

Forces rescue farmer after bandit abduction

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By Fanwell Sibanda

AN intensive ground and air operation mounted by the Zimbabwe defence forces rescued Mr Errol Lobb, a Zimbabwean farmer who had been abducted by a group of 25 MNR bandits on Friday last week while on a humanitarian mission in Mozambique.

The forces killed one bandit and suffered no casualties in the contact with the MNR before the rescue.

Mr Lobb and others who belong to a Christian organisation had gone into Mozambique to distribute clothes to refugees and orphans.

At about 2 am, the bandits attacked the homestead in which they were living, near Underbrook Farm in Amatsogas Mafoqa. The defence

forces said no one was killed or injured when the bandits attacked the homestead.

Mr Lobb yesterday described as a miracle how all the people survived the attack.

Mr Lobb said the bandits took all clothes, curtains and food at the homestead. "They also carried some oil away and it appears they were after clothes and food."

He was the only one abducted. The defence forces said the other people who had been with him escaped when the bandits attacked.

"I was taken on a 9 hour-long walk and all the time we were sorting out the loot they had taken from the homestead."

The Zimbabwe defence

forces said they were informed about the abduction at 8 am and immediately launched follow-up operations, using ground forces supported by helicopter gunships.

The defence forces caught up with the bandits and in the ensuing battle, one MNR bandit was shot dead and Mr Lobb rescued. He was not harmed.

"When the defence forces launched the attack, I was caught in the middle of the crossfire and the only thing I did was to lie down."

Mr Lobb said the forces launched their attack in a well-disciplined manner. "They could have killed many bandits but I believe they fired from above to give me chance to go to ground."