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Renamo gunmen attack farm

Renamo gunmen, some of them in uniform, attacked a farm in Rapale district, in the northern province of Nampula, shortly before dawn on 11 November. The farm, in the village of Locone, belongs to a local businessman and cattle breeder, Antonio Manuel.

The raiders tied up Manuel, and struck him with a machete four times on the head. They then burnt down his house, a tractor, a motorcycle, warehouses and a generator, and looted some of Manuel's possessions.

The Renamo group then moved onto a tourist complex, also owned by Manuel. They burnt down one of the residences in the complex and stole large quantities of food and alcoholic drinks.

A guard on the complex was kidnapped, but released after the gang had marched about ten kilometres.

Manuel was taken, in a coma, to the Rapale health centre, and then transferred to Nampula central hospital.

The gunmen are believed to be former Renamo guerrillas, who were employed to guard the house owned by Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama in Nampula city. Dhlakama left Nampula over a year ago, and went to live in a bush camp in Satunjira, in the central district of Gorongosa. However, the guards continued to protect the empty Nampula house.

They left the house on 22 October, the day after the Mozambican armed forces (FADM) occupied the Satunjira base, and headed for the mountains of Rapale, about 35 kilometres outside the city.

The first sign that a Renamo group was active in Rapale came on 29 October, when gunmen attacked a truck passing through the district and killed its driver.

That same day, the FADM overran a base the group had been setting up in the locality of Napome, and captured eight of the Renamo guards. One of them told reporters that the Renamo contingent at Dhlakama's house in Nampula had been 18 strong. This would mean that just ten of them were still at large. However, one eyewitness said about 20 people attacked Manuel's properties.

The Rapale district administrator, Armindo Gove, warned that, for as long as the gunmen are still roaming around the area, further attacks are likely, as the Renamo group raids civilian targets in order to obtain food.

One immediate result of the attack was that people living in the Locone area began to make their way to Nampula, in search of better security.

Meanwhile, the general commander of the police force, Jorge Khalau, has told reporters that a raid on the homestead of Dhlakama's father, regulo (chief) Mangunde, was intended to seize illegal weapons.

Speaking in the western city of Tete, Khalau said that the defence and security forces had received a tip-off that there was an arms cache at the chief's home, and had a warrant to search the property.

When the joint police and military unit reached the homestead, in Chibabava district, in Sofala province, it was deserted. The chief and his family had left in a hurry, and journalists who visited the place found that the only living things in sight were a few goats.

Khalau claimed that the police had successfully seized the weapons. "These guns hidden in houses are the ones that are killing us", he said. "It is our task, as members of the defence and security forces, to receive the information and seize the guns to avoid these attacks".

Instability hits school exams

The instability in parts of the central province of Sofala has made it impossible for 4,000 primary school pupils to sit their fifth and seventh grade end of year exams.

Most of these are from the district of Maringue, where schools were effectively closed because of clashes between gunmen from Renamo and the defence and security forces.

In addition, about a thousand pupils in Gorongosa district are also affected. These are pupils from two primary schools in the Nhamazi administrative post, where there have been two Renamo attacks this month, including the looting of a health centre in Canda locality.

The Sofala provincial director of education promised that everything would be done to avoid prejudicing the pupils. "Right now the pupils don't have the psychological conditions for taking exams. We are attentive to this sad situation, and I guarantee that everyone will sit the exams".

Education Minister Augusto Jone, speaking on 9 November in Beira, said the situation also affects some primary schools in Muxungue, an area that has seen repeated Renamo attacks on convoys of vehicles travelling along the country's main north-south highway.

However, Jone insisted that as soon as the current politico-military tension ends, all pupils will be examined.

All 760 secondary school students in Maringue were unable to sit their 10th and 12th grade exams in the district. Jone said that only 28 were able to make their way to Beira to sit the exams there.

Renamo gunman shot dead

The Mozambican defence and security forces shot dead a Renamo gunman in a clash on 10 November in the central district of Gorongosa. This followed an attack by Renamo on Canda, in the Nhamadzi administrative post.

On 6 November, Renamo attacked a police station and looted a health centre. The small police unit was outnumbered and retreated. However, in the latest incident the police and military forces were better prepared, and repelled the early morning attack.

One member of the Renamo group died, and TV crews filmed his body later in the day. The rest of the attacked group slipped back into the bush.

Meanwhile, the Renamo office in Maputo claimed that an invitation from President Armando Guebuza for a face-to-face meeting with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama in Maputo on 8 November only arrived at the office on that day.

President Guebuza's spokesperson, Edson Macuacua, had told reporters on 5 November that the invitation had been sent "through the habitual channels".

