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Big rise in insurgent activity in past month

A major insurgent attack on Macomia town at 05.00 Friday morning (10 May) underlined the increase in insurgent activity since the end of Ramadan a month ago. An estimated 100 insurgents entered the town on the road from Mucojo to the east. There was heavy firing, which caused local residents to flee into the bush and stay there over night. Insurgents occupied the town until about 14.00 on Saturday.

There had been some warning as the security services detailed three suspects in the town the week before. And the army and local militia did respond and the Defence Ministry says an insurgent leader called Issa was killed. But Lusa reports that the insurgents held the town until Saturday afternoon, and the population only began to return after the insurgents had left. (Macomia town had been occupied and largely destroyed two years ago.)

Two maps show the resurgence. The first (right) is from Focus Group (8 May) showing all incidents in the month 10 April to 8 May. The second is our map showing zones of control and movement.

From Focus Group Situation Report 240508
The second map (right) shows that insurgents largely control Macomia district from the N380 (north-south) road to the coast. Insurgents also control southern Mocimboa da Praia district in dense forest along the Messalo River, and have unchallenged free movement in much of Quissanga district (where electoral registration was delayed and is only taking place this week) and eastern Ancuabe district and western Metuge district.

Rwandan forces control the gas zone - Palma district and the northern part of Mocimboa da Praia district - and the graphite zone of Ancuabe district. Tanzanian troops control Nangade district.

Much of the fighting in the past month has been to over two corridors. The N380 is the only paved road north from Pemba to the gas zone and to Mueda. The section of the N380 from Ancuabe district through Macomia town and Chinde and into Muidumbe district is frequently attacked and often closed or passible only in convoys. The other corridor is the coastal area of fishing and small port towns, islands and coastal waterways from Ibo, Mucuojo and Quiterajo north into Rwandan controlled zones. Rwanda forces attacked two insurgent controlled villages in Mocimboa da Praia district and insurgents have been active in islands off Palma and Mocimboa da Praia in the past month.

In the first report of this series (https://bit.ly/Moz-633, 22Feb) we reported the big push south into Chiure district and across the Lurio River into Erati and Membra districts of northern Nampula province. Large numbers of insurgents walked 200 km south, totally unchallenged. Eventually Rwandan troops were brought in. Also, insurgent actions reduced during Ramadan. But in the past month activity has increased again in Chiure and Erati. Rwandan troops plus a local militia from Mueda are in Chiure town. It appears that the insurgents are establishing a permanent presence on both sides of the Lurio River.

Carta de Moçambique (10 May) reported that people had fled from the homes in villages in Odinepa, Eráti, and gone to Namapa (the district town of Eráti), where a curfew was imposed. After two weeks they returned home, both because of the lack of food, and also because Rwandan troops had cleared the insurgents.

Attacks on villages in Quissanga, Ancuabe, Chiure, and Erati districts were reported in the second half of April. In general insurgents looted food and livestock; burned state buildings, houses and motorcycles; and killed several civilians. There has been fighting in a few places.

**SADC pull out shows global politics of this war**

Mozambique lacks the capacity to fight its civil war, so it is dependent on foreign mercenaries, training and equipment. For historic reasons, there are three countries that want their troops in Mozambique and which Frelimo opposes.
Top of the list is the United States, which waged a Cold War proxy war against Mozambique in the 1980s and which killed a million Mozambicans. The US is the largest bi-lateral donor so has to be allowed a training mission. In the early days of the civil war, the US had not yet decided to fight a new cold war against China and Russia, and was searching for enemies. It saw Islam as a possible enemy and began to look at waging part of its war against Islam in Mozambique. Other enemies took over, so Islam became less important to the US.

Second is Portugal, the former colonial power, which wants to prove Mozambique still needs colonial troops. Portugal made the running to set up an EU training mission, which of course used Portuguese soldiers to train. But there are no boots in the war zone - neither US nor Portuguese trainers are allowed to go to Cabo Delgado to observe their students.

South Africa still sees itself at the major regional power and set up the SADC Military Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), which Mozambique never welcomed, but had to accept because Mozambique is part of SADC. SAMIM has been in Mozambique for two years but it is now leaving, which pleases Frelimo, in part because it has not been militarily effective or useful.

