

Mozambican rebel base reported captured

MOZAMBIQUE recently reported that its troops captured a major base of rightwing rebels 220 kilometres north of the capital, Maputo, on Christmas eve.

The semi-official Maputo daily, 'Noticias,' reported that the camp, containing 1,000 huts, was in thick forest near a lake at Nhalala, about 160 kilometres east of the border with South Africa.

It said the base was the springboard for attacks on Mozambique's main north-south highway. Some 400 people were massacred during October and November in ambushes within 80 kilometres of the capital which the government blamed on the rebel Mozambican National Resistance (MNR).

'Noticias' said 18 MNR rebels died in the fighting at the camp, which included at least four

counter-attacks after it was captured. And 1,000 rebels fled, many in the direction of South Africa.

In a separate episode, a wounded eyewitness who reached safety in Swaziland told reporters she had seen rebels in Mozambique douse a truck driver with petrol and set him alight during an ambush near the Swazi border.

Maria Dlamini, who was shot in the legs and neck, told reporters from her hospital bed in Mbabane that the rebels, in military uniforms, had fired at the truck and at least three of the 10 passengers might have been killed.

In another incident, some six civilians died when their vehicle was ambushed by the MNR rebels north of Maputo,

the official AIM News Agency said.

AIM quoted police sources as saying the attack happened in mid-afternoon in the area of Maluana, 50 kilometres north of Maputo on Mozambique's main north-south highway.

Four men, a woman and a child died in the ambush, which took place close to where guerrillas killed 71 people in an attack on a convoy on November 28.

Four other people in the vehicle, which was travelling from Manhica town southwards to Maputo, were taken to hospital in critical condition AIM said.

It said Nhalala has been an important springboard for MNR attacks on Mozambique's main north-south highway and the Limpopo rail line linking landlocked Zimbabwe to Maputo Port. — Reuter