The Renamo national spokesperson, Fernando Mazanga, cited in the independent newsheet "Mediafax" on 11 November, said the party would now try to ensure that the invitation reached its leader.

"We have now formally received the invitation", he said. "We shall analyse it and, despite all the difficulties, we shall do everything to ensure that the reply arrives as soon as possible".

However, he stressed that the Renamo office has no idea where Dhlakama is. "If we knew where our president is, we would already have sent him the invitation", he said.

Dhlakama has not been seen in public since the Mozambican armed forces occupied his bush headquarters at Satunjira, in Gorongosa district, three weeks ago. He, and several other senior Renamo officials, left the Satunjira base before the troops arrived. He is believed to have fled into the Gorongosa mountain range.

Portuguese kidnap victims released

The Mozambican police have confirmed that two Portuguese citizens, who were kidnapped by armed gangs in Maputo and the neighbouring city of Matola, were released on 9 November.

One of the released victims is a man kidnapped two weeks ago in Maputo. The second is a woman, who works as the financial manager of a company in Matola, and who was snatched on the company premises on 7 November.

A third Portuguese, an adolescent kidnapped two weeks ago in the Maputo neighbourhood of Coop, has also been released.

Neither the police nor the Portuguese embassy has given the names of the victims. The circumstances of the releases are not yet known, including whether any ransoms were paid.

The police say that kidnap gangs are still holding five people, all of them of Mozambican nationality.

On 8 November, the police announced that they have arrested a man they regard as the head of a gang involved in armed robberies and kidnapping in Maputo and Matola.

The police presented the 44-year-old man, named as O. Mussa, to reporters, claiming that he had led a four member gang responsible for the abortive attempt to kidnap a 16 year old boy, the son of a local businessman, in the southern town of Namaacha in mid-August.

As for the other gang members, one of them, a 27 year old woman named H. Mandlate, is in custody in the Ndlavela women's jail in Maputo province. Another died in a shootout with the police in an attempt to raid a confectionery factory in Matola. The fourth, not named by the police, is currently a fugitive and his whereabouts are unknown.

Mussa denies all involvement in the Namaacha kidnap event.

Election campaign mainly peaceful

As the campaign for Mozambique's municipal elections ended its first week, although the atmosphere remained generally calm, there were several reports of clashes between supporters of the two main contenders – the ruling Frelimo Party and the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM).

Perhaps the most serious incidents were in the central town of Dondo, where each side accused the other of destroying its property. According to a report in the latest issue of the "Mozambique Political Process Bulletin", published by AWEPA (Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa) and the Mozambican anti-corruption NGO, the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP), police arrested both the MDM district delegate Chico Jose and an unnamed Frelimo member.

They were accused of destroying campaign material of the other party and of incitement to violence.

In Quelimane, one of the two cities that have a MDM mayor, Frelimo and MDM motorcades clashed in the neighbourhood of Sagrada on 7 November and the police arrested four MDM members.

The Zambezia provincial police spokesperson, Elsidia Filipe, said this was the only serious incident in the province so far. Filipe lamented that parties do not announce the routes of their motorcades in advance, and urged them to restrain their members.

Motorcades also clashed on 7 November in the Sabao neighbourhood of Catandica municipality, in Manica province. MDM members are accused of attacking Frelimo member Zacarias Muzaja with sticks and injuring him severely enough so that he was hospitalised. MDM officials, including the candidate for mayor of Catandica, Rangel Mairoisse, did not deny the attack, but claimed it was in response to what they called constant harassment.

In Nhamayabue, in Tete province, the MDM candidate for mayor, Jose Gimo, accused Frelimo of tearing down its campaign material, and of setting fire to a hut used for the campaign. The Frelimo district spokesperson, Francisco Guta, denied the accusation.

In Xai-Xai, capital of the southern province of Gaza, two MDM members named Alfeu Bila and Arlindo Mathe were jailed at a summary trial for assaulting a Frelimo supporter in an informal market on 8 November.

The Bulletin also reports that Frelimo is continuing to use state-owned vehicles in its campaign in several municipalities, despite the clear ban in the electoral law on this abuse of state assets.

The Bulletin cites the number plates of several of these cars seen in the Frelimo campaign in Nacala, Inhambane and Mozambique Island municipalities. It also notes that the governor of the northern province of Cabo Delgado, Eliseu Machava, has been using a car from the provincial agriculture directorate to campaign for Frelimo in several of the province's municipalities.

President launches agricultural year

President Armando Guebuza on 8 November urged agricultural producers, and all those involved in the agricultural value chain, to commit themselves anew to productivity, to make the most of the country's potential.

