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Army occupies Renamo base

The Mozambican armed forces (FADM) on 21 October occupied the bush headquarters of Renamo at Satunjira, in the central district of Gorongosa, where its leader Afonso Dhlakama has been living for the past year.

The national director of defence policy in the Defence Ministry, Cristovao Chume, said the FADM overran Satunjira in response to yet another Renamo attack on a military unit.

The FADM says that there were three Renamo attacks on military patrols near Satunjira over previous days. Following the latest clashes, the FADM moved heavy artillery to the entrance to the Satunjira base, and warned that any further attack would be met with swift retaliation.

Chume said that at around midday on 21 October the FADM unit once again came under Renamo fire. There was a vigorous FADM counter-attack, and the Renamo gunmen fled towards the part of Satunjira where Dhlakama was living.

The FADM pursued them, and occupied all of Satunjira. Dhlakama and his men melted into the bush, and Chume said he did not know the current whereabouts of the Renamo leader. He said that the FADM had suffered no losses in taking the base and, as far as he knew, neither had Renamo.

Chume pointed out that the latest clashes followed a series of other Renamo attacks in Sofala province, including the raid on a police station in Muxungue in April, an attack against an FADM arsenal in Savane in June, and ambushes on the main north-south road between Muxungue and the Save River.

The priority now, he said, was to restore normal life in the Satunjira region. The army has urged local villagers who had fled into the bush to return to their homes and fields, and has appealed for calm.

Chume stressed that the occupation of Satunjira does not mean that the country is at war. He admitted that there might be Renamo retaliation, but pledged that the armed forces “will continue to play their role in the defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity”.

Renamo claimed that the purpose of the FADM action was to assassinate Dhlakama. The Renamo national spokesperson, Fernando Mazanga, told reporters that “the communist regime of Frelimo always fought to liquidate him (Dhlakama) and his collaborators. The objective of Frelimo and of its President, Armando Guebuza, is to assassinate President Dhlakama, in order to subjugate the will of the

Mozambicans, because he never allowed Mozambicans to be chained to the ideology of a single party”.

However, Mazanga stated that Dhlakama is alive and “in a safe place”, though he admitted to difficulties in communicating with him.

Mazanga described the occupation of Satunjira as “the end of multi-party democracy in Mozambique”, and claimed that “the irresponsible attitude” of President Guebuza, as Commander-in-Chief, had put an end to “the understandings of Rome”.

Mazanga was referring to the peace agreement signed between the government and Renamo in Rome on 4 October 1992.

Renamo head of mobilisation dies

Renamo has stated that its head of mobilization, Armindo Milaco, has died of wounds sustained in the clash when the Mozambican armed forces (FADM) occupied the Renamo base at Satunjira.

The spokesperson for the Renamo parliamentary group, Arnaldo Chalaua, cited by the news agency Lusa, said that he had only learnt of the death of Milaco, who was also a parliamentary deputy, on 25 October.

He considered Milaco’s death as “a great loss” for Renamo and for the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic. He had been a member of the Assembly’s management board.

The news came as a surprise, since it had been believed that the capture of Satunjira was entirely bloodless. When the FADM took over the base, they found that Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama and other members of the Renamo leadership had already left.

The army found no dead or wounded when they entered the base, and this was confirmed by Mozambican television crews.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact aim@aim.org.mz

President Guebuza condemns Renamo attack

President Armando Guebuza has strongly condemned the latest attack by gunmen from Renamo, who ambushed a minibus on 26 October, killing the driver and wounding nine others, including four children.

The attack took place on the Mozambique's main north-south highway, on the stretch between the Save River and the small town of Muxungue. Normally, the Mozambican armed forces and police escort vehicles along this 100-kilometre stretch. However, the minibus, which started its journey in the district of Machanga, joined the road after the river, and the driver did not wait for the next convoy.

After forcing the bus to stop, the gunmen looted the passengers' possessions and then set the bus on fire. One of the passengers told Radio Mozambique that the armed gang first shot the driver, and then began firing indiscriminately at the passengers.

After the attack, President Guebuza's official spokesperson, Edson Macuacua, told reporters in Beira he found it strange and worrying that when Renamo attacks occur, some of those who call themselves leaders of civil society "remain silent".

"They don't take any position, they don't have any message, they don't even express regrets at these inhuman acts", he accused. But when the defence and security forces react to such attacks these same civil society leaders "seem frenetic and make inflammatory speeches of condemnation".

