

2 500 flee hour-long Renamo bomb attack

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KOMATIPOORT. — More than 2 500 Mozambicans — many of them women with babies — flattened razor-sharp fences and entered South Africa in a desperate escape from Renamo soldiers who were reported to have killed 40 people and injured scores in attacks on two settlements in southern Mozambique.

The rebels on Tuesday night attacked the town of Ressano Garcia near the Lebombo border and AIM, the official Mozambique news agency, reported yesterday that on Saturday, 40 people were killed and 13 wounded when Renamo forces attacked the "7 April" commune in the Guija district of Gaza province, which adjoins South Africa.

Guerrillas set fire to houses and looted the village before being driven off by government troops, AIM said. Government forces claimed they killed two guerrillas, it said.

ATTACKS

As is common with attacks on rural villages, news of the attack took several days to reach Maputo.

There was no way to independently confirm the reports.

During the hour-long attack on Ressano Garcia, mortars, RPG7 projectiles and AK47 rifles rained down on the town, and hundreds of screaming people — many of them naked — rushed to the Caftan fence on the border.

Scores of people received deep cuts as they scaled the fence which ripped clothing from their bodies.

Once they had crossed into South Africa, weeping mothers hid in long grass to breast-feed their hungry, crying babies.

Residents in nearby Komatiport said it looked like Guy Fawkes as blazing mortars and projectiles lit up the countryside.

Then suddenly hordes of people started making their way to the electrified Caftan Border fence.