He was speaking at Chicumbane, in the southern province of Gaza, at the ceremony formally launching the 2013/14 agricultural campaign.

"In our tradition, the opening of an agricultural campaign represents the inauguration of a further cycle of activities to produce food and generate income", President Guebuza said. "It is always a moment of festivity and celebration".

It is a moment, he added, "for renewed hope of higher levels of production in the coming campaign, a state of spirit generated by unshakeable faith that the land is generous and rewards those who work it".

It was not only farmers on whom success depended. "We are relying on the extensionists and the community leaders", he said. "We are relying on the wholesalers, the traders and the transport operators. We are also relying on those involved in agro-processing and exporting our goods. We also rely on the researchers, the academics and the laboratory technicians".

President Guebuza warned that the rainy season brings with it the danger of possible floods. Chicumbane is in the Limpopo valley and at the start of this year the valley was swept by major flooding. He urged his audience to follow the guidelines from the local authorities about preventive measures that should be taking.

Low lying areas near the major rivers were fine for agriculture, he added, but farmers should not try to live there. "We should build our houses on higher ground, to avoid the risk of losing everything in the event of floods", he said.

Before launching the campaign, the President visited the Technology Transfer Area of the Lower Limpopo irrigation scheme, where the Italian company Igo Sammartini is working with peasant farmers from the nearby Vladimir Lenin village.

According to Igo Sammartini engineer Armando Bambo, this is an area that has not been touched by farmers for about a century. When the company moved in the land was covered with beds of reeds two metres tall.

The project involves an area of 15 hectares, and 60 farmers, each cultivating 2,500 square metres (a quarter of a hectare). The company says it has invested \$5 million in such interventions as opening drainage channels.

Thirteen accused of Education Ministry theft to stand trial

Mozambique's Central Office for the Fight Against Corruption (GCC) announced on 6 November that 13 of the 22 people accused of major thefts in the Ministry of Education will shortly face trial.

The GCC spokesperson, Bernardo Duce, told a press conference that the amount of money stolen from the Ministry is now put at 33 million meticaís (about \$1.1 million).

The theft became public knowledge last February. The main scheme used to drain money from the Ministry was the payment of wages to fictitious staff, through a parallel wages sheet. This cost two million meticaís a month, which suggests that the scheme may have been going on undetected for at least 16 months.

The sums involved are much less than was believed when the case first came to light. Then the figure of 144 million

meticaís, stolen over a six year period, was mentioned. Duce said the figure came down to 33 million meticaís during the preliminary investigations into the case.

Of the 13 people charged, only four are Education Ministry workers. The others are people from outside the Ministry who benefitted from the fraud.

As for the other nine suspects, they cannot be formally notified and charged, because they have disappeared. Rather than delay the trial until they are found, prosecutors have decided to open a separate, autonomous case against them.

Among those who have vanished are the former head of the finance department and two other members of the Administration and Finance Directorate of the Ministry.

In another case, Duce revealed that two officials of the Mozambique Tax Authority (AT), who worked on processing AT wages, have been accused of stealing 590,000 meticaís.

"On the wages sheet this group replaced names of their colleagues with the names of other people, who had no contractual ties with the institution", he said.

Duce said that in October the GCC had handled 44 cases against public officials accused of corruption. So far, charges have been brought in eight of these cases. A further eight cases were tried during the month, resulting in sentences ranging from fines to four years imprisonment.

CFM earns \$53 million from coal

The transport of coal from the Moatize coal basin in the central Mozambican province of Tete to the port of Beira, along the Sena rail line, has earned the Mozambique port and railways company, CFM, over \$53 million so far this year, according to a report on Radio Mozambique.

This results from handling three million tonnes of coal, compared with 1.5 million tonnes in the same period of 2012.

Candido Jone, the managing director of the central division of CFM, said the coal was produced by the Brazilian company Vale and the Anglo-Australian Rio Tinto. Two other companies are producing smaller amounts of coal. But so far, they are sending them to Beira by road. They are the Indian company Jindal, and Minas de Moatize, a subsidiary of the British-based Beacon Hill Resources.

Jone, who was speaking last week during a visit by Transport Minister Gabriel Muthisse to the Beira port and rail complex, said that the exports had involved 82 ships carrying the coal to markets in Asia, America and Europe.

Muthisse said there remain major logistical challenges in scaling up coal exports. He pointed to work under way to increase the handling capacity of the Sena line from 6.5 to 20 million tonnes by February 2015, and to expand the facilities at Beira so that the port can deal with exports of 26 million tonnes of coal a year.

