

New Renamo-SA link

South Africa continued to support Renamo, the Mozambican bandit movement, until as recently as two months ago, a New NATION investigation has revealed.

Investigations in the past few days also uncovered the route used by the SA Defence Force to channel the aid through the Kruger National Park to Ngungwe - a Renamo base in Mozambique. The base is located about 100 kilometres from the park's border with Mozambique.

Personnel from the SADF's Skhukhuza Commando inside the park, have often travelled to the Renamo base, ostensibly to deliver supplies to civilians in exchange for firewood.

Trucks laden with supplies, some of it packed in steel trunks, regularly made trips to the base, returning with loads of firewood.

Evidence at hand suggests that the collection of firewood may actually have been an attempt to disguise the real purpose of the journeys into Mozambican territory.

The park's spokesperson, Dr Solomon Joubert, confirmed that the SADF had been exchanging supplies for firewood in Mozambique.

He said the exchanges had been taking place since the early 1980s to help Mozambican villagers who, because of starvation, risked their lives crossing into the park.

"Now, because we do not have the capacity . . . the necessary vehicles, we have entered into an agreement with the defence force, because they patrol the border as well.

"They [the SADF] buy the firewood and any other things that we may use from the villagers, and sell it to us," said Joubert.

However, New NATION has established that "the villagers" were not ordinary Mozambicans, but Renamo members or their captives.

Asked whether he knew that the people with whom the SADF exchanged the firewood were Renamo members, Joubert said: "That might be the case. But that's not my concern. All we know is that we get the firewood from them."

Joubert and the SADF Public Relations Officer Colonel John Rolt, told New NATION that the exchanges took place with the full consent of Mozambican authorities. However, the Mozambique authorities denied this.