

## *Marcelino dos Santos:* OPENING NEW FRONTS

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Camerapix

**One of the founding fathers of the Mozambican independence struggle, Marcelino dos Santos, president of the People's Assembly, speaks with *Africa Report* about the evolution of political and economic ties with the United States. Explaining the government's strategies vis-à-vis Renamo, he also outlines current military needs.**

**Africa Report:** What is the purpose of your visit to the United States?

**dos Santos:** I am here in the United States in my capacity as president of the People's Assembly to continue to develop our relations with the U.S. and in the framework of these relations, to find out what contributions our two bodies—the People's Assembly and the U.S. Congress—can make to the well-being of our people. We already have relations between our governments and between several institutions and we feel that there must be some possibilities for the People's Assembly to cooperate with the U.S. Congress. Some delegations of senators and members of the House of Representatives have come to Mozambique on fact-finding and cooperation missions, but perhaps we can institutionalize relations between our two bodies.

But naturally to develop our relations, we have to look at the problems that we are facing. So we are coming to

exchange views: one, on developing economic relations with the U.S., and two, on what actions the U.S. intends to undertake regarding the problem of the armed bandits [Renamo]. We have already been in Washington and New York, and will continue to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Boston.

**Africa Report:** Over the last several years, there has been a positive evolution in American policy toward Mozambique. What is your government's view of the relationship?

**dos Santos:** No doubt that the evolution of relations between the U.S. and Mozambique has been very positive over the past few years. For several years, relations were quite cold—and I must say not because the Mozambicans didn't want to have relations with the U.S., but what could we do? We became independent and immediately we were put on the black list! I hope that that time is definitely in the past. Now the U.S. has better knowledge of Mozambique and of Frelimo,



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Joaquim Chissano with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe at Nyanga border camp: "We maintain that we have to fight on all fronts—on the military, but also on the economic and diplomatic fronts"

and better understands the actions undertaken by the Mozambican government. You have your own history, we have ours, so it is normal that we present to each other very different aspects. But our personalities should not be based on denying the personality of others. It is the responsibility of our governments to take all steps to enable our peoples to understand each other better.

We have cooperation with the U.S. in the emergency program, for example, to help the victims of the armed bandits, as well of the drought and famine. We have bilateral cooperation mainly in the railways and also in agriculture, in spite of the fact that the U.S. thinks it should help only the private sector! But it is OK! One day, the U.S. will understand that the state sector and the cooperative sector are realities in Mozambique and there can be cooperation in that area as well. We also cooperate through the Southern African Development Coordination Conference on projects that serve the different member countries of the organization. And we have coopera-

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tion in the diplomatic field, exchanging views on security issues in southern Africa and naturally on the question of the armed bandits.

We have spoken to our American friends to show them that the armed bandits are really terrorists. Although it took some time for our views to be shared by the U.S., I think they are now closer than in the past and sufficiently near to enable us to take strong steps in order to

bring about peace and promote economic and social development. Here, I want to mention what Charles Freeman [deputy assistant secretary of state] said concerning the situation in Mozambique. After his last visit to southern Africa, he went to Brazil, where he said that the difficulties that Mozambicans are facing are not the responsibility of its government, but rather a result of the aggression from the armed bandits. As he was speaking in Brazil, he also said that the Brazilian government has the moral duty to persuade those Portuguese that live

in Brazil to stop their support to the armed bandits. This was a very important statement which brings near our views.

Now we think it is very important for the U.S. to really, definitely state that the Renamo people are armed bandits—terrorists—and secondly that this organization must be destroyed. These forces are there just to destroy, without any social and economic aim that is acceptable to the people. This position must be clearly stated and at the same time, economic cooperation must be developed because it is through this that we will be able to establish a long-term relationship—if the U.S. finances more economic and social development projects.

If we all agree that the armed bandits are terrorists and the organization must be dismantled, we have to go a further step and see what military relations we can develop. To face the armed bandits, we need military equipment that is suited for counter-guerrilla action. During the struggle for our liberation, we were waging a guerrilla war and the Portuguese were waging a counter-guerrilla war. The people were with us.

Now the armed bandits have started a guerrilla war, but they don't have the people with them. We have to react with counter-guerrilla warfare. For this, we need military equipment, but what kind? We have to be able to undertake quick actions. We have to use equipment like helicopters, for instance. If you go by foot to reach one base, the armed bandits will know before you arrive and will run away. So we need this equipment. And we need light weapons to enable our people to defend themselves from the aggression of the armed bandits in all parts of the country.

