

Villagers urged to move as bandits kill 7 in Rushinga

By Funny Mushava

PEOPLE living in the security-sensitive north-eastern corner of Zimbabwe have been urged to move into security villages for better protection following the murder of seven people in the last two weeks by MNR bandits.

Tragedy struck in Mt Darwin and Rushinga just before the Christmas holiday and three days after New Year's day in which seven people died, five of them from one family. On December 21, a mother and her son were brutally murdered by the MNR bandits in Rushinga when they attacked their village.

On Wednesday this week, five people, a mother and her four children, were killed and the father is recovering from bullet wounds in Bindura Hospital.

The Member of Parliament for Rushinga, Cde Paddington Zvorwadza, yesterday said in an interview in Harare that people who had not moved into security villages yet should do so quickly.

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He said while there had been a lull in MNR bandit incursions and activities in the past six months, this did not mean that people should not be vigilant. He praised the police, the Zimbabwe National Army and homeguards for enforcing law and order and ensuring security to the villagers in this troubled corner of the country.

Cde Zvorwadza said the army's military intelligence had been able in the past to monitor the MNR bandit movements in Mozambique itself and inside Zimbabwe's borders and attacks had mainly occurred at night or in those areas where people had not moved into the security villages.

Commenting on the outcry by some villagers that the homeguards were not properly trained to fight the MNR bandits, Cde Zvorwadza said that while it was true that the ZNA were far better than the homeguards, the latter had played an important role in combating the bandits' incursions. This was evidenced by the lull in bandit activities in the past six months.

"But the situation in Rushinga is not static. At one time the law enforcement agents can cope with the demands and they fail when the incursions increase.

"The security forces have always been alerted of any build-ups of MNR activities and have been able to organise themselves in a manner that counters the attackers," said Cde Zvorwadza.

At times they were even alerted of the numbers, ammunitions and weapons carried by the MNR bandits. He said since security villages were introduced in the constituency early last year, bandit incursions had been decreasing.

There were also cases of MNR bandits and their collaborators being apprehended in refugee camps. Cde Zvorwadza, who makes at least one visit a week to the constituency, said methods had now been devised to guard against bandits sheltering in refugee camps.

He said there had been suggestions from the local people that the refugee camps be moved into the interior, possibly as far as Kadoma, but Cde Zvorwadza said this was not feasible because the real refugees would end up suffering. There was no way a tired person, hungry and fleeing from war, could travel as far as Kadoma for help.

While this move would have helped in apprehending MNR bandits in Mashonaland Central much quicker, the real refugees would have suffered.

The first victims were buried on December 27 and the provincial governor, Cde Joseph Kaparadza and senior Government officials attended the funeral, Cde Zvorwadza said.

The family which perished in the Wednesday attack has been identified as Edna Muzavari (33), with her four children Wonderful (13), Erina (12), Joe (4) and Lovejoy (2). Cde Zvorwadza said the incident occurred at Kanyera 2 Village, Mt Darwin, between Pityanguwo and Rushinga roads.

The bandits are also said to have looted property worth \$600 and follow-up operations are in progress. The five would be buried tomorrow at 10 am.