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:GRILZ:

BY IAIN CHRISTIE

MAPUTO, JUNE 1, REUTER - THE ITALIAN JOURNALIST WHO WAS KILLED IN MOZAMBIQUE DIED WHILE ACCOMPANYING A REBEL BAND ATTACKING A CENTRE FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AID TO STARVING VICTIMS OF THE WAR IN THIS SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRY.

ALMERIGO GRILZ WAS KILLED ON MAY 19 BY MOZAMBIKAN SECURITY FORCES GUARDING THE SMALL TOWN OF CAIA, ON THE SOUTH BANK OF THE ZAMBEZI RIVER

I WAS IN THE TOWN THAT DAY WITH A TEAM MAKING A FILM FOR THE UNITED NATIONS ABOUT EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR DISPLACED MOZAMBIKANS.

CAIA WAS RETAKEN BY GOVERNMENT FORCES LAST FEBRUARY AFTER BEING OCCUPIED FOR 14 MONTHS BY REBELS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN-BACKED MOZAMBIQUE NATIONAL RESISTANCE (MNR).

SINCE THEN, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO FLED CAIA DURING THE OCCUPATION HAVE RETURNED FROM THE BUSH AND ARE RECEIVING FOOD, CLOTHING, AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN AN AIRLIFT ORGANISED BY THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

DURING THE UN FILM TEAM'S VISIT, PEOPLE WERE ARRIVING IN DESPERATE CONDITION. HUNGRY AND HALF- NAKED, THEY LINED UP FOR FOOD AND CLOTHING HANDOUTS.

AT 16.00 HOURS LOCAL TIME ON MAY 19 A DAKOTA DC-3 CHARTERED BY THE WFP FROM THE MOZAMBIKAN NATIONAL AIRLINE LANDED AT CAIA'S 700-METRE TARMAC AIRSTRIP. IT WAS CARRYING MAIZE MEAL.

-- MORE STR/IC

GRILZ 2 MAPUTO

MINUTES LATER I LEFT FOR BEIRA CITY WITH A NORWEGIAN U.N. OFFICIAL, MS LISE STENSRUD, ON A TWIN-ENGINEED CESSNA AIRCRAFT, PILOTED BY A CANADIAN, MR DAVE DONKERSLOOT. THE FILM CREW FLEW TO BEIRA SHORTLY AFTERWARDS ON THE DAKOTA.

THE FOLLOWING DAY IN BEIRA WE WERE TOLD BY A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL THAT CAIA HAD BEEN ATTACKED BY THE MNR TWO HOURS AFTER OUR DEPARTURE. HE SAID THE REBELS HAD NOT SUCCEEDED IN ENTERING THE TOWN BUT A NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAD BEEN LIGHTLY WOUNDED BY INCOMING BAZOOKA FIRE.

THIS WAS CONFIRMED TO US LATER BY A MEMBER OF THE DAKOTA CREW, WHO SAID THE FOOD AIRLIFT TO CAIA WOULD BE SUSPENDED FOR A FEW DAYS UNTIL THE SITUATION WAS CLEAR.

MR GRILZ, WHO IS SAID BY HIS ITALIAN NEWS AGENCY TO HAVE BEEN MAKING A FILM, MUST HAVE BEEN WITH THE REBELS IN THE BUSH CLOSE TO CAIA WHILE THE U.N. TEAM WAS FILMING THE PLIGHT OF THE DISPLACED PEOPLE.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS DEATH HAS SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLITICS.

UNTIL SUNDAY THIS WEEK, THE MOZAMBICAN AUTHORITIES WERE APPARENTLY UNAWARE THAT MR GRILZ HAD BEEN KILLED BY THIER SECURITY FORCES. HIS BODY MAY HAVE BEEN CARRIED AWAY BY THE REBELS.

THE MOZAMBICAN GOVERNMENT WILL NOW WANT TO KNOW HOW MR GRILZ GOT INTO THE ZONE, IN MNR COMPANY.

CAIA LIES ONLY 75 KM FROM THE SOUTHERN TIP OF MALAWI, THE ONLY AFRICAN COUNTRY WHICH MAINTAINS FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA. LAST YEAR, MR GRILZ ENTERED MOZAMBIQUE FROM MALAWI WITH THE MNR BUT SINCE THEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE SIGNED A SECURITY AGREEMENT WHICH COMMITS MALAWI TO PREVENTING CROSS-BORDER INCURSIONS.

MOZAMBICAN OFFICIALS SAY IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW MR GRILZ AND THE GUNMEN COULD HAVE REACHED CAIA BY ANY OTHER ROUTE OTHER THAN THROUGH MALAWI.

==REUTER STR/IC

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CORRECTION IN GRILZ PAGE ONE. IN LINE TWO, PLEASE INSERT THE WORDS +LAST MONTH+ AFTER +KILLED IN MOZAMBIQUE+.

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