

Britain may increase aid to Mozambique

By Peter Almond
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

7 May 87

LONDON — Britain is weighing an increase in financial and military aid to the Marxist government of Mozambique following a meeting between Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano.

Mr. Chissano, 47, who is scheduled to lunch with Queen Elizabeth II today, arrived in Britain yesterday after a successful visit to Italy, where he met the pope and persuaded the government to cancel a \$100 million Mozambican debt.

His diplomatic gains were buttressed by a report of significant battlefield gains by Mozambican army units — some with British-trained officers — against anti-communist guerrillas of the Mozambique Resistance Movement (RENAMO).

Lusa, the Portuguese news agency, said Mozambican forces assisted by Zimbabwean and Tanzanian troops recently captured an important RENAMO base and routed 5,000 guerrillas from the Murambala district of northern Zambezia province.

A spokesman for the Save the Children Fund relief agency in London could not confirm the report, but he said large numbers of new arrivals

at a nearby refugee center indicated they were fleeing a government offensive.

Zambezia is one of the provinces in Mozambique where RENAMO had established a strong presence, claiming control of 80 percent of the countryside.

British Army trainers based in Zimbabwe recently doubled the number of junior Mozambican Army officers they put through 12-week courses in leadership, field craft, administration and logistics. Defense sources here said the number was raised from 60 to 120 a year as of May 1.

Another team of former SAS men from the private British firm, Defence Systems Ltd, is helping to train a 600-man counterinsurgency force guarding the rail line from the Mozambican port of Nacala to Malawi.

British diplomatic sources say the Malawian government, which had tacitly supported RENAMO by closing its eyes to cross-border trade and supply runs by the anti-communist guerrillas, has turned against them and now is providing troops to help guard the Nacala line.

The British reject complaints from some American conservatives that they are wrongly providing military aid to a Marxist govern-



Joaquim Chissano



Margaret Thatcher

ment, pointing out that the Reagan administration itself is providing economic aid to Mozambique and does not support RENAMO.

The British say they have far more experience of post-colonial situations than Americans and do not regard Mr. Chissano, or his predecessor Samora Machel, as wedded to Marxism.

"Samora Machel was much more of a flamboyant populist than a Marxist," said a British official. "Mrs. Thatcher got on well with him. She doesn't know Mr. Chissano, but she hopes he will continue to be the same sort of pragmatist as Mr. Ma-

chel. He's coming to Britain at her invitation rather than his request."

That is roughly the same view as expressed by the U.S. State Department in explaining why the Reagan administration supports anti-communist guerrillas in Angola but not in Mozambique.

Conservative critics say this contradicts the Reagan Doctrine. They point out that U.S. economic aid to Mozambique actually underwrites Soviet bloc military assistance, since Moscow has troops stationed there along with military contingents from East Germany, Cuba, North Korea, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania.