

Warning against forcing soldiers

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MAPUTO. — The United Nations Special Representative in Mozambique, Aldo Ajello, has warned that if Renamo and Frelimo forced their soldiers to be part of the new Unified Defence Force, it would create "major problems".

He was responding to reports that some camp commanders in the assembly points were telling their soldiers not to respond to the UN registration form question on whether they wanted to join the new defence force or not.

Mr Ajello said that if such forced recruiting was taking place, it was "shortsighted".

"If you force people to join they will be discontented and will be troublemakers," he said.

He argued that while a properly-trained and well-paid army could be a guarantee of democracy, "a bad army is just a source of trouble and destabilisation".

A string of mutinies in the government army this month adds weight to Mr Ajello's warning.

The latest incident happened last week in the town of Magude, where a supposedly elite commando unit mutinied for the second time in a week, demanding payment of a New Year bonus, equivalent to an extra month's wages.

Residents fled into the bush following indiscriminate rifle and mortar fire by the mutineers.

Implementation of the Peace Agreement between the government and Renamo is once again falling behind schedule, but Mr Ajello thought the delays would not threaten the October date for general elections.