

Violence reigns in Beira Corridor

HARARE — A sudden upsurge of violent incidents, apparently sparked by hunger, has broken out on Mozambique's Beira Corridor, Zimbabwe's closest link to the sea, posing new dangers for travellers on the 315km link.

The BCG Bulletin, published monthly by the Beira Corridor Group, the private company monitoring business interests on the route, says in its latest edition there were five attacks in May and early June in which one person was killed and another was injured.

"None of the attacks appear to have been politically motivated," says the Bulletin. Instead, they were carried out by men in a desperate attempt to find food or money.

Sapa's correspondent in Harare reports food production has fallen by 45% in the central Mozambican provinces of Manica and Sofala through which the corridor runs. It is heavily guarded by Zimbabwean troops to protect the road, railway line and fuel pipeline link from the port city of

Beira to the eastern Zimbabwean border city of Mutare.

Reports say the number of refugees on the corridor, fleeing hunger and attacks by Renamo, have swelled dramatically in recent months.

The Bulletin says all the attacks, between May 16 and June 7, occurred during daylight, and were mostly shots fired at passing vehicles.

The incidents occurred after a long lull in the violence on the corridor which has earned the reputation for being one of the few safe roads in Mozambique.

The Bulletin says the attacks "seem to have been carried out under the assumption that vehicles travelling from Zimbabwe will contain food, and travellers coming from Beira will have money" for shopping in Zimbabwe.

The Bulletin says the Zimbabwe National Army has arrested some of the gunmen but adds: "The easy availability of weapons may result in further attacks of this nature." — Sapa.

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