Beira alone cannot deal with the vast amounts of coal that the mining companies say they will be exporting in the near future. Other ports will therefore come into play. Vale is financing a new railway from Moatize through southern Malawi that will link up with the existing line to the northern port of Nacala. A new mineral port is to be built at Macuze, in Zambezia, which implies building another new railway, this time exclusively within Mozambique.

Muthisse said that the amount of coal to be transported by the country's railways and ports could rise to 100 million tonnes a year.

He added that Beira port should not neglect its traditional clients. On the contrary, it should make every effort to increase the handling of cargo to and from countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Seventy per cent of water used in agriculture

Seventy per cent of the water consumed in Mozambique is used in agriculture, which makes measures to improve the efficiency of water use crucial for economic growth, sustainability and poverty reduction, according to officials in the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Ministry argues that it is fundamental to encourage research to increase the productivity of water.

The Ministry's statistics show that Mozambique has 36 million hectares of potentially arable land, of which three million hectares could be irrigated. But currently only five million hectares of land is being exploited for agriculture, and of this land only 120,000 hectares is irrigated.

Sugar cane accounts for 60 per cent of the irrigated area, followed by vegetables (18 per cent), and rice (10 per cent), while a variety of other crops account for the remaining 12 per cent.

Speaking in Maputo on 29 October during a workshop on policies for the development of irrigation, the Permanent Secretary in the Agriculture Ministry, Daniel Clemente, said that in recent years over 35,000 hectares of irrigation schemes have been built or rehabilitated, at an investment in excess of \$300 million.

"It remains necessary to continue the effort to build and rehabilitate irrigation systems to improve the efficiency of water use and increase agricultural production, by reducing harvest losses", he said.

In this context, Clemente continued, efforts to develop irrigation require bringing together various areas of technical and scientific knowledge, with the involvement of the government, private business and research centres.

"We stress the role that research can play", he said, "in supporting irrigation and thus supporting food production and poverty reduction".

The general director of the National Irrigation Institute (INIR), Paiva Munguambe, told the workshop that Mozambique needs to produce its own food, and that requires better planning. "We can't just wait for our neighbours and our partners", he stressed. "We have to grow our own food".

Mozambique safe for holidaymakers

The South African High Commissioner to Mozambique, Charles Nqakula, on 6 November stressed that Mozambique is safe for holidaymakers wanting to travel to Maputo or to the country's beaches.

Talking on the South African radio station "Radio 702", Nqakula stressed that the prime cause of the current political instability is Renamo. Since the Mozambican armed forces (FADM) occupied the Renamo bush headquarters at Satunjira, in the central province of Sofala, there have been repeated clashes between Renamo gunmen and Mozambican government forces in Sofala.

The South African government has lines of communication with Renamo. Nqakula said that he has

recently held two meetings with Renamo and that he will meet with its political representatives again next week.

He highlighted that South Africa has both political and economic interests in Mozambique and "anything that threatens the country is actually threatening us as well".

Nqakula stressed that his government "insists on peace, stability and security in Mozambique".

Chinese aid for health service

The Chinese government on 4 November pledged to provide \$46 million in grants and loans to be used in improving health infrastructures in Mozambique.

The agreements to this effect were signed by Mozambican Foreign Minister Oldemiro Baloi and Chinese Trade Minister Gao Hucheng, who were both attending the fourth edition of the Macau Forum.

The purpose of the Forum is to encourage economic relations and cooperation between Portuguese speaking countries and China

Half the sum is a grant of \$23 million to build a paediatric ward in Beira Central Hospital. The other \$23 million is a soft loan, on which no interest will be charged, for the construction of residence for the 12 Chinese doctors who are currently working in Maputo.

Speaking after the signing ceremony, Baloi expressed satisfaction at the growing level of multi-sector cooperation between Mozambique and China, which the Macau Forum has helped to consolidate.

Gao Hucheng said that the agreement was a clear example of the success of the Forum, and "consolidates the conviction of joint development".

Agriterra increases production

The Guernsey registered company Agriterra on 4 November reported a record output in its beef operations in the central Mozambican province of Manica.

According to the company, revenue from beef operations more than doubled during the year to \$2.2 million. The company slaughtered 2,145 animals and opened three retail butchers.

Agriterra also announced that it had improved the pregnancy rate for its cattle, and as a result, the company expects to achieve its target of 10,000 head by 2015.

Agriterra is also involved in maize production, and it reported "record revenues of \$15.8 million generated from the maize division, representing a 61 per cent increase compared to the previous year". It milled 46,600 tonnes of maize and sold 34,500 tonnes of maize meal.

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

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