

# Renamo 'no' to food convoys

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THE United Nations representative in Mozambique has been unable to get from Renamo an undertaking that its rebels will not attack convoys carrying humanitarian aid to starving communities.

UN representative Mr Peter Simkin confirmed to the official news agency Afp that the secret meeting had taken place between him and Renamo leader Mr Afonso Dhlakama but refused to say when and where it was held.

Mass starvation would occur unless the food got through, he said.

"This is an apocalyptic situation and we cannot allow it to continue," he said, "because we know that in the coming weeks people will start dying of hunger."

Simkin said the UN delegation had tried without success to get an undertaking from Dhlakama that food convoys,

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including those passing through Renamo-held areas, would not be attacked.

He said, however, that new proposals, including the designation of specific routes, would be put to Renamo and added: "I believe the door has not been closed."

Renamo insists that all humanitarian aid be flown in rather than taken in by road on the grounds that convoys would expose the rebels to possible covert surveillance by government forces.

The UN is insisting, however, that the aid must go in by road as not all famine-hit areas have airstrips and only small loads can be landed at existing airstrips, and then at much greater cost than road transport.