

MNR bandits training boys for terror raids

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MNR bandits have increased their grisly attacks on civilians and are training more boys to do the killing.

The latest edition of the 1 Brigade magazine, The Elephant News, says in one of their most brutal acts, the bandits recently murdered eight people in the Mozambican district of Chokwe, and mutilated three of their victims.

According to a company commander with 13 Infantry Battalion, Captain Domico Khumalo, the bandits raided a village at midnight and abducted about 100 people at gunpoint. The eight victims were murdered while the rest watched in horror.

The bandits took aside the bodies of a man and two women and mutilated them before releasing the rest of the people.

Local elders in the village believed the bandits intended to use the body parts they cut out for "juju" (black magic) in the belief that this would make them succeed in all battles against Mozambican security forces.

In their operations in the Limpopo Corridor, Zimbabwean forces had found evidence that the MNR bandits were using children to intensify atrocities against Mozambican civilians.

According to the then acting commander of the Zimbabwe National Army's 1 Brigade, Lt-Col Trust Masocha, some of the boys were less than 10 years old.

The children were trained in bush bases scattered throughout the country.

Their missions also included attacks on the ZNA troops who were in Mozambique to protect vital installations including the railway lines from Zimbabwe to Mozambique.

A captured boy, Antonio Maltino, said part of their training involved political orientation in which they were told to fight fiercely until the "enemy" was totally eliminated.

The children were also told that when they died, they would rise in South Africa as generals and go back to Mozambique to command provinces.

In this way, said Lt-Col Masocha, many boys had been killed or captured fighting a blind war.

ZNA troops had captured large quantities of weapons from the boys. All the rifles given to these children had their butts detached to fit the boys.

All the weapons captured looked very old and most of them were fitted with improvised firing mechanisms.

The MNR bandits were also using "psychological" tactics during their attacks on ZNA troops. The bandits would take along with them about 200 civil-

ians to accompany about 10 bandits on these attacks.

During the attack, the civilians would make disturbing sounds that confused their foes. Amid the gun bursts would be heard the beating of drums and empty buckets to demoralise the opposition. However, it had not taken ZNA long to discover that only a few bandits actually carried guns, and that most of the others were civilians forced to act as shields.

In one incident in Sofala province, the bandits attacked a ZNA Puma truck with 15 soldiers in it. Despite the heavy fire from ZNA machine-guns, the bandits had kept on advancing towards the truck, most of them unarmed.

Many civilians had died as a result of this. However, such incidents were now rare as the bandits had discovered the consequences of indulging in such adventurous attacks on the ZNA.