

MNR STILL ACTIVE IN MOZAMBIQUE

SO FAR the Nkomati accord signed with South Africa has done nothing for Mozambique's troubles with the "armed bandits" of the Mozambique National Resistance. In fact, the organisation has stepped up its activities. The accord was supposed to cut off South African support for the dissident bands, but in the past two months attacks on transport and communications infra-structure have intensified, especially in the north and around the capital, Maputo.

In the northern province of Nampula the MNR has been attacking the road from the provincial capital, Nampula, to Cabo Delgado province. More ominously the rail line between Nampula and Malawi has come under attack, threatening Malawi's access to the coast.

In one such attack on April 26, between 30 and 40 passengers were killed. An eyewitness said the nine cold storage units at the Nampula public morgue were filled with bodies and many were left lying on the floor. Rail traffic in the province has virtually halted and road traffic is by convoy only. The closure of the only rail link between Malawi and the sea is a serious blow to that country and is thought to be the reason for South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha's visit to Lilongwe.

In the Central Provinces of Manica and Sofala the situation is less critical and the army has scored some successes. Usually reliable statements by army spokesmen claim areas have been freed from bandit control.

Officers of the Mozambican fifth brigade say they have succeeded in re-opening the national north-south highway in Sofala province. But the situation in the south, especially around Maputo, has deteriorated sharply with some attacks taking place only 15 kilometres from the capital. Worst hit has been the national highway to the major food-producing areas in the Limpopo Valley.

It is believed that large numbers of MNR were pushed across the border from South Africa immediately before the signing of the Nkomati accord and have instructions to harass the capital.

Mozambican authorities are trying to stem the spate of attacks by intensified security, a campaign for public vigilance and re-organisation of the national military service system. The bandits are believed to be trying to infiltrate into civil life and a drive to check documents and residence qualifications has been launched.

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