"We should ask: who do these civil society leaders serve? What agenda are they following?" Macuacua asked. "It seems that they are pursuing interests and objectives that they cannot admit and that are contrary to national interests".

Although Macuacua did not name the leaders he had in mind, his remarks were clearly aimed at Alice Mabota, the President of the Mozambican Human Rights League (LDH), who, at a press conference, claimed that the government violated the Constitution when it sent the armed forces (FADM) to occupy the Renamo headquarters at Satunjira.

Macuacua found this thesis absurd. "We would like to clarify that the intervention by the defence and security forces is covered by the Constitution", he said. "Had they not acted that would have been a violation of the Constitution by omission, since the defence and security forces would not have been complying with their mission".

Article 265 of the Constitution states that defence and security policy "seeks to defend national independence, preserve the sovereignty and integrity of the country, and guarantee the normal functioning of institutions and the security of citizens against any armed aggression".

Macuacua stressed that President Guebuza remains open to dialogue with Renamo and its leader, Afonso Dhlakama, but he would not abdicate from resort to the defence and security forces to defend the State from against these repeated attacks by Renamo".

Nonetheless, President Guebuza was still willing to talk and "reiterates his appeal to the Renamo leader to abandon the attacks and return to the dialogue table. But putting dialogue in first place, as a path to the consolidation of peace, should at no time mean that the defence and security forces are excused from complying with their mission, and that the State and the citizens are left unprotected".

Renamo has denied responsibility for the attack. Cited in the newssheet "Mediafax", the party's national spokesperson, Fernando Mazanga, said attribution of the attack to Renamo is just "political propaganda".

Polling staff recruited

All the personnel required to staff thousands of polling stations in Mozambique's municipal elections, scheduled for 20 November, have now been recruited, the spokesperson for the National Elections Commission (CNE), Joao Beirao, told a press briefing on 25 October.

The period for recruiting the staff had to be extended because of the difficulty in some municipalities in acquiring the necessary documents, notably criminal record certificates.

Currently the training of people who will then go on to train the polling station staff is under way, Beirao added.

Some of the staff were in the brigades that registered voters in the municipalities between May and July.

Asked if the CNE would exclude people who may have committed electoral offences at polling stations in the 2009 general elections, Beirao said this was not possible, since the CNE was not responsible for pressing criminal charges.

The question referred to those dishonest polling station staff who invalidated ballot papers by adding an ink mark to make it look as if the voters concerned had tried to vote for more than one candidate. It is easy to check at which polling stations this misconduct happened – they are the ones that recorded an abnormally high number of invalid votes.

But Beirao said all the CNE could do at the time was to inform the Public Prosecutor's Office of the problem. It was up to the public prosecutor, and not the CNE, to press charges. But prosecutors took no action, and nobody was ever charged for tampering with votes in 2009.

Beirao said that lots have now been drawn for positions on the ballot papers. The top two positions on ballot papers are occupied by the only two parties that are standing in all 53 municipalities. The ruling Frelimo party drew the first position, and the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) is in the number two slot.

Beirao said the ballot papers are now being printed in South Africa, and a team from the CNE and its executive body, STAE (Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat), is on hand to check the printing.

The competing parties and citizens' groups have also drawn lots for positions in the time allocated for political broadcasts on the public radio and television stations. The broadcasts will be transmitted during the official election campaign, which runs from 5 to 17 November.

The list of polling stations has been published in the daily paper "Noticias". Beirao said that, wherever possible, the polling stations are in the same places as the voter registration posts. A full list of candidates, both for mayors and for members of the municipal assemblies, has also been published in "Noticias".

Accreditation of observers and journalists is now under way. Beirao said that, to date, 86 foreign observers (59 from the European Union and 27 from the United States) have been accredited, and 77 journalists.

Two kidnapping within an hour

Kidnappings are continuing at an alarming rate in Maputo, and on 24 October two women were kidnapped in different parts of the city, in broad daylight.

According to a report in the daily newspaper "O Pais", a woman of Asian origin was abducted at about 15.00 in the neighbourhood of Malanga.

The woman, the wife of a businessman who owns an ice-making business, was seized outside her husband's factory by

five men, armed with AK-47 assault rifles. According to an eye-witness, “the victim was in the back seat of her car, when they arrived and fired a shot into the air, to intimidate her. But she refused to leave the car”.

