

Private armies begin to disband

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MAPUTO. — Commercial concerns that set up private armies to defend their operations against Renamo rebel attacks during the Mozambican war are beginning to disband them.

But they are proceeding cautiously, still uncertain whether the ceasefire between Renamo and the Frelimo government will hold. They are also worried their operations may still be attacked.

Some of the private armies are several thousand strong and were formed because of the inability of the Frelimo troops to provide adequate protection.

Disbanding of the private forces is required in terms of the October 4 peace accord between Renamo and Frelimo. However, exceptions may be allowed by the body monitoring the accord, the Supervisory and Control Commission (SCC).

Another difficulty in the way of demobilising these forces, besides security considerations, is finding alternative employment for the men.

Mozambique Railways, which employs 4 000 militiamen to protect its operations, is reported to be resisting demands for their demobilisation until the men are guaranteed other jobs.

Lomaco, a company jointly owned by the Mozambican government and Lonrho, has begun to demobilise the more than 1 000 private troops guarding its farms. The men are being offered three months' severance pay and plots on Lomaco-owned land.

The five Western countries with seats on the SCC said they were confident of the "competence and impartiality" of the United Nations.