

Civilians Pay Price of Renamo Attacks

Casualty Toll Mounts as Mozambican Rebels Continue Incursions Into Zimbabwe

By Karl Maier

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MAHENYE, Zimbabwe—The beat of traditional drums reaches a crescendo at dusk as a unit of Zimbabwean troops moves out of this tiny southeastern village to search the dense bush for any Mozambican rebels coming across the border three miles away.

The women of Mahenye, about 225 miles southeast of the capital, Harare, prepare the evening meal of maize porridge around campfires before heading out to sleep under the trees. Their homes have become targets for the rebels. After dark, most of the village is deserted.

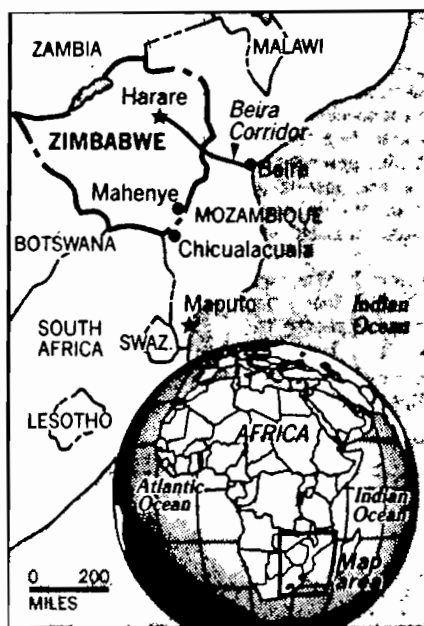
"Few people stay in their homes at night anymore. It's too dangerous," said Stanley Nyamunda, headmaster of the village primary school. "After dark, we civilians sleep in the bush."

Two years of incursions into Zimbabwe by the right-wing Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) rebel movement have taken a heavy toll on civilians on both sides of the 600-mile border. Hundreds of people have been killed and kidnapped. Thousands of Mozambicans have been rounded up and put in refugee camps in Zimbabwe.

Renamo declared war on Zimbabwe in October 1986, in retaliation for a decision by President Robert Mugabe's government to send 10,000 Zimbabwean troops into Mozambique to fight alongside President Joaquim Chissano's Frelimo army and to guard a vital transportation link against rebel attacks.

The first Renamo strike came on June 15, 1987, when rebels attacked and looted a northern village. According to government reports on that raid and 374 others between then and April 9, 335 civilians have been killed, 280 wounded and 667 kidnapped; more than 400 people are unaccounted for. Zimbabwe's security forces have suffered 22 dead and 44 wounded; 29 rebels have been killed, five wounded and 45 captured, according to the government. Food is the guerrillas' usual target, the reports say.

The half-finished wattle-and-daub huts along the dirt road into Mahenye tell the story of what the war has meant for villagers along the border. Peasants here are being moved from their scattered homesteads to the village center for safety. Protected villages are springing up. In April alone, at least 6,700 people were moved into guarded villages in



BY LARRY FOGEL—THE WASHINGTON POST

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the northern district of Rushinga.

Refugee camps surrounded by barbed wire hold more than 70,000 Mozambicans, according to U.N. figures. Some of these fled the war across the border into Zimbabwe; some were seasonal laborers whom the army rounded up as potential security risks; some were taken from their homes inside Mozambique by Zimbabwean troops nine months ago in an attempt to prevent Renamo infiltration by creating a *cordon sanitaire* extending from the border to 10 to 20 miles inside Mozambique.

The Renamo insurgency has come full circle. The movement was created in Zimbabwe

in the early 1970s when this southern African nation of 9 million people was known as Rhodesia. The Rhodesian intelligence agency used Renamo as a spy network inside Mozambique, from which black nationalists were launching a guerrilla war to end white-minority rule in Rhodesia.

When Zimbabwe gained independence nine years ago, South Africa began sponsoring the rebels. Pretoria denies it is now aiding the movement, but that claim is widely disputed.

Renamo spread the war inside Mozambique, targeting the Beira Corridor, the 196-mile rail, road and oil pipeline that delivers 95 percent of Zimbabwe's fuel supplies from the Mozambican port of Beira on the Indian Ocean. In 1982, 2,000 Zimbabwean troops deployed in central Mozambique to guard the corridor. Three years later, 10,000 more went in.

Sabotage has cost Zimbabwe \$2.5 million in lost fuel, according to figures from the National Oil Co. of Zimbabwe. Despite the attacks, the Beira Corridor has enabled Zimbabwe to avoid using more costly routes through South Africa, and last year it saved the country \$35 million in lower freight bills, according to Senator Denis Norman, a Zimbabwean businessman involved in rebuilding Beira's port.

But economists put the cost of maintaining the Zimbabwean army inside Mozambique and along the border at up to \$350,000 per day. Zimbabwe is now redeploying troops from central Mozambique to the southern part of the nation to guard Zimbabwean track workers who are rebuilding the 350-mile-long railway that runs from the border town of Chicualacuala to the port in Maputo, the Mozambican capital.

With the costs mounting, Zimbabwean officials are hoping for a diplomatic end to the conflict, which many military analysts consider to be a stalemate. In early March, Charles W. Freeman, then the deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, met with Mugabe and Chissano to discuss how to bring about a peaceful settlement.

But until that occurs, border villages such as Mahenye will continue to face upheaval. "We have more and more cases of children fainting from hunger in classes," said Nyamunda. "The people are too scared to go out very far in the maize fields."