END TO MOZAMBIQUE WAR' (1,310)
(7/12 CSMonitor article by E.A. Wayne)

July 12 Christian Science Monitor carried the following article by E.A. Wayne on page 8, with the above headline.

(BEGIN TEXT)

WASHINGTON -- Peace talks in Angola's civil war and South Africa's desire to improve relations with its neighbors may have opened the doors for peace in Mozambique.

"The whole regional climate has made it less sensitive to talk" to your opponents, says Chester Crocker, former assistant secretary of state for Africa. "In an era of peacemaking, it is easier for people to make concessions, to reach out," says Mr. Crocker, who mediated last year's Angola-Namibia peace accords as well as a failed 1984 agreement between Mozambique and South Africa.

United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen is on a swing through southern Africa. Exploring the possibilities for fostering peace in Mozambique is a top item on his agenda.

If invited, the Bush Administration is very interested in helping, officials say. The U.S. would not be a central player, they suggest, but it could facilitate a dialogue between Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) rebels, the Mozambique government, and South Africa, which has been Renamo's main backer. Washington also could eventually help build international guarantees needed for a settlement.

The U.S. is pressing South Africa to cut off aid to Renamo and last year issued a report accusing Renamo of responsibility for the deaths of up to 100,000 civilians. Washington is the largest donor of food aid to Mozambique.

U.S. specialists in and out of the government say the parties have entered a "feeling out" period. Emissaries have passed messages between Renamo and the Marxist government, headed by the Frelimo Party (Mozambique Liberation Front). Mozambique and South Africa also have engaged in direct talks and have renewed co-operation on such projects as a major hydroelectric dam.

After consulting the government, for example, the Mozambican Christian Council recently offered a peace plan similar to one discussed in failed 1984 talks and reportedly had fruitful contacts with several Renamo representatives outside the country.

Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano welcomed last month's cease-fire accords in Angola's civil war as a possible example for Mozambique and asked Renamo to follow suit. He also sought United Nations support for efforts to start a dialogue.

13 JUL 1989

Renamo spokesmen welcomed the government's overtures. But they said any cease-fire has to be mutual, not unilateral as the government suggests. Renamo's Washington spokesman, Luis Serapio, says talks have to be among equal partners without preconditions. The government is offering dialogue about ending the fighting and potentially about the conditions of amnesty for Renamo members, Mozambican officials say. But it is not willing to agree to power-sharing negotiations, they say.

U.S. specialists say it remains to be seen whether South Africa is willing to fully give up Renamo -- its lever for destabilizing Mozambique -- and bless peace talks.

If a dialogue with rebels is to begin, the Mozambique government also has to find authoritative Renamo representatives. "There are a lot of people on the outside who claim to speak in the name of Renamo," says a well-informed U.S. specialist, "but it is far from clear who is genuinely close to Renamo's inside decisionmakers or how united they are." Finally, the Mozambican government will have to offer enough political liberalization and other incentives to woo key Renamo players.

Mozambique has been ravaged by more than a decade of war between the Frelimo government and the Renamo rebels, who have long benefited from support by South African military intelligence.

Mozambique's rebels have much less international legitimacy and a less clear political identity than those in Angola, which the U.S. backs. But Renamo has been very effective militarily. While neither side can win the war, U.S. specialists say, more than 80 percent of the country is ungovernable. The economy and society are in ruins.

The Frelimo government has been forced to rely heavily on international aid to survive. It has undertaken significant economic reforms toward free-market approaches. At an important party conference this month, it will reportedly introduce political reforms aimed at meeting complaints from a wide range of Mozambicans, including Renamo, about its one-party rule.

Moscow, long Frelimo's main arms supplier, has reportedly decided to withdraw all of its military advisers over the next year and a half and will reportedly cut its military aid by 40 percent. Informed diplomats say that neighboring Zimbabwe is also pressing for talks. It has thousands of troops in Mozambique defending key transportation routes linking Zimbabwe and the Indian Ocean.

Under these and other pressures, Mozambique's government has shifted its policy in recent months. Instead of telling visitors to avoid Renamo, the government has started asking them to use any channel available to offer the rebels a dialogue about ending the fighting and reintegrating Renamo members into society.

Simultaneously, the South African Foreign Ministry and others have begun to press hard to halt support for Renamo and to cooperate with Mozambique. These South Africans advocate building better relations with black neighbors as the way to end South Africa's international isolation. Currently, these moderates seem to have the upper hand.

13 JUL 1989

While South African aid to Renamo has diminished, U.S. insiders say, it continues in the form of advice, sophisticated communications equipment, and money. They say they are not sure if the aid is flowing mainly from former Portuguese Mozambicans in South Africa or South African military intelligence.

William Minter, visiting researcher at Georgetown University and a Mozambique specialist, says he thinks the military intelligence role remains important and reflects a deep division within the South African government. He points to an April 27 incident where South African military trucks reportedly drove Renamo troops to the main border crossing with Mozambique, waited while they looted and killed on the Mozambican side, and then drove them and their loot away.

One U.S. insider suggests that no clear message will emerge on South Africa's direction until after elections in September that are expected to elevate Frederik de Klerk to the presidency. A clear decision for peace from South Africa, Mr. Minter adds, would foster more feelers and possible resumption of 1984 direct Renamo-government talks.

There is broad consensus that Mozambique needs peace. More than 1 million Mozambicans have fled to neighboring lands from the war. An estimated 1.6 million are displaced within the country and another 2.8 million are considered seriously affected by the fighting. Well over 100,000 civilians are believed to have died in the decade of fighting. The U.N. estimates that almost 400 million dollars in emergency relief and will be needed in the year ahead just to meet the needs inside Mozambique.

U.S. officials and others liken the Renamo rebels to the Khmer Rouge because of their brutal tactics. The Frelimo government, however, is also credited with alienating large segments of the population through disastrous policies and abuses.

A solution may require dealing with Renamo and fully ending South Africa's efforts to destabilize Mozambique. U.S. and Soviet specialists agree, but the problem now goes far beyond Renamo and South Africa.

Mozambique is a "testimony to the power of destruction and the difficulty of construction," University of California specialist John Marcum told a recent Johns Hopkins University seminar. "It will be very difficult to put Humpty Dumpty together again."

A well-placed Soviet expert, who requested anonymity, says Renamo is only part of Mozambique's "bandit" problem. Many others also took up arms against the government. This led to a kind of general social mutiny, he says, which destroyed the old system in the countryside and has left nothing in its place.

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