

# Bid to Have U.S. Back Mozambique Rebels Halted

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WASHINGTON, March 15 — The State Department has apparently succeeded in ending the efforts of conservatives and others to undercut the Reagan Administration's policy of seeking better relations with Mozambique

Officials in the Administration and Congress say the intense campaign to have the United States drastically shift its policy on the Mozambique Government, which has called itself Marxist, and begin supporting anti-Government rebels has become a casualty of the Iran-contra affair.

And the officials said the campaign

was unlikely to be revived in the Administration's remaining two years.

At one time, the issue of whether to withdraw support from the Government of Mozambique was a subject of lively contention within the Administration, and many believed the momentum favored an eventual shift of policy.

### Casey Retirement a Setback

But the Iran-contra affair has dampened enthusiasm in the Administration for such moves, several officials agreed in interviews. The retirement because of illness of William J. Casey as Director of Central Intelligence has robbed the conservatives of their most

forceful Administration voice for support of the Mozambican rebels. A staff shake-up at the National Security Council has also depleted the influence of those who had hoped for such a change of policy.

Officials described the developments as a setback for those who had hoped to reinforce and extend the so-called Reagan Doctrine, which calls for support of insurgencies directed against Communist or leftist governments.

State Department policy makers have tried to increase ties to Mozambique in an effort to reduce its ties to Moscow. The Government has been aggressively challenged by a military in-

surgency called the National Resistance Movement, or Renamo.

At a Congressional hearing this month, one of the rebels' principal supporters on Capitol Hill, Representative Dan Burton, challenged Chester A. Crocker Jr., the Assistant Secretary of State in charge of African affairs, on the issue. Mr. Burton, an Indiana Republican, asked how the Administration could justify supporting a Marxist government and turning its back on anti-Communist insurgents.

### Moving Away From Moscow

In the past, Mr. Crocker, who has been a leading advocate of improving relations with the Maputo Government, had replied mildly to such questions. But in what State Department officials said was a belief that the situation had changed irreversibly, Mr. Crocker

challenged the characterization of the Government as Marxist and called the Renamo movement a tool of the South African military.

"We do not consider the Government of Mozambique to be, in the sense you use that term, a Communist government," Mr. Crocker said. "The Government of Mozambique has been working systematically in the past four or five years to move away from its previously close embrace with Moscow."

The Administration is undertaking a major relief operation in Mozambique, where civil war combined with years of drought has caused a severe food shortage. The United States is offering \$50 million in food assistance.

Representative Howard E. Wolpe, a Michigan Democrat and chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, commended the Admin-

istration for resisting conservative pressures to abandon the Mozambican Government in favor of Renamo. Mr. Wolpe, who is usually critical of the Administration's policy on southern Africa, described Renamo as without any genuine popular support.

Renamo's origins date to Mozambique's independence from Portugal in 1975. The movement was supported principally by the white regime in what was then Rhodesia, Portuguese exiles and the South African Government.

The Reagan Administration helped arrange a nonaggression agreement between the Pretoria Government and Mozambique. But American policy makers say South Africa has violated the agreement and supported the Renamo rebels as part of its effort to disrupt the surrounding black-ruled countries.