

Rebels threaten to end Maputo truce

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22 FEB 1984

MAPUTO. — Peacekeepers monitoring a truce in Mozambique's 15-year-old civil war voiced concern yesterday after a spokesman for the main rebel movement said it would stop observing the ceasefire.

Portugal's Lusa news agency quoted Mr Joaquim Vaz, a spokesman

in Nairobi for the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo), as saying the rebels would resume attacks yesterday on two transport corridors covered by the truce.

"Such declarations create confusion, disappointment and concern," said Mr Manfredo Incisa di Camerana, Italian chairman of an eight-nation Joint Verification Committee (JVC) set up to monitor the partial truce.

"We hope that the declaration has been made not by the real Renamo chiefs but by a Renamo representative not having the authorisation of his own chiefs," he said in an interview.

British ambassador Mr Maeve Fort said: "I hope it's just sabre-rattling. It would be extremely foolish for Renamo to attack the corridors."

The partial ceasefire, agreed in peace talks in Rome on December 1, applies to two transport corridors linking landlocked Zimbabwe to the Mozambican ports of Beira and Maputo.

Renamo said in December it would stop attacking the trade routes if 7 000 Zimbabwean soldiers helping the Mozambican army retreated to six-km zones around each corridor and stopped fighting on the government side in other areas.

Mr Vaz said on Wednesday that Renamo had decided to stop observing the truce because the Zimbabweans were not complying with the agreement. Renamo says they are operating in 52 places outside the Beira and Limpopo corridors.

Mr Di Camerana said JVC military experts who

had inspected eight of the 52 areas had found no evidence to support the claims.

"The conclusions of the commission are that in these sites no Zimbabwean troops are present and that they have been withdrawn," he said.

The experts would visit the Limpopo corridor next week to check the Renamo claims, he added.

Mr Di Camerana said Zimbabwean troops were technically violating the accord at the Beira corridor town of Chimoio, where a brigade of about 3 000 men is based. Their base is nine km from the town, outside the corridor limits.

The commission concluded earlier that Renamo was "probably guilty" of six violations of the agreement. — Sapa-Reuter.