

Rebels plan big push for 1982

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Special report from JEREMY MARTIN in Salisbury

THE Mozambique National Resistance organisation is planning a New Year's upsurge in its guerrilla and sabotage campaign aimed at destabilising the marxist government of President Samora Machel, according to informed sources in Salisbury.

The sources said recruitment among the rural population would be stepped up, government outposts and military establishments would be attacked, and crucial economic installations would be sabotaged.

Far from being driven south to defensive mountain positions, as the government has claimed, the MNR has extended its influence to large areas of central Mozambique, stretching 500km from the Save River to the Malawi border.

The demolition of the Pungwe road and rail bridges in October was thought to have been the work of former Rhodesian SAS men operating from South Africa, but locals reported a massive MNR operation to secure

the area, 50km from Beira, before the explosive charges were detonated — indicating wider control by the MNR than previously thought.

While Zimbabwe has not announced official military support to Mozambique there has been a marked increase in military activity along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border with a special fifth brigade of the Zimbabwe Army being trained by North Korean instructors in the mountainous Inyanga area.

The MNR was formed by dissident former Frelimo officers in 1977 with backing from Mr Ian Smith's government to counter thrusts by Zimbabwe liberation forces from inside Mozambique.

The organisation lacked credibility until August when "The voice of free Africa" broadcast a resumé of the MNR aims:

- To form a government of "national reconciliation" to organise elections.
- To review Frelimo's policy of nationalisation

and to make the private sector the "dynamic sector" of the economy.

In central Mozambique and in Eastern Zimbabwe the MNR is called "Andrea's People" after its first commander, Andrea Matsangaiza, who died in a battle with Frelimo in 1979.

It is not yet known whether a second dissident group — Fumo (United Mozambique Front, led by Dr Domingos Arouca) — has decided to join the MNR after a "Voice" appeal for the settling of squabbles among anti-Frelimo elements.

A third group — the Free Africa Organisation, which was probably responsible for sabotaging the Cabora Bassa power lines to South Africa last winter, has reportedly been operating out of Malawi but could now be under pressure after recent accords between President Dr Kamuzu Banda and Maputo.

Whatever the extent of South Africa's covert activity against Frelimo, signs are that President Machel is deeply worried.

And a new offensive by the MNR at a time of economic breakdown in Mozambique could result in yet more defections from Frelimo and increasing support for the guerrillas.