

# A day after the peace, Renamo makes war again

RENAMO guerrillas staged some of the most destructive raids in Mozambique's 12-year war last week — just days after the rebel movement had announced a one-month ceasefire so that emergency supplies could reach the country's drought-stricken areas.

Bands of insurgents brought the war closer than ever to the country's capital when they last week attacked the commercial centre of Marracuene, just 30km north of Maputo. A resurgence of rebel activity in the central province of Zambezia has cut off supplies to 52 000 people in the famine-hit district of Gile.

Mozambique's prime minister, Mario Machungo, said Renamo's unilateral declaration of a ceasefire was an attempt to "justify their crimes to the rest of the world" before the international conference on emergency aid to Mozambique which starts in New York today.

Rob Davies, political analyst at Eduardo Mondlane University's Centre for African Studies, told the *Weekly Mail* that the ceasefire declaration was clearly an attempt by Renamo to break out of the diplomatic isolation it has experienced in the last year.

But Davies believes the move may

## One day after its surprise ceasefire declaration this week, Renamo attacked a town near Maputo, reports EDDIE KOCH

also be an attempt by the rebels to insert themselves as a factor in peace plans for Mozambique that were announced by Foreign Minister Pik Botha in February and given some impetus when British Premier Margaret Thatcher met leaders of the frontline states during her tour of the region last month.

"An overall climate is developing

which suggests that the war should end and I would imagine that Renamo is trying to link itself to this initiative," he said.

Although there is no evidence that the rebel group was pushed into making the declaration by diplomatic pressure, Davies said it was significant that the announcement came from Renamo's wing in Lisbon, which has in the past maintained close links with South African military intelligence.

The South African Defence Force took over Renamo from Rhodesian intelligence after Zimbabwe became

independent and developed its military capacity. South Africa denies claims that it has continued to support Renamo since the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique was signed in 1984.

The Lisbon faction of Renamo also has close links with support groups in West Germany, where a meeting with rebel leader Afonso Dhlakama was held late last year aimed at improving the movement's international image and pressure for the ceasefire may have come from this source.

There are also indications that Renamo's declaration was designed to nudge the Mozambican government into an agreement to negotiate a solution to the war with the rebels.

Asked to comment on the implications of the ceasefire for the South African peace initiative in the region, a representative for South Africa's Department of Foreign Affairs said: "Any move that promotes international dialogue is welcomed by the South African government."

The British government has no official policy on the issue of negotiations with the rebels and Thatcher has labelled Renamo a "terrorist organisation". But in a carefully phrased reply to questions at a press conference in Blantyre last month she did not rule out the possibility that negotiations could end the conflict in Mozambique.

"Whether it (the war) can be settled by negotiations between the government of Mozambique and representatives of Renamo, you would need to know precisely what are the objectives of Renamo and what are their demands and that is not a problem with which we can help," she said. "It would be one which President Chissano, if he wishes to ask for help from any other country, I am sure he would find a ready response."

But flagrant violations of the ceasefire in the last two weeks have seriously undermined any serious intent behind Renamo's initiative. "It's probably largely a public relations stunt," said Davies. "But if Renamo was serious they would have difficulties in getting their people inside the country to observe it. The crucial test of their motives will be seen in the next couple of weeks (when they will have had time to pass on the instruction)."

The Mozambican government has ruled out the idea of talks with Renamo but has indicated it is prepared to widen its amnesty so that members and leaders of the movement can be "reintegrated into society".

● The Mozambican government will ask at the donors' conference in New York for US\$382.8-million in aid of which more than 60 percent is for grain and other foodstuffs.