

# Southern Africa News Features

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## TRAINING OF MOZAMBICAN TROOPS TO START

by Ronald Imbayago

A new Mozambican army is expected to start training on 4 April and the recent approval of a new military wage scale is expected to boost morale among the forces.

The first batch of the 24 000 new infantry troops will start training as soon as uniforms and other equipment from Portugal arrive in Maputo. The ship carrying the equipment has already docked at the South African port of Durban.

Mozambique expects to build a strong army of 30 000 men of which 2 000 will join the air force while another 4 000 will form the navy.

Training of the new army was supposed to have started in January, under a revised schedule, but has been repeatedly postponed, usually to accommodate additional demands by Renamo. At one time the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) attributed the delay to unfinished repair work in training centres.

However, Renamo is saying money was at the root of the problem. The disagreement was over wages for lower ranks in the army, for example privates. The government had proposed that a private gets the national minimum wage of 70 000 meticaïs (about US\$12) a month and Renamo was insisting on a monthly wage of more than 90 000 meticaïs (over US\$18).

Renamo troops are also sceptical about the whole programme of demobilization and training. They are uncertain about their future after demobilization. The implementation of the peace process largely depends on the attitude of Renamo.

Many Renamo fighters are young and were allegedly forced to join the rebel group at tender ages. The first fighter to be demobilized by Renamo, Alberto Samuel, (16), told Mozambican reporters that he was kidnapped by Renamo and had taken part in various military operations in the south of the country. On whether he was going to marry since he was returning to civilian life, Alberto said he was still a child.

Demobilization is likely to run into fresh problems since both sides have stopped giving lists of men to be demobilized, according to the Mozambique News Agency (AIM). The lists are needed two weeks before demobilization so that ONUMOZ and the finance ministry can deal with the paperwork concerning demobilization pay.

The demobilization of the troops was supposed to have started last year but was postponed to January and is expected to be complete by May. This now seems impossible considering the slow pace the exercise is being undertaken.

Renamo claims that members of ONUMOZ and government representatives are stealing some of the fighters' demob pay. ONUMOZ has denied the allegations. The forces also feel demob pay is not enough.

Addressing a Press briefing in Maputo in March, the United Nations special representative in Mozambique, Aldo Ajello, said a new wage scale had been set up, adding that as soon as weapons and other military equipment arrive, 15 infantry battalions will be trained in three phases of five battalions each.

For this to succeed, more instructors will be needed to help the 540 Mozambican instructors trained by Zimbabwean and British advisors in Nyanga, Zimbabwe, last year.

The Zimbabwean officers who helped train the 540 Mozambicans may be called again for their expertise. Renamo has already been informed about the plan and has not objected.

Ajello said some training camps were being rehabilitated to facilitate the programme which will see the integration of Renamo and government forces.

Ajello announced at the Press briefing that the Supervisory and Control Commission (CSC), the body responsible for implementing the 1992 Rome Peace Accord, had come up with a new wage scale. This, he said, will boost morale among the new army and encourage them to work towards establishing permanent peace.

The Lieutenant-General, the highest rank in the new army, will receive 2.5 million meticaïs (more than US\$500) a month while a private, the lowest rank, will receive 80 000 meticaïs (approximately US\$16) a month. A private in the old army used to get a basic monthly salary of 32 000 meticaïs (about US\$6). With the new salary scale in place, the demobilization and the building of the new army may go ahead.

Attractive incentives, including food, transport, accommodation and medical care will be awarded in an effort to build a confident and reliable army. Food rations will not only be increased, but the quality will also be improved. Each soldier will get an allowance of 7 300 meticaïs (about US\$2) per day for food.

Poor salaries and unsatisfactory working conditions have on many occasions resulted in soldiers revolting. Ajello said he will consult with the ministries of defence and finance to ensure that the promised money was made available to the troops.

It has been reported on several occasions that Mozambican soldiers were going without pay for several months. For example, the 540 Mozambican infantry instructors trained in Zimbabwe last year waited for two months without pay. Ajello attributed the confusion to the transitional period.

On the whole the demobilization of the troops and the training of the new army is behind schedule. Statistics provided by the UN technical unit in Maputo show that a total of 6 356 soldiers both from government and Renamo, had been demobilized by 30 March since the programme started on 10 March.

Meanwhile, AIM, says a total of 33 347 government and 14 808 Renamo troops have arrived in the country's 49 assembly points.(SARDC)