

## Ex-HUD aide solicited for charity allegedly linked to African rebels

By David Willman and Gary Webb  
Mercury News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Reagan's housing commissioner asked executives doing business with his agency to donate to a charity that sought to raise money from groups supporting African guerrillas condemned for slaughtering civilians, records and interviews show.

Thomas Demery, while housing commissioner from 1986 to 1988, raised \$290,554 from developers "known to be involved" with pro-

grams of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD's inspector general found. The money went to Food for Africa, a South Africa-based charity operating in the war-torn nation of Mozambique. The socialist-ruled country has been devastated by a civil war waged by the anti-government guerrillas, known as Renamo.

Food for Africa distributes food, clothing and medical supplies throughout the extensively rural southeast African nation. Mozambique's

government has authorized the charity's work, but recently began an examination of its activities. The charity says it is politically neutral and that its goal is to help the civil war's victims.

In the United States, however, Food for Africa's officials have asked for money from vocally anti-communist evangelicals, some of whom openly support Renamo.

See SOLICIT, Page 6A

### HUD's questionable ties to charity

■ Housing Commissioner Thomas T. Demery raised money for a charity called Food for Africa.

■ One of the charity's top contributors was television evangelist Pat Robertson, ex-presidential candidate.

■ Robertson is a vocal supporter of an anti-communist guerrilla group operating in Mozambique, where the charity disburses its relief.

■ A spokeswoman for Robertson said the money was given to Food for Africa with the understanding that it would, in part, assist families of the guerrillas.

■ The socialist government of Mozambique has begun a "preliminary" examination of Food for Africa's activities.



Demery Robertson

SOLICIT, from Page 1A

One such supporter, television evangelist and former Republican presidential candidate Pat Robertson, donated \$25,000, at Demery's request, with the understanding that it would assist the families of Renamo soldiers, according to a Robertson spokesman.

Demery, while housing commissioner, trumpeted Food for Africa at eight fund-raising dinners across the United States from 1986 to 1988. Some of the housing industry executives who donated told federal investigators they were deeply moved by slide-show presentations hosted by Demery and the charity's South African founder.

The HUD inspector general concluded that Demery's involvement with Food for Africa "may have violated" the agency's conflict-of-interest standards. An investigative report was forwarded to the Justice Department, which ultimately decided not to prosecute Demery.

Demery, who as housing commissioner exercised vast power over a number of government housing programs, said in interviews with the Mercury News that he did not misuse his position to assist Food for Africa and that he has had no involvement with Renamo.

But records obtained from HUD under the Freedom of Information Act show that Demery apparently returned phone calls from Renamo's representative in Washington.

The Mercury News also has found that, at Demery's request, the charity enlisted members of Lt. Col. Oliver North's covert fundraising network to raise money for its cause.

The United States has shunned Renamo because of its human rights record in Mozambique, a socialist country that renounced Marxism in July after 14 years of post-colonial independence.

#### What records show

Records and interviews also revealed that:

✓ Food for Africa and Demery have had close personal and financial ties to Robertson, the television evangelist who unstintingly championed the rebels during his 1988 presidential campaign.

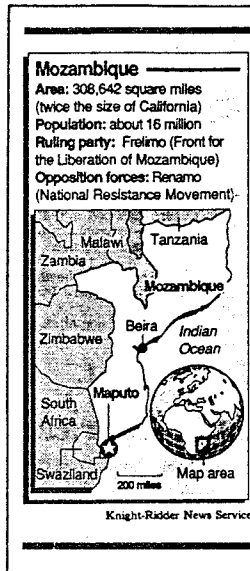
✓ Food for Africa has solicited and affiliated itself with other staunchly anti-communist clergy members, including Texas televangelist James Robison, who has pledged \$25,000 a month.

✓ Food for Africa is affiliated with and receives monthly financing from a South African church that, according to a founder of Renamo, is giving material and spiritual support to the guerrilla force.

✓ Food for Africa in 1986 and 1987 enlisted a lawyer and a public relations firm that were integral parts of North's secret operation to raise money for the Nicaraguan Contras.

✓ Food for Africa, despite its name, does not raise money to buy food. The charity's sole purpose, its brochures say, is to buy airplanes and trucks for distributing supplies and operating relief centers. Two of the charity's trustees say the South African government provides some of those supplies.

Officials of other relief organizations said they do not accept South African supplies because of the government's racial policies and the widespread belief that its military continues to secretly equip Renamo. Renamo was created in the mid-1970s by agents of white-ruled Rhodesia, which is now



Map area Knight-Ridder News Service

### Guerrillas' motives, methods

Q What is Renamo?

A A guerrilla force fighting the government of Mozambique, Renamo was formed in the mid-1970s by neighboring white-ruled Rhodesia. The group was formed, in part, to keep the black government of Mozambique off balance because it was allowing another group of guerrillas seeking to topple the Rhodesian government to operate from its soil. When Rhodesia became black-ruled Zimbabwe, South Africa became a main patron of Renamo.

