

Frelimo asks UK to help integrate army

Own Correspondent

LONDON — Mozambique's socialist Frelimo government, due to resume talks this week with right-wing Renamo rebels aimed at ending 14 years of civil war, is asking Britain to help form a single Mozambican army when peace is reached.

Mozambique is keen to use Britain's skills in uniting government and rebel troops which have already been applied in Zimbabwe,

Namibia, and most recently, Angola. It has also approached Portugal, Spain, Egypt and France.

Britain would fund its assistance by diverting aid currently used to provide military training for Mozambican troops guarding the Beira and Limpopo trade corridors.

Britain would work within the framework of the 12-country Joint Verification Commission, set up to monitor a partial ceasefire along

the two corridors.

The fate of thousands of demobilised troops will be one of the trickiest issues in a post-war Mozambique, and is a key item on the agenda of the peace talks in Rome.

Mozambican officials hope to achieve peace by the end of the year. But the talks, which began a year ago and are due to resume this week, are moving at a snail's pace.

According to diplomats Renamo is causing the delay, because it

does not believe peace is in its interests.

The two sides spent all of May working out the agenda, but broke up on June 6 after failing to reach agreement on criteria for the formation and registration of new political parties. Renamo says it wants UN officials to monitor the formation of parties.

Last week Mozambican Transport Minister Armando Guevuza said he hoped the United States

would push the deadlocked peace talks forward.

US and British officials are trying to persuade Renamo that it is in its best interests to transform from a military to a political force as quickly as possible, before it loses financial backing from right-wing groups in the United States, South Africa and Portugal.

South Africa was for years Renamo's main source of funding.