

MOZAMBIQUE

Dhlakama drops objection to Zimbabwean peace-keeping troops

HARARE/ Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama says he has no objection to Zimbabwean troops being incorporated into the UN peace monitoring force. But he added that this was something that had not been discussed by Renamo.

In an interview in the Zimbabwe *Herald* Dhlakama said he would agree to Zimbabwean troops staying in Mozambique under UN command as a way of speeding up the deployment of UN troops. He said there was no good reason why the UN forces should not already have been deployed, and that the longer the exercise took, the longer it would take to prepare for elections.

The issue of Zimbabwe's troops in Mozambique was a major stumbling block in the peace negotiations.

Since the peace accord was signed over five months ago, only a handful of UN monitors have arrived, plus advance units of troops from Italy, one of the contributing countries.

It now appears that Japan is backing out and would rather finance another country to take its place in the UN team - partly because it is reluctant to see its troops being drawn into fighting on foreign soil and partly because Japanese people do not understand the conflict in that country, according to Japanese journalists also present at Dhlakama's bush headquarters at Maringue, in

Mozambique's Sofala province.

Speaking in Shona, the main Zimbabwean language, Dhlakama appealed to the Zimbabwean media to stop calling his forces "bandits" because "we are the opposition party in Mozambique now".

He also said that allegations that Renamo did not control all rebel forces fighting against the Mozambican government had been proved wrong, because "we have ordered our troops to stop fighting in accordance with the peace accord and they have done so".

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe's Defence Minister Moven Mahachi said this week his government is investigating allegations that 1,000 Zimbabwean dissidents are being trained by white instructors at a Renamo stronghold in Mozambique.

He said that although his government had not been informed either by Renamo or by the Mozambican government about the allegations, it had launched an investigation because it could not afford to ignore them.

The allegations surfaced in a Reuters report, claiming to quote UN and Mozambican government documents. The documents also apparently report the sighting of a unit of about 300 well-armed men moving in the direction of Zimbabwe.

[Own correspondent]