Q Why is Renamo fighting?

A Renamo espouses an anti-communist agenda; the ruling Mozambique government is socialist, having renounced Marxism in July. But many analysts believe Renamo's main aim has been to destabilize the

government, rather than to supplant it.

Q Where does Renamo operate?

A Predominantly in Mozambique's rural outback or bush. Analysts estimate Renamo has occupied, if not controlled, 80 percent of the largely rural country.

Q What is Renamo's human rights record?

A The State Department in 1988 "conservatively" estimated that Renamo had murdered at least 100,000 civilians. Based on refugee interviews, the department's Robert Gersony said Renamo's atrocities "included shooting executions, knife/ax/bayonet killings, burning alive, beating to death, forced asphyxiation, forced starvation, forced drownings, and random shooting."

— David Willman

Zimbabwe. South Africa later became the rebels' main patron.

Demery and Food for Africa's founder, fundamentalist pastor Peter Pretorius, said in interviews that neither the charity nor its parent body has aided the Renamo guerrillas. Indeed, no evidence has surfaced from Mozambique suggesting that the charity has directly aided the rebels.

"People are dying and other people are trying to help," said Demery, who helped start Food for Africa's American operations in Michigan in 1985 and was the charity's chief fund-raiser until Reagan appointed him federal housing commissioner in late 1986. "That's the beginning and end of Food for Africa."

#### Claims of charity's approval

Demery, a born-again Christian, and Pretorius, who met because of Pretorius' association with Demery's fundamentalist church, also said that all of the charity's activities are conducted with the knowledge and approval of the Mozambique government.

But Mozambique has recently begun a "preliminary" examination of the charity's activities, sources familiar with the matter have told the Mercury News.

The examination has been prompted, said those sources, by suspicions that Food for Africa is supported by American anti-communists who also back Renamo. A would-be contributor to Food for Africa this year received favorable literature about Renamo after expressing an anti-communist opinion to the charity's office in Southfield, Mich., sources said.

Pretorius said Food for Africa runs an orphanage in a small coastal town in Mozambique, where medical services are provided, basket weaving and carpentry are taught and produce is grown. He said Food for Africa operates a soup kitchen in the capital city of Maputo and distributes food at four other, more remote sites in the difficult-to-traverse nation, which is almost twice the size of California.

Although the charity's policy is not to assist government or Renamo soldiers, Pretorius said, "It's

difficult to tell" whether the charity's efforts have aided the families of Renamo soldiers.

And, Pretorius said, if he rejected assistance on the basis of a donor's position toward Renamo, "all I would be doing is harming people who the politics of this world affect very little. What affects them is whether they've got food to eat."

#### The human rights record

Support for Renamo is a matter of international sensitivity because of the rebels' human rights record, which has prevented them from winning official backing from the United States government.

In 1988, shortly after the U.S. State Department published a report "conservatively" estimating that Renamo had killed at least 100,000 unarmed Mozambicans, Roy Stacy, the department's deputy assistant secretary of African affairs, said: "What has emerged in Mozambique is one of the most brutal holocausts against ordinary human beings since World War II. And the supporters of Renamo, wherever they may be, cannot wash the blood from their hands unless all support for this unconscionable violence is stopped immediately."

Demery, who toured Mozambique in 1986, said, "I have no opinion, whatsoever" about Renamo. Said Pretorius: "I don't have any agreement to their situation, but nor do I have any conflict. . . . My personal view is that I do not have very much time for people who shoot people, who murder people, regardless of which side they back."

A founder of Renamo, Robert MacKenzie, interviewed by phone from Tacoma, Wash., said that a South African religious group closely affiliated with Pretorius and Food for Africa has provided medicines, run soup kitchens and "on occasion provided clothes" to the Renamo soldiers.

Food for Africa's parent body, Jesus Alive Ministries Ltd., is financed by and formally affiliated with the Rhema church of South Africa.

"I do know of Rhema and I know of their efforts inside Renamo

areas," said MacKenzie, a former member of the Rhodesian and South African armies who recently returned from a lengthy bivouac with Renamo forces.

"Let me categorically state," responded Pretorius, whose ministry is affiliated with Rhema, "that that's an absolute lie." A spokesman for the Rhema church echoed Pretorius' statement.

#### 'Evangelistic outreach' only

Pretorius also said he practices only "straight evangelistic outreach. . . . We're not involved in any political side."

An official with a Quaker charity working in Mozambique said Pretorius' Jesus Alive Ministries was actively preaching anti-communism in Renamo-controlled areas.

"Their orientation is basically to preach the Gospel against communism," said Mahulati Mokegane, director of the African division of the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia. "I have seen their planes leaving the airport in Maputo."

