

In logistical terms, Africa's lack of airlift capacity poses serious problems. Rapid deployment of troops is not possible without that capability. Then after troops have been transported, they have to be supplied, also usually by air. Past African force interventions have had to rely on

United States or North Atlantic Treaty Organisation air assets, which leaves rich Western nations with a power of veto that the new force was meant to avoid.

Lamamra, who has been pushing hard behind the scenes for the establishment of the ACIRC and whose department will be

bolstered by its implementation, insists the force is merely an interim measure until the African Standby Force is ready. Experience suggests that once the force is established with a clear structure and is financed, it will be extremely difficult to shut it down. ●

MOZAMBIQUE

Timber rackets, gas booms

As the gas industry opens up the north, generals and politicians are smuggling hundreds of tonnes of timber and ivory to China

As the booming trade in smuggled ivory and timber devastates northern Mozambique's environment, Attorney General **Augusto Paulino** has launched an investigation into the claimed involvement of Agriculture Minister **José Pacheco** and his predecessor **Tomás Mandlate**. Both face accusations of involvement in timber smuggling in cahoots with **Chinese** companies. Both Pacheco and Mandlate deny all wrong doing.

Foreign and local anti-corruption groups are pushing for more probity, but powerful political and commercial interests still protect lucrative illegal timber deals. President **Armando Guebuza**, some of whose closest aides have been involved in timber-smuggling rackets, faces growing pressure from northern generals who want their share of their region's spoils as companies move in to develop the gas industry.

The stakes are so high that the government has tried to flout its own laws and grant logging licences inside the conservation area of the Niassa Reserve. These reports worry organisations trying to promote sustainable forestry. They are also concerned about rent-seeking and racketeering as companies open up the under-developed north for the gas export industry (AC Vol 54 No 8 & Vol 53 No 9).

The rackets also have implications for the reputations, at least, of the major foreign oil and gas companies operating in Mozambique. More evidence came from a leading campaigner, the Environmental Investigation Agency, in a report on corruption in the forestry sector in February. China's Mozambique First International Development (Mofid) Limited, a log exporter, confirmed to EIA investigators that it had benefitted from Pacheco's assistance. The report also said that Chinese timber exporter Senlian admitted paying Mandlate a monthly salary. Senlian is a subsidiary of the state-owned Shanghai Senlian Timber Industrial Development Company Ltd.

Since the report came out, foreign

investors – particularly **Finland**, which had made concessional loans to the forestry sector – have pressed for a government investigation. Paulino has a good reputation on opposing corruption and recently attacked corrupt judges and prosecutors in a major speech. His investigation is believed to be a result of the report as, we hear, is the apparent sacking of senior port officials in Nacala. Ironically, infrastructure improvements intended to foster economic development, especially in Nacala port and road bridges, are helping to denude forests and wildlife. Previously, illegal logging may have been going on but export capacity was lacking.

BUDGETING FOR FINES

Both Mofid and Senlian have been repeatedly convicted of and fined for illegal timber exports to China, normally for violating the restrictions on exporting unprocessed logs. The fines, however, have no deterrent effect and are 'factored into the costs', a source familiar with the industry said. The trade is still growing, they said. That trade would not be possible without help from senior officials of the governing *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo).

The EIA claims that 48% of China's imports of timber from Mozambique are illegal, including vast numbers of logs from 'first class' species that are banned from export without first being processed. The calculation is based on the massive gap between China's official import figures and Mozambique's far lower figures for exports to China. Other research, not yet published, shows that if domestic timber consumption is taken into consideration, the total harvest is well above the output of all licensed logging operations. Concerns about the environmental impact are matched by an immense loss of tax revenue, about US\$30 million in 2012.

Precedents are not encouraging. When 561 containers of illegal timber

were seized at Nacala in July 2011, a Chinese company allegedly involved – Casa Bonita – was found to be linked to the former Chief of Army General Staff, General **Henriques Lagos Lidimo**, and another powerful general, the former Zambézia Governor, the late **Bonifácio Gruveta Massamba** (AC Vol 41 No 3). The independent newspaper *Savana* reported that their influence had led to the release of many of the containers, noting that the local media 'systematically' omitted the generals from their reports.

