

Joint forces paralyse MNR

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Herald Reporter

THE MNR's command and control set up has been paralysed through combined operations by the Zimbabwe Defence Forces and the Mozambican Armed Forces (FAM) with consequent reductions in sabotage attacks.

At a Press briefing in Chimoto on Monday, the acting commanding officer of 6 Brigade, Colonel Misheck Tanyanyiwa, said five bases had been attacked, captured or destroyed in the operations with seven towns liberated and thousands of people freed.

The main MNR base at Gorongosa had been captured, as had the base at Chikamba. The Muxamba I and II bases had been attacked and Mavhonde base was destroyed. The towns of Maringwe, Maccossa, Mutarara, Sena, Villa Nova, Caia and Magwe had been liberated.

Weapons and munitions had been recovered in the operations and supplies de-

stroyed. Bandit cadres had been captured and propaganda material seized.

Col Tanyanyiwa said there had been a reduction of MNR sabotage along Zimbabwe's lifeline, the Beira Corridor, as well as along the Zobue and Chicualacuala Corridors which run to Malawi and Maputo.

The support had been gained of the people living in the corridors, the liberated towns and the Casa Banana area. Other people rescued from the bandits had been resettled and the forces had helped with the Zimofa programmes of food relief and clothing in close co-ordination with the Red Barna and Red Cross.

These resettled people had been protected and schools, medical care and proper administration had been introduced. Roads had been opened and bridges built.

Zimbabwean and Mozambican forces maintained

close liaison.

With the Beira and Zobue corridors open, the Zimbabweans were guarding these and were helping to re-open the route from Chicualacuala to Maputo. Much progress had been made with 170 km from the Zimbabwean border now covered.

But, said Col Tanyanyiwa, there were still problems, despite the considerable progress.

Shortages of food supplies to the resettled had been encountered although Zimofa was trying its best to alleviate this and the destruction of the economy by the bandits had led to hunger. Food sometimes had to be airlifted because roads and bridges were impassable or destroyed.

After the Mozambican authorities had managed to resettle most freed local people within Villa Paiva, there were still thousands resettled in former MNR base areas. Casa Banana had

8 500 and Guro 17 000. There were 5 800 at Machesa, 7 300 at Cavalo and 500 at Changara.

Col Tanyanyiwa said that after independence Zimbabwe looked for alternative trade routes to those then being used through South Africa. The routes through Mozambique were the best because there were good relations between the two governments, the routes were shorter, and they passed back through other SADC countries which had economic ties with Zimbabwe.

With the escalation of bandit activity the pipeline, road and railway down the Beira Corridor were sabotaged and the Nyamapanda to Zobue route experienced bandit activity.

Because of the deteriorating situation mainly in Manica, Sofala and Tete provinces, the Zimbabwe Defence Forces had to be deployed with the FAM to protect routes against MNR attack. This was agreed between the two countries.

At first the Zimbabweans had little information about the MNR's bases, strength, weapons and capabilities, said Col Tanyanyiwa, but after a while information flowed, confirming the existence of the big bases later captured, attacked or destroyed.

MNR tactics included attacks and sabotage on the pipeline, railway line and power lines. There were also attacks, and these were continuing, on Zimbabwean and FAM positions, especially along the pipeline and on convoys escorting commercial vehicles.

Local people were abducted and property looted. This was still happening both in Mozambique and in Zimbabwe along the border.

Civilian vehicles along the routes had been attacked on several occasions. The bandits had also attacked towns which were later recaptured by the joint forces.