Renamo's Washington-based agent, Thomas W. Schaaf, acknowledged that religious organizations in the United States and South Africa play a "very significant" role in assisting the rebels, but he declined to identify them.

"Obviously, they're in a very sensitive position, the ones that I know about," said Schaaf, who has been accused by the governments of Mozambique and Zimbabwe of supplying the guerrillas with weapons and intelligence.

Demery's HUD telephone logs indicate that in April 1987 he received and returned two calls at his HUD office from Schaaf.

Both Schaaf and Demery denied making contact, even though Demery's phone messages contain check marks in the "call returned" category.

One of Schaaf's phone messages said that Schaaf "has visitors in from Africa . . . who know your pastor at home. Wondering if you were interested in meeting with them." The other Schaaf message mentioned that Demery was "going to coordinate a visit" with Schaaf on Capitol Hill.

Demery first said he "may have" called Schaaf back, then later said he was "almost 100 percent certain" he did not.

"I did not want to find myself in the situation where a returned call could somehow be misinterpreted by the other side," Demery said.

#### Links to Renamo supporters

But both Demery and Pretorius have openly associated with other Renamo supporters.

One of those supporters, television evangelist Robertson, has featured Pretorius on his syndicated religious talk show, the "700 Club." The "700 Club" also aired a flattering documentary on the Renamo rebels in 1986.

And a spokeswoman for Robertson said that it was at Demery's request that the evangelist's Christian Broadcasting Network gave the \$25,000 to Food for Africa.

"We had a request from Thomas Demery, who was raising money for food to distribute to the camps," said Frankie Abourjile, an aide to Robertson. "And we were happy to contribute to that effort." Abourjile also said she was "sure" that CBN contributed the \$25,000 from its "Operation Blessing" fund on the understanding that the relief would, in part, ease the plight of the families of Renamo soldiers.

Demery said the 1986 Robertson contribution "didn't involve me" and that he learned of it only "a few months ago."

Neither Demery nor Pretorius said he was bothered by Robertson's solidarity with Renamo. Pretorius, in fact, said he was disappointed Robertson gave his charity only \$25,000.

Demery, described by a Robertson presidential campaign spokeswoman as a "close friend" of the Virginia-based evangelist, did acknowledge he raised money for Robertson's campaign. Demery's HUD telephone logs show several calls from top Robertson campaign officials — including one from the candidate himself.

In 1986, Pretorius also personally and in writing solicited funding from the Dallas-based Christ for the Nations ministry, which backs Renamo and preaches anti-communism throughout the world, according to Christ for the Nations officials and Pretorius.

#### Request for donation

Freda Lindsay, leader of Christ for the Nations, said Pretorius asked for \$34,494 and that the money was not given because Pretorius did not provide the necessary paperwork. Pretorius said he actually did obtain \$500 from the group, to be used for a church roof.

At one point, in an interview, Pretorius said he was "totally unaware" that groups he has dealt with supported Renamo. But Christ for the Nations, like Robertson, has made no secret that it backs the rebels.

In a July newsletter, for instance, the organization sought funds to "help the starving" in Mozambique and cited the "death,

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— Thomas Demery, Housing commissioner under Reagan

dealing WAR between communists and Freedom Forces," a reference to Renamo.

Food for Africa officials have given contradictory explanations about the source of their supplies. Two of Food for Africa's U.S. officers told HUD investigators that the charity receives supplies from the South African government, which officials at other international charities with a U.S. presence said was extremely unusual.

Pretorius denied getting supplies from the South African government, adding that he does accept pharmaceuticals from South African companies.

Records also show that, on Demery's recommendation, Food for Africa in 1986 hired a Washington public relations firm, Lichtenstein & Co., to devise publicity campaigns and organize fund-raisers. Those events generated tens of thousands of dollars for Food for Africa.

Lichtenstein & Co. was part of North's campaign to finance the Contras. The company was paid \$36,000 by North's chief Contra fund-raiser, Carl R. "Spitz" Channell.

#### Contra connection

Another player in the Contra fund-raising operation who became a Food for Africa supporter was Washington lawyer Martin Artiano. Artiano, according to congressional Iran-Contra records, collected more than \$200,000 from Channell for arranging meetings with President Reagan for the Contras' biggest benefactors.

Artiano, records show, was in frequent telephone contact with Demery and was a Food for Africa contributor. Artiano also was "somehow involved" with a Food for Africa fund-raiser at New York's Ritz-Carlton Hotel in March 1987 and was active with HUD-related projects, according to HUD investigative records.

Authorities have never accused either Lichtenstein & Co. or Artiano of any wrongdoing. Artiano did not respond to phone messages seeking his comment.

Demery reiterated that his and Food for Africa's only intention was to help ease the suffering in Mozambique.