The gang then fired another warning shot, broke the car window, and dragged the woman out by force.

About an hour later, another woman, also the wife of a businessman, was kidnapped in the centre of the city, close to the well-known “Cruz Azul” private clinic. Again, the criminals were armed with AK-47s.

This brings the number of kidnapping in Maputo to five in a week. On 21 October, a businessman was abducted in Olof Palme Avenue, in the heart of the city. The next day, a woman of Asian origin was seized at the entrance to the Maputo Portuguese School, where she had just dropped her four year old son.

And on 23 October, at about 20.00, a boy attending 12th grade at the Portuguese School was kidnapped in front of his house in the central neighbourhood of Coop. He was with his father, a muslim businessman who owns a bottle store, who was powerless to save his son from the kidnap gang.

The deputy chairperson of the Supreme Court, Adelino Muchanga, asked about the wave of kidnappings, admitted weaknesses in the police investigations. “As long as we do not improve our investigative capacity, we will not be successful in the fight against kidnapping”, he said.

However, he thought this fight was the responsibility, not solely of the Criminal Investigation Police (PIC) and of the Public Prosecutor’s Office, but of all of society “since these people (the kidnapers) live in society”.

World Bank to advise Portucel on plantation

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the member of the World Bank Group that focuses on the private sector in developing countries, is to support the development of a huge eucalyptus plantation in Mozambique.

IFC has signed an agreement with the Portuguese paper company Portucel to advise the company on how it can strengthen the sustainability of its forestry operations in Mozambique.

Portucel is investing \$2.3 billion on an integrated eucalyptus plantation, pulp and energy project in the central provinces of Manica and Zambezia. The project could generate 7,500 direct jobs.

IFC’s support will include assessments of environmental and social impact, community engagement, community development planning, and help with the implementation of community and enterprise investments.

According to Portucel’s chief executive, Jose Honorio, “Portucel is committed to the long term success of its investment in Mozambique, and we are reaching out to partner IFC and the World Bank Group to help us develop forestry in Mozambique in line with the strongest international environmental and social standards”.

The IFC chief executive, Jin Yong Cai, pointed out, “Mozambique needs large scale investment to diversify its economy beyond extractive industries and create employment. IFC and our partners are working to engage with local communities and ensure that the benefits of private sector investment are broadly shared”.

The Mozambican government awarded Portucel land use concessions on 356,000 hectares in Manica and Zambezia.

Phase I of the project involves a greenfield plantation of 60,000 hectares of eucalyptus. In addition to advisory support, IFC is considering an equity investment in Portucel’s Mozambique operations.

Assembly approves youth policy

The Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, on 24 October unanimously approved an amended Youth Policy presented by the government.

Introducing the document, the Minister of Youth and Sport, Fernando Sumbana, said that the existing youth policy dated to 1996 and needed to be updated. The new document resulted from discussions between the government and the National Youth Council (CNJ), and meetings with young people throughout the country, which began in 2011.

“This is an exercise of extraordinary scope”, he said, “since it is dealing with the future of young Mozambicans and consequently of the country, bearing in mind that the majority of our population is young, and they are the lever for the country’s development”.

The purpose of the new youth policy, said Sumbana, is “to ensure that young Mozambicans live long and healthy lives, resting on the combination of decent health care, education and work, suitable remuneration and decent housing, resulting from solid, technical, professional and vocational training combined with the habits and practices of a citizenship oriented by the highest ethical standards”.

The document calls for “establishing appropriate mechanisms that facilitate the effective and integrated participation of young people of both sexes at all levels in decision making bodies and in development programmes”.

The policy states that young people have rights, among others, to “access to housing; freedom of expression; and protection against exploitation at work, violence, crime, sexual abuse and consumption of drugs”.

The document obliges the state “to adopt measures that encourage the initiatives of young people, which assist in the eradication of poverty, particularly in simulating income generating activities that contribute to the development of the country’s economy”.

The state must also facilitate the access of young people to land, and take measures to reduce the costs of building houses. It should encourage financial institutions to offer loans at low interest rate to allow youth to obtain mortgages and to attend higher education courses.

A Fund to Support Youth Initiatives (FAIJ) is to be set up, decentralized to local level, which will fund viable youth programmes. A percentage of the public funds used for income generation and job creation must be allocated to youth initiatives.

The entire Assembly, including deputies from Renamo, voted in favour of the youth policy.

