

Pact could end resistance in Mozambique

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LISBON — The future of the Mozambican rebel movement — Renamo — appears to be in the balance following preliminary moves to reach a mutual security accord between South Africa and its marxist-ruled neighbour Mozambique, Portuguese diplomatic sources believe.

Renamo, Portuguese acronym of the Mozambican national resistance, has been responsible for constant and sometimes spectacular sabotage in Mozambique since 1977 and some opponents of South Africa charge it is used by Pretoria for pressuring the Mozambican Government.

It has repeatedly sabotaged power lines carrying electricity to South Africa from the Portuguese-run Cabora Bassa hydro-electric project, causing huge financial losses to Portugal.

Following the visit to Lisbon in late November by the Foreign Minister, Mr Pik Botha, the Portuguese have been active in working for a summit meeting between President Samora Machel and the Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, at which a 'mutual security agreement' is likely to be discussed, according to sources here.

The Portuguese hope that if the rebels can be isolated the dam will be able to operate effectively, reducing its present economic burden on Portugal.

Diplomatic sources here say that since the Botha visit the rebel's chief co-ordinator in South Africa, Mr Evo Fernandes, has been under pressure to keep a low profile, while a number of other resistance movement officials abroad, including its New York representative, have been removed from their posts.

In exchange for assurances that Mozambique will severely curtail the activities of African National Congress groups in that country, South Africa seems to be reconsidering the role of Renamo, sources here believe.

If preliminary moves are successful and the mooted summit comes off, Pretoria and Maputo could work out a mutually advantageous pact assuring the security of those countries and even opening the way to low key South African development aid and investment in the country — something the Mozambicans have already indicated they would not oppose.