

Secrets of Renamo's ivory trade uncovered

TRADING ivory for anti-aircraft missiles and selling smuggled semi-precious stones in Washington DC were among the schemes dreamed up by the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) rebels to finance their protracted war against President Joaquim Chissano's government.

Evidence of the planned transactions has emerged from more than 200 documents captured by the government army on 18 April when troops overran what was described as a rebel "presidential base" at Nhamagoda, in the central province of Sofala. *The Independent* gained access to the documents, which consist mainly of radio messages and letters in Portuguese sent to and from Renamo's leader, Afonso Dhlakama, from mid-1987 to early 1989. The messages focus on a wide range of topics including peace negotiations, battlefield reports inside Mozambique and neighbouring Zimbabwe, and contacts with the governments of Malawi and Kenya.

Renamo's relations with the Malawian secret police and the Kenyan government are also detailed in the papers. A letter of January 1989 said that Max Lunguzi, a Malawian secret police agent, co-ordinated aid to the rebels and that the Malawian government demanded that Renamo halt attacks on a railway which links Malawi to the Indian ocean port of Nacala. In August 1989, Mr Dhlakama announced a unilateral ceasefire on the Nacala railway.

Correspondence in May 1988 from Renamo's external representatives reveal that Daniel arap Moi, Kenya's President, had invited Mr Dhlakama to visit Kenya and had promised to provide passports and air tickets. Nairobi has strongly denied reports that it aids the rebel movement, though Western diplomats and Mozambican officials believe that Kenya has provided Renamo with uniforms and military training.

The radio messages dealing with military matters also belie Mr Dhlakama's claim that his guerrilla army is not responsible for atrocities against civilians. On 17 June 1988, Moises Machava, a section chief in Manica province, sent Mr Dhlakama a message about operations inside Zimbabwe: "Two groups of Machaze special forces went with terrorism missions into the interior of Zimbabwe. One group headed by group commander Ricardo Oliveira went with 10 soldiers. On 16 July 1988 they killed five elements of the population and burned down 12 houses."