

Portuguese troops return

The Portuguese army which Frelimo defeated nearly 20 years ago is returning to coordinate the communications network for the international peace-keeping forces.

Portuguese military participation in Unomoz will constitute Lisbon's largest-ever contribution to a multinational peace-keeping operation, and will be followed by an as-yet-undefined joint role with France and Britain in the setting up of a new unitary Mozambican army.

The first 32 members of the elite Communications Battalion of the Portuguese army (BT4) have already flown in to Maputo, with equipment and vehicles.

The soldiers, both officers and NCOs, have taken up positions in Nampula, Beira and Maputo, where at least some of them will be assigned to Unomoz headquarters.

BT4's role is to secure country-wide internal communications for the Unomoz forces over the next six months, and the operation is seen at home as a testing-ground for the unit's Portuguese-made high-tech equipment.

BT4 is commanded by Lt.-Col. Jose Manuel Pinto de Castro, a former commander of the army's communications stores.

Another 50-strong unit of Portuguese troops under Brig. Albuquerque Goncalves will be responsible for training two battalions of Mozambican "special forces".