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Africa

MNR attack claim dismissed as false

THE ZIMBABWE Government on Wednesday dismissed as false a claim by right-wing Mozambican rebels that they attacked military barracks southeast of Harare on Sunday.

The Mozambican National Resistance (MNR), in a brief communique issued in Lisbon on Tuesday, said its guerrillas had attacked barracks inside Zimbabwe at the towns of Rusape, Nyazura and Tsungwizi.

"No such attack ever took place. The whole story is a pack of lies concocted by the leadership of the bandit movement in Lisbon," a Zimbabwe government statement said.

"Authentic reports from Mozambique indicate that the MNR has suffered defeats in recent weeks, and the population is increasing its opposition to the bandits.

"The false and baseless reports from Lisbon may be an attempt to cover up these failures," the statement

said.

The MNR had given no details of the alleged raids but said they marked "the start of our promised response to (Zimbabwean prime minister Robert) Mugabe's support for the Maputo government."

An estimated 12,000 Zimbabwean troops are helping Maputo government soldiers fight MNR rebels who launched their guerrilla campaign shortly after Mozambique became independent from Portugal in 1975.

The MNR statement said the rebels had infiltrated eastern Zimbabwe since the beginning of this year and were now capable of further attacks.

Mugabe has vowed to "fight to the last man" to prevent a rebel takeover in Mozambique, which gave military bases to his guerrillas during the war for Zimbabwe's independence which ended in 1980. —Reuter