

Rebel activity worries Machel

By DAVID FORRET

'Mail' Africa Bureau

SALISBURY. — Zimbabwe's Prime Minister, Mr Robert Mugabe, flies to Mozambique today for talks with his closest ally, President Samora Machel.

One of the main topics for discussion will probably be the recurrence of anti-Frelimo guerrilla activity in the south of Mozambique.

Mr Mugabe has already pledged his government's active support to flush out the rebel Mozambican guerrillas who are suspected of using Zimbabwe as a sanctuary from Frelimo forces.

Recent dissident operations by the Mozambique Resistance Movement (MRM) have hampered rail traffic between landlocked Zimbabwe and its re-opened outlet through the port of Beira.

The line was blocked for a fortnight until early this month because a mine apparently derailed a train and caused extensive damage to the tracks in Mozambique.

There have also been other reports of guerrilla activity in Mozambique and an undisclosed number of refugees crossed the border to escape the fighting, which has increased during the past few weeks following a counter-offensive by government forces.

Most political observers have strong doubts about the strength of the MRM, a former Rhodesian-backed group which has now been accused of getting its support from South Africa.

But any resurgence of anti-Frelimo operations involving the vital rail link could seriously hamper Zimbabwe's plans to build up traffic on the Mozambican line in keeping with its policy to lessen dependence on the South African ports and railway system.

A senior government official said that today's meeting between the two leaders at Quelimane, a coastal town about 450km north of Beira, was a routine get-together.

He said Mr Mugabe and President Machel had recently agreed to have routine meetings on a regular basis to discuss matters of mutual interest.

President Machel would probably take the opportunity to brief Mr Mugabe on his recent visit to various Eastern European countries.

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