There are no signs on the ground that the increase in prosecutorial interest in the timber trade is causing a fall in exports. Indeed, they are still climbing, say local sources. In Pemba, the illegal trade takes place openly and lorries carrying illegal logs to the port are clearly visible 'all day and all night', according to one witness. Local officials are paid off and this remote part of the country continues to be seen as a law unto itself, largely controlled by Frelimo officials and army generals. These include generals **Alberto Joaquim Chipande** and **Raimundo Pachinuapa**, former Governors of Cabo Delgado who have much control over land in the region and whose business interests in forestry, mining and transport *Africa Confidential* has already detailed (AC Vol 54 No 8).

Lidimo more recently made the transition from politics to business, being awarded a number of mineral concessions in the north amidst some controversy. Gruveta, though, who died in September 2011, just two months after the Nacala log seizure, had extensive interests, including in tourism and agriculture, and was reputed to be one of the main 'protectors' of Chinese business interests in the region. One of his business partners was a leading Frelimo member of parliament, Gen. **Eduardo Silva Nihia**, one of Guebuza's closest confidants, who founded a mining company in Niassa following a visit on presidential business in 2009. Another was **Amélia Matos Sumbana**, Ambassador to the **United States** and sister-in-law to two top Frelimo officials, Tourism Minister **Fernando Sumbana Junior** and his brother **António Fernandes Sumbana**, who is Guebuza's Chief of Staff.

Mozambique's wildlife reserves are under pressure. The start of the natural resource boom five years ago coincided with a sharp rise in poaching. The country is a transit point for the trafficking of

rhinoceros horn, while its most serious poaching is for ivory. This goes on in the same areas as logging, infrastructure and mining projects, especially those run by Chinese companies. Ivory and rhino horn have been found in containers of timber bound for China. All rhino in Limpopo National Park were declared extinct last month. LNP borders South Africa's Kruger National Park and, with Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park, the three form the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

Environmentalists had worried that the building of the Unity Bridge, which links Tanzania's Mtwara region and Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, would damage the Niassa Reserve, home to 80% of Mozambique's wildlife. Immediately after the Chinese-built bridge opened in 2010, problems with illegal logging began in earnest. Poaching had increased in the reserve in 2008, after ten years of stable wildlife populations. Some 2,600 elephants were killed from 2009 to 2011. Poachers from Tanzania are believed to have played a major role.

