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Anatomy of Renamo

EYEWITNESS accounts by former Renamo/Mozambican National Resistance members have attested to South Africa's support for the rebel force, according to a report published last week. The interviews, held at the end of last year with 32 of those who took advantage of the Mozambique government's amnesty, also establish that the overwhelming majority of Renamo adherents have been forcibly recruited, and are kept in the organisation through threats of execution for attempted desertion. In one province, Zambezia, between 1984 and 1987 "even the commanders had originally been abducted", according to one interviewee. The report, by US author and Georgetown University researcher William Minter, buttresses an earlier account of the internal workings of Renamo, written by US researcher Robert Gersony. That report did much to thwart right wing lobbyists' moves to have Renamo taken under the US wing in the same way as Unita was adopted. Minter's interviewees provide evidence of regu-

lar supplies from South Africa for a "professionally competent" Renamo, with advanced communications and with military training back-up. Renamo, which he estimates as having about 20,000 soldiers, is not "a loose collection of warlords and roving bands, but rather an army with a clear hierarchical structure and good command, control and communications". Some 80-90% of the commanders of Renamo are Shona speakers, many of them veterans from the groups trained by Rhodesia before 1980. The rank and file, however, comes from all ethnic groups. The basic operations unit is the company, of around 100-150 men, generally grouped in one main base with smaller attached bases for special functions such as security and reconnaissance. Each company has a radio communications facility. Radio communications are vital to the structure; one communications officer in charge of the area overlapping Manica and Sofala provinces in 1982-3, had 21 radios in his sector. Sources in Harare told

Minter that the Gorongosa (Renamo headquarters) to South Africa radio link was an advanced rapid frequency-hopping system which neither Mozambique nor Zimbabwe could monitor. There are many references to continuing supplies of weapons and ammunition - further afield through parachute drops, or by sea, and closer to South Africa by porter or helicopter drops. However, according to the interviews the presence of South African troops in Mozambique has been "episodic rather than constant". Consistent evidence of South African support has been difficult to come - and this is presumably because inside Renamo the supply has been organised by small elite groups, on a need-to-know basis. The interviewees referred to training inside South Africa, in one instance at the Phalaborwa special forces base in South Africa. In another case in 1982, 90 recruits were sent for paratroop training in Namibia. Others were given specialised sabotage training. Those trained in South Africa received salaries as members of the SADF. There has been no political training in Renamo; the interviewees "regarded themselves as part of an army, not a political movement", the report says.

[The Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) as described by ex-participants. Research report submitted to Ford Foundation and Swedish International Development Agency.]