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Renamo strike

RIGHT-WING Mozambican rebels have begun raiding south-eastern Zimbabwe near a key rail link to Mozambique that is being rebuilt with British funds, diplomatic sources said yesterday.

Gunmen killed two park rangers and kidnapped a third at the Gonarezhou national park, about 300 miles south-east of Harare, on 7 September. Two days later several peasants at the nearby Chikombedzi Mission were hacked to death.

The Zimbabwean army moved into the area following the attacks, the sources said, and reportedly used helicopter gunships to dislodge the rebels from the area on 11 September. The government in Harare has not commented on the incident. The reported attacks signal the MNR's presence in an area that is crucial to the efforts of Britain and Zimbabwe to rebuild the Limpopo railway, which links Harare to the Mozambican capital, Maputo.

The Zimbabwean army is expected to be deployed in southern Mozambique to defend the transport route, as it is along the Beira Corridor in the central part of the country. The Zimbabwean army recently established a small garrison on the line at the southern Mozambican town of Chokue.