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AFRICA-MOZAMBIQUE

Rebels' Supplies Continue

South Africa is continuing to support rebels in Mozambique, according to a senior American official.

In the first US comment since Pretoria is said to have promised to cut supplies to the rebel Mozambique National Resistance (**Renamo**) last year, Alison Rosenberg, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, said South Africa was still involved. Pretoria has persistently denied helping the Mozambique rebels. At a meeting at Songo in Mozambique last September, President P. W. Botha is believed to have promised Joaquim Chissano, his Mozambican counterpart, that Pretoria's support for Renamo would stop (p. 9000). The meeting revived the Nkomati Accord, signed five years ago on March 16th, which committed both sides to stop backing each other's rebels. (p. 7166).

As a result of the Songo meeting, South Africa supplied Mozambique with non-lethal military aid to help defend key installations from Renamo attack in the country. In February, Pik Botha, the Foreign Minister, suggested that the United States should mediate between the rebels and the government in Mozambique. The US welcomed the call but, despite a visit to the region by a senior State Department official, no negotiations appear to be imminent.

A US official said on March 10th, that Washington knew of Renamo bases within 10 miles of the South African border and knew that supplies were reaching the rebels from South Africa. He said the US suspected that they were coming from both the South African Defence Force and private sources within the country and he pointed out that Pretoria had made no effort to block the supply route.

Renamo rebels have recently destroyed about 12 miles of the Nacala railway in northern Mozambique but appear to have moved their operations to the south of the country, attacking private-sector projects. Catholic missionaries near Nacala have reported that 3,500 people have starved to death this year, although the port is well-supplied. But blown-up bridges prevent food reaching villages even 35 miles from the port.

The civil war, banditry and drought have left nearly half of Mozambique's 15 million people in need of food aid this year.

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