

Rebels Burned Bus Passengers, Survivors in Mozambique Say

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MAPUTO, Mozambique, Oct. 31 (AP) — Survivors of an ambush on a convoy said rebels burned buses that were crowded with passengers, the national press agency reported today. At least 211 people were reported killed.

Mozambican rebels, in a statement released in Lisbon today, denied responsibility for the killings and accused Government forces of trying to discredit them.

The rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance, or Renamo, have charged that the Maputo Government sponsors terrorist forces that carry out massacres and then blames them on the rebels. They contended today that such forces were behind the killings

Thursday and previous massacres of civilians.

The Mozambican press agency, AIM, said about 80 vehicles were destroyed in the attack, which took place on the main north-south road near the town of Tanninga, 50 miles north of Maputo.

The agency said an unidentified survivor reported that soldiers escorting the convoy retreated after the vehicles were fired on. It said people in the convoy who fled into the bush were urged by the guerrillas to leave their hiding places.

"I think this is when many people were gunned down," the agency quoted the survivor as saying.

"Most of the dead and wounded were

women and children," the survivor said, according to the agency. "I saw bodies burning in the buses that were set alight."

Another survivor, Mahomed Feridican, said some of the attackers appeared to be about 10 years old, the agency reported.

"Most wore uniforms," Mr. Feridican was quoted as saying. "As they looted the goods of travelers, they shouted insults."

Search operations were under way today, the agency said, adding that the military expected to find more bodies.

At the time of the attack, the convoy was traveling north from Maputo to the provinces of Gaza and Inhambane.

Officials said long road trips often are made in convoys to guard against attacks by Renamo, a South African-backed group that has been fighting a 10-year war against the Government.

The Government said the guerrillas killed 53 people in another convoy near the same site on Oct. 16. It has also accused the rebels of killing 92 people in the village of Manjacaze on Aug. 10 and 424 in the town of Homoine on July 18.