

Beira oil depot destroyed by rebels

Lisbon (Reuter) - Mozambican anti-government guerrillas yesterday claimed responsibility for a huge fire burning at an oil depot in the northern Mozambique port of Beira.

A Lisbon spokesman for the Mozambique National Resistance said the flames could not be extinguished and that the depot had been destroyed. He added that the attack was a warning to Zimbabwe not to help the Mozambique Government with troops.

According to official sources in Harare, the fire started on Wednesday night. The depot, owned by Shell and British Petroleum, supplies fuel to central Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

The spokesman said the guerrillas also destroyed a pumping station on a pipeline

from Beira to Zimbabwe. "This is a warning not only to the Government of Mozambique but also to Zimbabwe" and the policy of Mr Robert Mugabe, the Zimbabwean Prime Minister, "of sending troops to help Mozambique," he said.

"We threaten more attacks on economic targets important to Zimbabwe, but also foresee military attacks against Zimbabwe itself in future."

Several weeks ago, Zimbabwe sent troops to Mozambique to help to guard the pipeline from Beira to Mutare in Zimbabwe and also a rail link between Beira and Machipanda.

The guerrillas concentrate their attacks on energy and communications in Mozambique. Electricity in Beira was recently restored after a two-

week blackout caused by sabotage to pylons.

Zimbabwe and Mozambique accuse South Africa of supporting guerrillas in order to cripple Mozambique's ports and railways, vital for black southern African countries' economic independence. Pretoria denies the allegation.

● MAPUTO: A British school-teacher and her Zimbabwean fiancé were badly burnt when their car was blown off the road in central Mozambique by a rocket attack by guerrillas. British diplomats said here (AFP reports).

The wounded couple were rescued by troops from Zimbabwe. It was the first semi-official confirmation of reports that Zimbabwean soldiers are operating in Mozambique.