

Nine killed in six-hour firefight in Mozambique

MAPUTO. — Mozambican troops fought a six-hour gunbattle with rebels attacking the town of Guja on the north bank of the Limpopo River, a Maputo daily reported yesterday.

Five rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) and four Guja residents were killed in Thursday's clash before the attackers withdrew, the Noticias newspaper said. There was no

mention of army casualties.

Renamo managed to carry out the attack despite the reported loss of its major base in the area only two days earlier.

Mugabe

Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe meanwhile flew to Mozambique yesterday to discuss a withdrawal of Zimbabwean troops, official sources said.

Mr Mugabe and Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano met in Beira where Zimbabwe has an estimated 7,000 soldiers guarding its trade routes.

Zimbabwe sent thousands of troops to Mozambique in 1985 to help the ruling Frelimo party in its war against Renamo rebels.

Noticias carried a separate article quoting a spokesman for army

headquarters in Maputo as saying the army had destroyed the Renamo base at Merrungane in Guja district last Tuesday.

Guja is an important agricultural area of Gaza province, home of Chissano and his predecessor, the late Samora Machel.

The army spokesman said the captured camp was Renamo's central base for the entire province — Sapa-Reuters.