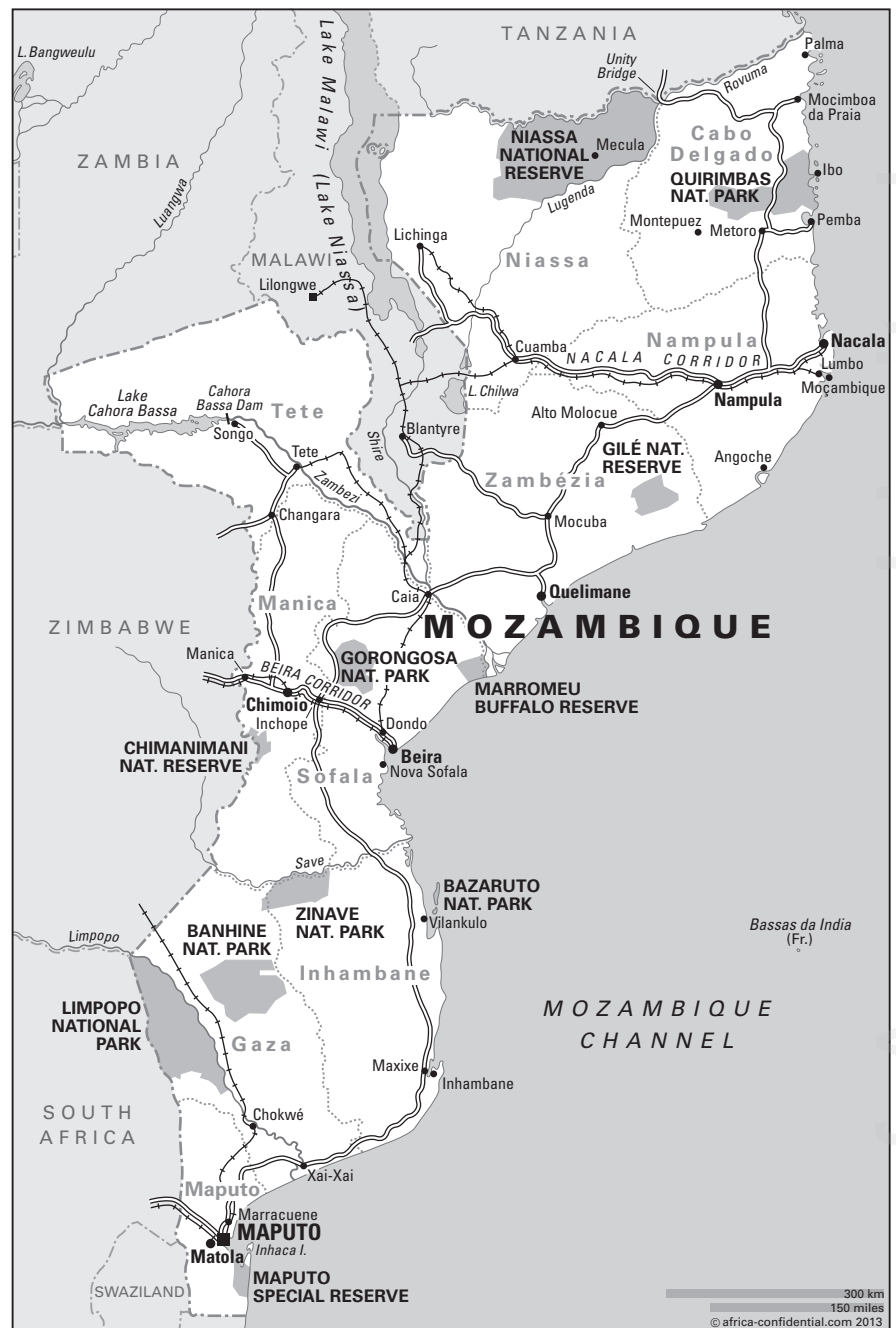
BAD YEAR FOR ELEPHANTS

The year 2011 was not only devastating for elephants in Niassa, it was declared the worst year worldwide since the international ivory trade was banned in 1989 under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Experts believe this devastation was, and continues to be, driven by the rising demand and rocketing prices for ivory and rhino horn in the Far East, facilitated by East Asia's economic boom.

EIA investigations found that ivory fetches as much as \$1,500 per kilogramme in China, more than ten times its value in 2005, and the price is still rising. It is not a criminal offence in Mozambique to kill an elephant but cross-border trade is banned, except in the rare case of an internationally approved auction. Nevertheless, EIA investigations found that up to 90% of supposedly legal ivory available in China was from illegal sources. Since 2008, China has been Mozambique's second largest foreign investor and both state and private companies wield considerable influence with the authorities at all levels.

Efforts at enforcement often run up against the endemic problems of low pay and corruption. Mozambique brought in border police to deal with an 'invasion' of Tanzanian poachers over the Unity Bridge into Niassa but many have been found to be complicit in the illegal trade.

Like the Limpopo rangers, who are accused of helping poachers to capture rhinos, the police are 'very much involved' in the activities, says a source familiar with the circumstances. The government posts more rangers to the reserves but



this can exacerbate the problem because many are then recruited by poachers. The Wildlife Conservation Society, which co-manages the Niassa Reserve, is starting to give rangers the training they need but there is much to be done.

When seizures of ivory occur, there is little fear of punishment. 'Nobody bats an eyelid' over the sale of ivory, said a Pemba source, or of bush meat, which is openly available at a market on the edge of town. Bush meat markets spring up even inside the Reserve. The growth of poaching and of bush meat availability are partly due to the sharp rise in local prices as foreign workers and wealthier Mozambicans flock to remote areas such as gas-rich Pemba. Limited resources to meet the growing demand and powerful local families'

monopoly of the retail trade leaves poorer residents struggling to make ends meet.

Signs that Frelimo will take any action over the threats to its natural environment are so far discouraging, but some have high hopes of the Paulino investigation. If it comes to nothing, the writing will be clearly on the wall that northern Mozambique will see no change in the current despoiling of its landscape and wildlife. Since *laissez-faire* is the hallmark of the northern mining, oil and gas boom, it would be surprising if attitudes towards nature were any different. Yet civic activists, local and foreign, are intensifying their campaigns against corruption and environmental despoliation as Guebuza's government comes under mounting pressure. ●