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Mugabe's joint forces may aid Mozambique

By Brendan Nicholson
The Star's Africa News
Service

SALISBURY — Former guerillas and Rhodesian security force members who fought each other through the Rhodesian bush war may be thrown into action against anti-Frelimo forces operating in Mozambique.

Saturday's sudden visit to Mozambique by Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe follows intensified attacks on Frelimo officials and supporters there by the national Resistance Movement (MNR).

While there has been no official comment on Saturday's talks at the port of Quelimane between Mr Mugabe and President Samora Machel, it appears likely that the Mozambican leader will ask

for some sort of military assistance.

After the last wave of intensified violence by the Mozambican rebel movement Mr Mugabe flew to Beira, and on his return, announced that he had discussed with President Machel a plan for joint action against the MNR.

DUTY BOUND

"Dissidents and reactionary elements cannot be allowed to continue operating on our soil or in Mozambique," he said then.

Mr Mugabe added that if anti-Frelimo forces were launching their attacks from Zimbabwe "... then we are duty bound to get rid of them."

In the past, promises of help made between Mozambique and the new



MR. MUGABE

Zimbabwe have been based largely on the debt of gratitude felt by Mr Mugabe's ruling Zanu (PF) Party towards Mozambique for that country's support during the guerilla war.

Now what was essentially an internal problem for Mozambique has taken on

more serious implications for several of the black nations of southern Africa, especially Zimbabwe.

The success of the black nations' plan to increase their economic co-operation and lessen dependence on South Africa hangs largely on transport.

The rail routes from Zaire and Zambia through Zimbabwe to the Mozambique ports of Beira and Maputo are key points in this plan.

Without them, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe must rely on the South African ports or the Benguela Railway (under constant attack by Unita guerillas) through Angola for much of their exports.

TREFWOO

Mugabe

Mozambique

Zimbabwe

Machel

Help

We

Frelimo

MWB

Machel

ZANU



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It just so happens that, with these rail routes barely reopened with the end of the war, they have come under attack by the MNR.

RAIL ATTACKS

On October 20 the Umtali-Beira line was locked when the rebels blew up a train with either a rocket or a landmine.

Unconfirmed reports quickly followed that the MNR had also attacked a bus on the road that runs alongside the railway line, killing 30 people.

Then a fresh flood of Mozambican refugees risked minefields left over from the war to escape into Zimbabwe.

They brought horror stories of atrocities said to have been carried out by the MNR on Frelimo officials.

Government officials on both sides of the border are understood to be deeply concerned about the resurgence of anti-Frelimo activity.

Most MNR strength is believed to come from former black members of the Portuguese special forces type unit who were originally supported by Rhodesia.

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