

RENAMO-SA DEAL REVEALED

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A New Nation investigation has revealed that a deal was struck between Eskom and Renamo in which Eskom gave material support in exchange for the bandit movement not attacking electricity pylons around the Cahora Bassa dam.

Up to last month, the deal in which Eskom gave Renamo food, uniform and ammunition, was still in place.

Although it could not be established, it is believed that the deal also involved the South African Defence Force (SADF).

Eskom chief executive, Ian McRae, who is also the Permanent Joint Committee (PJC) chairperson - a committee comprising of South Africa, Mozambique and Portugal - which was established to work on the restoration of Cahora Bassa plant. The plant was on previous occasions attacked by Renamo.

To stop the attacks, Eskom struck the deal with Renamo.

McRae conceded this week that there was "an

exchange of information between Renamo and Eskom security".

Sources close to the two groups revealed that the exchange of "material supply" which had taken place in the border areas of the northern Transvaal, included foodstuffs, uniforms and ammunition.

New Nation's information is that Renamo chief, Afonso Dlakama, met with McRae several times this year.

Meeting

While denying an exchange of material, McRae said meetings with the rebel leader were necessary to discuss the security situation of the powerline since Renamo had blown up 1 400 towers.

The Eskom chief said that the PJC had nominated a particular member to meet with Dlakama. But he would not reveal the identity of this particular member.

Asked whether meetings with Renamo had been sanctioned by the three governments involved with Cahora Bassa, McRae said: "It is not the way we operate. We inform them of what we are doing through our reports from time to time.

"By virtue of the fact that after we have informed them that we were having meetings with Renamo; they did not put up a finger and say 'stop', effectively the governments had knowledge of the contact," he said.

McRae claimed since meetings of the committee with Dlakama, attacks on the pylons had stopped and that "he [Dlakama] has indicated that he no longer wishes to damage the Cahora Bassa line". He had also pledged to support the restoration and the rebuilding of the line and was even prepared to give co-operation where he could.

Relationship

But contrary to McRae's remarks, New Nation sources have indicated that attacks on the powerlines were continuing. The restoration process had not even been started because of the attacks.

Other sources have indicated that a strong relationship between the SA Defence Force and Eskom has been in existence for years and that several ANC cadres were detained by members of

Eskom's advice, but its personnel had not been sent to the line.

The company had instead been re-directed to protect the Komatipoort-Maputo power line which has been under Renamo's constant invasions.

Intelligence

There are, however, many reservations about the services of this security firm.

Sources close to the firm said one of its directors is a former member of Rhodesian intelligence who had immigrated to

South Africa, shortly before that country became independent.

The officer, whose name is known to New Nation, is said to have been involved in attacks on Zimbabwean refugees in the Mapai and Chimoio camps, in Mozambique, during the liberation war in Zimbabwe.

Given his past combat activities, there is a strong suspicion that he could have dealings with Renamo since the latter was formed in Rhodesia during this period.

This security company

apparently began safeguarding the Maputo line on June 25 this year. The following day, the Mozambican News Agency (AIM) reported an attack on the powerline and the derailment of a passenger train in the Komatipoort-Maputo railway line.

The director of the Electricity of Mozambique (EDM), Fernando Juliao, who is also a member of the Permanent Joint Committee, was not available for comment.