

Renamo captures four Mozambique towns

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HUNDREDS of Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) guerrillas are engaged in heavy fighting with government troops in Northern Mozambique, and at least four towns have been taken by the rebels.

The towns are Zumbo and Mutarare in Tete province, Caia in northern Sofala, and Milange in Zambezia Province. For the first time the Mozambican government has acknowledged that it has lost control of certain areas of the country.

Renamo has claimed that Western attempts to restore the Beira corridor road and rail links could fail because of its hold on the territory.

The Frontline States, in a statement from Maputo, said that because of Malawian complicity, Mozambican "bandit gangs" had occupied "frontier zones in the provinces of Tete, Sofala and Zambezia".

COMMENT

The Frontline States are assessing what action should be taken to prevent assistance being given to Renamo from Malawian territory. This could result in further destabilisation of the area. SA sees a Renamo victory in Mozambique as a hole in the wall of hostile states surrounding it, but, with no cohesive policy or structure a Renamo success would cause further destabilisation and could end African National Congress (ANC) activity in the country.

However, US State Department observers do not believe that President Samora Machel's government, though considerably weakened, is in immediate danger of collapse and have encouraged Mozambique to open an embassy in Washington DC.

A great deal of misinformation is being disseminated about the internal picture in Mozambique and some of this has come from SA's State-run radio which has begun quoting direct contacts with the Renamo leadership as the source of its information.