

28% of Zimbabwe's transit cargo now going via Mozambican ports

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1989

ZIMBABWE'S total transit cargo through Mozambican ports increased from about 15% in 1987 to approximately 28% in 1988, according to the chairman of the Beira Corridor Group, Senator Dennis Norman. In the same period, savings of US\$35m were made as a result of increased use of the shorter routes.

Briefing local journalists on port developments at Beira this week, Sen Norman said the at-

titude of Zimbabwean importers and exporters — often sceptical about the efficiency and reliability of Mozambican transport routes — had changed "considerably" over the last twelve months.

Currently, the most significant development at the port is the recent arrival of the dredger, which, on completion of the channel dredging programme in one year's time at a cost of \$34m, will allow vessels of

60 000 tonnes to call at Beira port, representing further savings in landing costs for Zimbabwe's importers and exporters. Currently, Beira has a vessel restriction of 25 000 to 28 000 tonnes.

In 1988 alone, 2.2m tonnes of cargo were handled through Beira, and Sen Norman anticipates that with all the new development projects coming on stream, this tonnage will be increased in 1989.

It is also anticipated that rehabilitation of the harbour will be completed by mid-1991, by which time the terminals are expected to be operational. In the meantime, road and rail projects are continuing.

With the completion in 1991 of the rebuilding projects, including the dredging exercise which ends next year, Beira, said Sen Norman, will have a harbour capable of handling five million tonnes of goods annually. Following the completion of the capital dredging programme, a maintenance team using a smaller dredger will move in for regular maintenance of the channel.

On the question of pilfering from cargo en route, he said that this was no longer a serious problem. "In any transport system there will be pilfering, but there is insurance cover available for that sort of incident. We have overcome that problem, and generally it is not of major concern."

Meanwhile, Sen Norman said that financing for the major port rehabilitation projects including the road and rail programmes, had been secured through overseas multilateral and donor organisations.

"I think that the major problem is not so much the funding, but the implementation stage. We have just been informed that funding is available for the road project. The rebuilding of the 2 to 5 wharves got under way six months behind schedule, although it is now on course.

"I am not too worried with funding, but with the speed at which the projects are proceeding. One of the delays has been due to the fact that the necessary expertise has to be imported."

Sen Norman also spoke of training programmes for Mozambican nationals in areas of port maintenance. There are currently "several hundred" expatriates involved in the entire Beira rehabilitation project, including a number of experts from the Nordic countries.