

Mugabe blames rebels for killings

Kidnap tourists' bodies found: Zimbabwe

HARARE (Reuter-AP) — Six bodies recovered in the Matabeleland region have been identified as those of foreign tourists kidnapped by anti-government rebels in Zimbabwe more than 2½ years ago, Prime Minister Robert Mugabe said yesterday.

He told a news conference the government has come to the conclusion that the six were murdered by opposition rebels within three days of being kidnapped on July 23, 1982.

The prime minister said the six, seized by about 22 rebels north of the southwestern city of Bulawayo, had been killed after shouting from a hut in which they were being held to try to attract the attention of security forces searching for them.

The six were Australians William Butler, 31, of Newcastle, New South Wales, and Tony Bajzelj, 25, of Ulverstone, Tasmania; Americans Brett Baldwin, 23, of Walnut Creek, Calif., and Kevin Ellis, 24, of Bellevue, Wash.; and Britons James Greenwell, 19, of



ELLIS
Of Washington



BALDWIN
Of California

Liverpool, and Martyn Hodgson, 35, of Peterborough.

Mugabe said the six had been marched to a village in the remote Insuza area, north of where they were kidnapped. Insuza is about 120 kilometres northwest of Bulawayo.

The gang leader, Gilbert Ngwenya, shot Hodgson first, Mugabe said.

Another of the six, who Mugabe did

not identify, tried to run away and was strangled and then the other four were also shot, the prime minister said.

The six bodies were buried in three shallow graves and villagers then walked cattle over the area to obliterate any signs.

Mugabe said Ngwenya and Austin Mpofo, his lieutenant, told investigators what happened during the abduction after they themselves were captured. The two men were sentenced to be hanged in November.

Informed sources said Ngwenya told about the graves trying to avoid being executed.

The prime minister said in a statement made public at the news conference that officials of Joshua Nkomo's opposition party "had knowledge of both the abduction and the killing of the six tourists."

But Nkomo and his opposition party, the biggest in Zimbabwe, deny government charges that they direct the rebels.