

Mozambique rebels 'derail train on Beira line'

BY MICHAEL HOLMAN IN SALISBURY

ANTI-GOVERNMENT forces in Mozambique derailed a train on the 155-mile railway line from the Zimbabwe border town of Umtali to the Port of Beira, closing the route for two weeks, it was reported here yesterday.

A Zimbabwe Railways official confirmed that after an "incident" on the line, traffic had been halted between September 21 and October 3, but would give no further details. Informants in Salisbury, however, said that the Mozambique Resistance Movement (MRM) had planted a landmine which derailed the train.

The strength of the Mozambique Resistance Movement is not known, but in an offensive last June, the Mozambique Government forces claimed to have killed 270 rebels and captured 300. The MRM once

received assistance from the former white Rhodesian Government.

Although the line carries only a small proportion of Zimbabwean trade, the disruption is likely to discourage would-be users and set back efforts by black Southern African states to break free of their dependence on South African ports and railways.

About 500 tonnes a day have been carried on the Beira line, which has a capacity of double that. A further 3,000 tonnes a day is sent through Zimbabwe's alternative route to the Mozambique coast, the railway via Rutenga and on to Maputo.

The remaining traffic—some 20,000 tonnes a day—goes south through South Africa, along a line which also carries goods to and from Zambia and Zaire.