

GREEN PAGES: *War and reconstruction*

SA ships strip coast of LM prawns

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PIRATE ships which sail into Mozambique's territorial waters, mainly from South Africa, are illegally stripping the coastline of its prawns — and local maritime authorities are powerless to prevent this.

Mozambican fishermen last year reported a constant presence of South African boats in Mozambican waters, primarily in Machungulo Bay 25km south of Maputo.

"They are only able to catch fish out there on the high sea as prawns are abundant only in shallow waters. So they come right in here to zones which they know are out of bounds," said Ernesto Nhambe, the director of Maritime Administration in Maputo.

The boats are usually spotted by fishermen in dhows or marine guards, who inform the maritime authorities. "We speak to them over the radio and that's how we found out they are South

Before you shell and pop that delicious LM prawn in your mouth, consider that the prawn was probably illegally caught off the Mozambique coast. By **GIL LAURECIANO**

Africans," says Nhambe. "We immediately inform the National Maritime Directorate who lodge complaints with the South African authorities."

But the government, which spends

about 45 percent of its revenue on the country's war effort, lacks the resources to stop the plunder. The maritime authorities don't have a single boat — and helicopters that could be used to control illegal fishing are engaged in anti-insurgency operations.

The export of prawns contributes 40 percent to Mozambique's foreign exchange earnings and illegal fishing is a serious threat to one of the country's most valuable resources.

"The consequences of this form of ecological destruction won't differ from those of the war in the countryside," says Luis Martins, a biologist from the state secretariat for fishing.

The government has begun to toughen up its controls on legislation and measures to prevent the overexploitation of marine resources, including a revision of the fishing calendar, limiting licences to foreign fishing concerns and penalties for disobeying the law.