

Fuelling Renamo's war with smuggled ivory, gemstones

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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 April 18 when troops overran what was described as a rebel "presidential base" at Nhamagoda, in the central province of Sofala.

The documents 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.

One unsigned and undated document, believed to have been written by Mr Dhlakama, says: "I would like to know the price of every missile. I would also like to know the price of every kilogram of ivory.

"Renamo can arrange the ivory. Renamo can arrange a landing strip for the plane. That same plane that comes to bring the missiles ought to bring one or two instructors only to teach our forces to work the missiles."

In an apparent response, a message sent on December 28 1987 by Victor Anselmo, Renamo's chief of political affairs, says that a plane "will land on a strip chosen by your excellency (Dhlakama) and the same plane will take



Afonso Dhlakama

with it on departure the trucks of ivory".

Later Mr Anselmo writes: "It is possible for us to obtain missile arms in return for ivory. The operation can take place on one of the landing strips in the interior."

Mr Anselmo also spoke of plans to smuggle out semi-precious stones through a base at the Chire River on the border with Malawi for sale in the United States.

"About the case of semi-precious stones, there is a supermarket in Washington that needs them. The pro-

cess of getting them out could be through Chire..."

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 guerilla army is not responsible for atrocities against civilians.

On June 17 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 July 16 1988 they killed five elements of the population and burned down 12 houses." — The Independent.