We have been developing this with several countries. In our projects, there is a military component, some finance for the training of forces to defend the economic projects. We have it with the French in the Nampula corridor to build the railways, with the Italians, for example, in the construction of Pequeno Libombo dam, and with Britain in the Limpopo corridor. It is in all our interests to defend ourselves against the armed bandits and to act effectively to destroy them completely! It is important now that the U.S. take a step forward and say the organization must be dismantled—let us support Mozambique in the military field.

**Africa Report:** But there is a ban in Congress on military assistance to Mozambique. Is there more support developing now for supplying such assistance?

**dos Santos:** Frankly speaking, although I found more comprehension than before, for the time being, President Bush's administration is not able to tell us exactly what its position will be. But we will continue to try to reach this aim. We met with some senators and representatives and their understanding of the Mozambican reality was quite good.

**Africa Report:** A few months ago, the South African foreign minister suggested there should be an international initiative, involving the U.S. and Soviet Union, to end the war. What is your government's view of this proposal and do you see any diplomatic role for the U.S. to play toward ending the war, or is a military solution the only answer?

**dos Santos:** We always maintain that we have to fight on all fronts—on the military front, but also on the economic and diplomatic fronts. Everything is linked. I told you how we developed economic projects with France, Italy, and Britain, and also have military cooperation—equipment for the soldiers, uniforms, boots, weapons, provided by these countries. The military component is there. In the diplomatic field, we have been working together in trying to show the world the reality of the armed bandits.

Coming to Pik Botha's proposal, some people feel that all situations can be considered the same. But it is clear that the situation in Mozambique is not the same as in Angola. So we have to explain it to Mr. Botha. He makes a proposal to bring together the United States, the Soviet Union, Mozambique, and South Africa, but to do what? What is the meaning of this? One is forced to think this is an effort to convince the world that apartheid is no more! The successful development of the situation in Angola is not due to the fact that apartheid has changed its nature. Not at all! It is because the Angolans won militarily! This is the reason why there were changes. So we can't allow ourselves to be fooled. Apartheid hasn't changed its spots.

The armed bandits are not a political alternative. They are terrorists and thus have to be dismantled. So what kind of mediation or talks can be arranged? What role can the United States play? For example, it can tell the armed bandits that there is an amnesty law that was promulgated and that all of them can be reintegrated into Mozambican society. Then we will see what they will do. If they want to go and work in agriculture, or if they want to be reintegrated in the army, they must follow the normal channels. But amnesty means amnesty. Everybody is reintegrated. So one role is to tell them that they have this possibility. I think everybody understood that something was not right in Pik Botha's proposal.

**Africa Report:** Is South Africa still playing a role in supporting Renamo?

**dos Santos:** Yes, we say that to them every time. But they always ask: Where is the proof? Naturally if one plane comes during the night and drops ammunition or weapons, it is not easy for the Mozambicans to prove that the plane came. Then when we showed them the parachutes, they were forced to accept it. But every time we bring proof, they say it is not the government, it is someone else. But if this someone is doing it once, twice, thrice, five, ten times and those who have the power—the government—don't do anything, what do you want me to believe? We have to say this is just a bluff. So the fact is that they are still supporting the armed bandits.

They entered into the Nkomati agreement, etc., etc., but this is their form of diplomacy. We say that South Africa is supporting the armed bandits, but we will not say it is somebody here and there. Let them be the ones to say that those who are supporting the armed bandits are not the government. Let them make these statements.

**Africa Report:** There must be an effective way of stopping South African support. What role could the U.S. play in this regard?

**dos Santos:** There are two ways to stop South African support. We can act against the racist regime of apartheid, or directly against the armed bandits. To act against the armed bandits, we have to face them militarily. But the international community has already conceived instruments that could force apartheid to change. If we want to stop things peacefully, applying sanctions could have this impact. Sanctions are an instrument that the international community has already devised to avoid going to a full war.

When Senator Paul Simon went to South Africa, he said there are two ways to finish with apartheid. One is to apply sanctions and the other is to accept a full war in the region. Everyone has to assume his own responsibility vis-à-vis history. We will have to answer tomorrow for what we have done today. If we don't want to apply sanctions, we have to accept what could happen—the possibility of a full war. ○