

Border security 'much better'

16 JUL 1987

LONDON.

THE Prime Minister, Cde Mugabe, said here yesterday that the security situation on the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border had vastly improved and the South African-backed Renamo - MNR bandits that had last month kidnapped and murdered innocent civilians in the area were "now on the run".

He was updating embassy staff and invited guests about the social, economic and political developments in Zimbabwe at a reception hosted by Zimbabwe's High Commissioner to Britain, Dr Herbert Murerwa, at the High Commission yesterday evening.

Cde Mugabe said Zimbabwe National Army soldiers were maintaining a high level of vigilance and stepped up patrols on the border after a group of

armed MNR bandits kidnapped and murdered 11 people in the Rushinga district.

"The situation is now much better because the area is sealed off. We have mobilised forces in that area of Tete," said Cde Mugabe.

"Obviously Renamo cannot win the war anymore. Now they are on the run and on the run all the time. The situation which we dreaded would worsen, we now do not regard as that threatening."

Cde Mugabe said there was now "high morale" among the Frelimo soldiers who were now being assisted by units of the Tanzanian and Zimbabwe armies.

Earlier the Prime Minister told guests that Zimbabwe was better off with educated unemployed people than illiterate jobless citizens. "Our belief is that every child must have O-

level as a minimum requirement and this we are attaining," said Cde Mugabe. "Perhaps we will be the first to achieve this level of education in the whole of Africa."

The Prime Minister noted that while it was commendable for Zimbabwe to achieve this level of education for its citizens, that feat was not without its problems as some critics would question the wisdom of educating a person but not guaranteeing him a job.

"But I will say that we are better off with educated unemployed than illiterate unemployed," he said. An educated person, he said, was in a better position even where he was unemployed to be self-employed and self-reliant.

On Zimbabwe's foreign policy stand, the Prime Minister

said while the country was friends with the West and friends with the East, it reserved its right to criticise in areas that were at tangent with its declared principles.

He said Zimbabwe had criticised the Soviet Union over its troop involvement in Afghanistan and the United States over its support of Contra bandits in Nicaragua and Unita in Angola.

He said Zimbabwe had therefore courted the disfavour of the United States because of its outspoken stance and had aid virtually cut by the Reagan administration.

"But we have said we do not need their aid," he said. "We are proud to be sovereign, though not mighty but truly faithful to the principle of being the makers of our destiny."

Cde Mugabe leaves for home today. — Ziana.