

# Soldiers of the bush

"IT'S SAD when they go out of that gate," said Sergeant Frank Higgins in a broad Glaswegian accent as B Company of the Mozambican army rolled out of Border Camp, Eastern Zimbabwe after 16 weeks of instruction from the British Military Advisory and Training Team.

B Company is the second batch of Mozambican soldiers to be trained in Border Camp under the terms of a two-year-old British military aid provision for South Africa's war torn neighbour.

The scheme started in February 1986 as a training programme for Mozambican officers. Last year, policy changed in favour of training integrated companies - roughly 110 men - who will remain together as crack outfits in the Mozambican armed forces on their return home.

The training facility, which is estimated to cost Britain £230,000 a com-

pany, has secure funding until March 1989. Foreign Office representatives, who spent a Saturday recently watching B Company at target practice and field exercises, believe that the scheme will probably continue beyond that date.

The first Mozambican company to be trained by the British left Border Camp last year. In December they were deployed along the Limpopo railway line, a 540 km stretch of track linking the Mozambican capital to the eastern frontier of Zimbabwe.

The British government has allocated £14m towards the rehabilitation of the Limpopo railway. The upgrading is part of an overall move by nine states in the region to reduce their trade and transport dependence on South Africa.

In March, reports from the Limpopo line indicated that after more than three months at Ungubana, B

Company's predecessors were suffering from food shortages and deteriorating kit.

This month at Border Camp, British Foreign Office and military personnel were confident that these problems had been overcome. Morale among the soldiers guarding the line was high, said Lt Col Adrian Gilbert, the British defence adviser in Maputo.

In 16 weeks of training, a strong bond of reciprocal affection and respect has developed between the young Mozambican soldiers and their British instructors.

"In the field, that's where they shine," said Sgt Higgins as the last truckload of soldiers left the camp singing the praises of the late President Samora Machel. "They're soldiers of the bush and they always will be."

**Jeremy Harding**