

# British zoologist set free

GN  
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From John Borrell,  
in Harare, Zimbabwe

A British zoologist, captured and held hostage by anti-Government guerrillas in Mozambique for the past five months, was set free inside Zimbabwe yesterday.

Mr John Burlison, aged 28, from Stockton-on-Tees, north-east England, was working at a college in Mozambique's Gorongoa game reserve when guerrillas from the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RNM) took him prisoner on December 17, last year.

The RNM, which is fighting a low-key war against President Machel's Administration, sent a ransom note to Mr Burlison's family early this year demanding publicity in Britain as a condition for his release.

Although the demands were met, fears had begun to grow recently for his safety. British officials working to secure his release were assured by RNM representatives that he was safe, but were given little other information.

Hopes were rekindled earlier this month, however, when an RNM representative contacted British officials and informed them that Mr Burlison would shortly be brought across the Mozambique border and released in Zimbabwe.

Police here will not say where he was found, but he is believed to have been set free on a dirt road in the eastern districts several miles inside Zimbabwe.

An anonymous caller claiming to represent the RNM informed the police in the border town of Mutare and he was found after a short search. Similar calls were received by the British High Commission.

Mr Burlison's release in Zimbabwe is of some embarrassment to Mr Mugabe who has close links with President Machel and has been attempting to seal the border against RNM infiltration.

Police in Mutare are believed to be under strict instructions not to allow the press access to the Briton.

British High Commission officials were hoping to make contact with Mr Burlison last night and said they would make arrangements for his immediate return to Britain if asked to do so.

It seems likely however, that he will be asked to stay in Zimbabwe long enough to allow intelligence officers to question him closely about RNM activities in Mozambique. It is also possible that Mozambican officials will want to debrief him before he returns to Britain.