

# Mozambican rebels release hostages

From Nick Worrall  
in Harare, Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's Security Minister, Mr Emmerson Munangagwa, has confirmed that three Portuguese engineers and their families, kidnapped by anti-government dissidents in Mozambique a month ago, have been released just inside the eastern border.

Mr Munangagwa said the engineers, their wives and a five-year-old child, were released on Monday while Mozambique's President Machel was in Zimbabwe to discuss security.

In Lisbon, a spokesman for the rebel group, the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), said the release was timed to coincide with President Machel's visit "as a gesture of defiance to the Zimbabwean and Mozambican authorities."

The technicians were working on the oil pipeline from

the Mozambique coast at Befra to Zimbabwe. It has been a frequent target for sabotage by the MNR, which is backed by South Africa.

The families, resting in the eastern city of Mutare, are reported to be in good health despite their 30 days in captivity.

President Machel has appealed for military help from neighbouring black states and in talks with the Prime Minister, Mr Mugabe, he is understood to have again requested assistance for his forces. Zimbabwe has been reluctant to assist the Mozambique Government, apparently for fear of South African reprisals.

At a press conference on Monday night after President Machel had left the country, Mr Mugabe said it was necessary for the two countries to strengthen their relations in political and security matters. Talks would continue between the two countries on these matters.