

Another MNR base falls to joint forces

MAPUTO. THE Mozambican armed forces have seized another base of MNR in the central province of Sofala.

Official sources told AIM that the Ndoro base was captured on Friday. Ndoro lies between Gorongosa mountain and the railway town of Inhaminga in the north of the province.

The seizure of Ndoro is part of a major military offensive under way in the centre of the country carried out jointly by units of the Mozambican and Zimbabwean armed forces.

Many of the bandits at Ndoro had fled from the MNR headquarters known as "Casa Banana" in the Gorongosa foothills when this was overrun by Zimbabwean paratroopers on August 23.

● Twenty-four people who had been held hostage by MNR bandits in Tete and Zambezia, bordering Malawi, are in Maputo under medical observation.

They are two Italian

missionaries, one British and one Irish citizen, 13 Portuguese (including eight priests or nuns) and seven Mozambicans.

An official of the Foreign Affairs Ministry told AIM on Friday: "The heightened rhythm of the military offensive in the country has forced some of the bandits to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, and they take their hostages with them."

The Malawian authorities told Maputo the 24 had been set free on Malawian soil on Tuesday. President Machel sent his personal plane to Blantyre to pick them up.

The two Italian priests, Filippo Guarneri and Caetano Pasqualicchio, were kidnapped in the MNR attack against the town of Luabo on the north bank of the Zambezi on July 30. Two engineers, Malcolm Blakey (British), and John O'Connell (Irish), were taken prisoners at the same time.

One hostage, Portuguese

citizen Sebastiao Miranda, has been hospitalised, while the other 23 are under medical observation in a Maputo hotel.

One family spent over a year in bandit captivity, after they were kidnapped in early September 1984 on a road in central Zambezia. They are Portuguese citizen Antonio Rebelo Soares, his Mozambican wife Otília Miguel Macedo, and their four children.

At the time of the kidnapping Ms Macedo was heavily pregnant, and while she was in the MNR's hands she gave birth to another child.

The foreign ministry spokesman described the MNR's behaviour as "inhuman" especially in the case of Ms Macedo, forced to march for long distances through the bush while in the final stages of pregnancy.

"The bandits were using these 24 innocent civilians as a shield, to protect them against possible attack," he said.