Minimum pension increases

The National Social Security Institute (INSS) has announced a rise of 33 per cent in the minimum state pension.

The minimum monthly pension will rise to 3,000 meticaís (almost exactly \$100).

The rise was made public on 23 October at a press conference given in the southern town of Namaacha by the chairperson of the INSS board, Francisco Mazoio.

He added that pensions higher than the minimum will also be increased by 930 meticaís a month.

Mazoio said that the decision taken by the INSS board honours the undertaking given by the institution to improve continually the living conditions of pensioners. He added that the new pension is “within prudential limits”, and guaranteed that paying it will not imply any increase in the social security contributions paid by workers or employers.

Assembly passes immigration service bill

The Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, on 23 October passed the first reading of a government bill setting up a National Immigration Service (SENAMI).

The new service, like the current immigration officials, will be under control of the Ministry of the Interior. It will issue passports, entry visas and other travel documents, including residence authorizations for foreign citizens (currently the task of the National Immigration Directorate).

SENAMI will be responsible for passport control at the borders, and for authorizing the entry and exit of citizens to or from national territory. It will be authorised to detain foreign citizens who are in the country illegally, and to carry out measures to repatriate or expel foreigners. It will also give its opinion on requests for asylum.

Introducing the bill, Interior Minister Alberto Mondlane said the government wanted to strengthen control over cross-border movements "because of the challenges that the dynamic of migratory flows in an ever more globalised world imposes on the individual and collective security of states".

Migration into Mozambique, he said, arose "from the availability of natural resources, from the climate of peace, and from the security and stability in the country, which creates an environment favourable for business and tourism. These facts justify the creation of a public service, with the power and responsibility to deal with the challenges posed by controlling the entry, residence and departure of foreign citizens".

The main element of contention in the bill was that SENAMI will be a paramilitary body. Deputies of the main opposition party, Renamo, objected, arguing that creating another paramilitary body will lead to the proliferation of firearms.

Renamo saw no need to change immigration procedures, and said the bill will increase state expenditure for no good reason. The fragility of borders, it argued, was due largely to corruption in the issuing of documents such as passports.

"You don't issue passports with a gun in your hand", said deputy Jose Manteiga. "We've all had enough of the militarization of the state".

He thought the money would be better spent on improving the "deplorable living conditions" of the Frontier Guard in remote border areas.

The bill passed its first reading, with 178 deputies from the majority Frelimo Party and the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) in favour, while the 28 Renamo deputies present voted against.

President Guebuza pledges investigation into Machel death will continue

President Armando Guebuza on 19 October reiterated the government's promise to do all in its power to ascertain the full circumstances of the death of the country's first leader, Samora Machel.

Machel, and 34 of those travelling with him, died on 19 October 1986 in a plane crash at Mbuzini, just inside South Africa, as they were returning from a regional summit in the Zambian town of Mbala. It has long been suspected that the presidential aircraft was lured away from its correct flight path by a pirate radio beacon (VOR), operating on the same frequency as the Maputo airport beacon.

Speaking during the inauguration of a power station in the town of Chimbonila, in the northern province of Niassa, on the 27th anniversary of Machel's death, President Guebuza said the government will not rest until what happened at Mbuzini has been fully explained.

"We have said that the crash was caused by apartheid", he said, "but there were individuals who carried out this action of the apartheid regime. We shall continue to work to identify who they are".

President Guebuza said that the man who proclaimed Mozambican independence died when he was returning from a mission of peace, for he wanted peace not only in Mozambique, but in the southern African region, and throughout the world.

The President stressed the importance of electrification for the development of the country. The Chimbonila station is part of the rural electrification of Niassa, and has been financed by Norway which provided the equivalent of about \$1.8 million.

The power has been flowing since last month, and currently benefits more than 150 households, and several public institutions, including the local health unit. The electrification of Chimbonila includes 35 kilometres of medium voltage and 11 kilometres of low voltage transmission lines, and nine new transformer posts.

Before inaugurating the electricity scheme, President Guebuza visited the "African Century" Agro-Industrial Complex at Matama, and the "Mr Chicken" poultry farm, which is also producing macadamia nuts.

The Matama complex results from a partnership between the British-based company African Century foods, and the Mozambican Malonda Foundation. In this joint venture African Century, which holds 80 per cent of the shares, provides the technology, while Malonda has the land use rights.

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