

'Renamo rebels use chemicals'

MAPUTO — A defector from Mozambique's right-wing Renamo rebels says the insurgent group uses chemical weapons.

The defector, Victorino Fernandes, told a news conference he had met about 50 Renamo fighters carrying gas masks at a bus stop 40km north of Maputo in January.

Fernandes said the men told him the masks were necessary as protection against a weapon they were carrying, a projectile that could be fired from a heavy machinegun. The weapon released a poisonous substance which, if inhaled in sufficient quantity, could kill. People further away from the impact would faint or be seriously weakened, Fernandes said.

Western military experts said they knew of no chemical weapon designed to be fired from machineguns.

Renamo officials in Europe have denied using chemical weapons in their fight against the Mozambique government since Mozambique secured independence from Portugal in 1975. — Sapa-Reuter.

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