In early 2021 insurgents captured the gas town of Palma, which underlined the inability of Mozambique forces to win the civil war. Totally unexpectedly, President Filipe Nyusi turned to Rwanda, which had a large and well trained military which it hired out for peacekeeping. It is almost a neighbour and speaks Kiswahili, one of the languages of Cabo Delgado (and Tanzania). And its northern links are with France, the country of TotalEnergies, which is the main gas company in Mozambique. Rwandan soldiers have proved highly effective in controlling the insurgency in the gas zone. In addition to money, Rwanda President Paul Kagame successfully demanded part of the local construction and contracting sector, and also the right to extradite Rwandan political opponents who had taken refuge in Mozambique. The sudden exit of SAMIM is because SADC's latest military venture is helping the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to fight the M23 rebel movement in the resource-rich eastern province of North Kivu, which borders Rwanda. But Rwanda is strongly backing M23. SADC leaders said they could not fight against Rwanda in the DRC and with Rwanda in Mozambique, so they are pulling out of Mozambique.

Finally, after the death in 2021 of Tanzania president John Magufuli from Covid (which he denied existed), the new president Samia Suluhu Hassan improved relations with all Tanzania's neighbours. This included cooperation with Mozambique on the war. Troops that had been part of SAMIM have stayed and taken effective control of the border district of Nangade, which had been controlled by insurgents.

What about the gas?

Mozambique's huge off-shore gas field is controlled by two consortia. Area 1 nearest the coast is led by the French TotalEnergies and area 4 further off-shore by the US ExxonMobil, both of which have highest level political links in their counties. The gas is to be compressed to liquified national gas (LNG) by both companies on the Afungi Peninsula near Palma. The fall of Palma stopped work and it has not resumed. Total Energies head Patrick Pouyanné initially said he would only restart when the war stopped, but he is accepting Rwanda protection of just two districts. He then said he would only restart if contractors accepted the same prices as when the bid five years ago, and under pressure, most did. He talked about starting by mid-2024.

But in a 29 April report (LNG Prime) he said that "We had a good discussion with the contractors. So the good news I can confirm is that we've actually come back and we have good contracts with everyone". But the bad news is security. Some global funders, apparently including US Exim Bank and the Dutch Atradius, are not willing to release funds on security grounds. So Pouyanné again moved the start date, at least to the end of the this year.
Meanwhile ExxonMobil told Reuters (2 May) that it will not make a final investment decision on Cabo Delgado until the end of next year, 2025. It will also have funding issues, with Credit Agricole saying it would not fund Exxon in Cabo Delgado because of pressure on it to stop funding fossil fuel.

Both Exxon and Total are doing physical work on the ground and Exxon is commissioning a different type of LNG equipment. But no formal investment decision has been made.

**Who profits from the climate emergency?**

"Hundreds of the world’s leading climate scientists expect global temperatures to rise to at least 2.5°C above preindustrial levels this century", compared to the agreed target of 1.5°C, a *Guardian* (8 May) survey revealed. [https://bit.ly/3WCkhj0](https://bit.ly/3WCkhj0) This is also what the gas companies are assuming. When gas contracts were agreed a decade ago, there was a tacit assumption that it would be impossible to sell gas after 2050 because of the need to meet 1.5°C. But no one in the industry believes that now.

ExxonMobil, TotalEnergies and other gas companies expect to sell for a decade longer. Thus Patrick Pouyanne, Total Energies Chair told investors a year ago (29 April 2023) "we are not in a hurry" to return to Mozambique. The gas can always be sold. There is a key gamble for Patrick Pouyanne and for Darren Woods, CEO of Exxon. They are betting their companies on the belief that the climate emergency will continue. But across the world, the temperature rise to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels has already happened. Flood, fires, and famines are already here. In a decade, having wasted money on Cabo Delgado, will Exxon and Total be forced to pull the plug on Cabo Delgado?

Personally, both Pouyanne and Woods are 60 years old and have salaries of $8mn and $36mn per year, respectively. They will probably die before the climate disaster hits, or at least be able to use their millions to not be hurt. But their children and grand-children?

Ultimately, it is Mozambicans who will carry the real cost. The floods and cyclones in Matola, Maputo, Beira, and Quelimane are just tasters of what is coming down the road. The floods in Kenya and drought in Zimbabwe are at 1.5°C - the agreed number. And in five years at 2°C? And when the gas is still being sold and global heating is devastating Mozambique?

Even if the gas billions are used well, they are not enough to transform Mozambique into a country that can survive unprecedented floods, cyclones, and droughts - a complete transformation to housing, travel, farming. And money spent on dams will be no use when there is no rain.

Frelimo leaders dream of billions of dollars. But the contracts give all the power to the gas companies - for example to charge inflated prices for the initial costs and security. And now companies are being move off shore to UAE and Mauritius, where Mozambique has no control. The billions in gas profits are a fantasy - but the climate emergency is real.

*Am I being too pessimistic?* There would be no war in Cabo Delgado today if the money from the gas and mineral developments had been shared, to create jobs and training, and if young people had been involved in how the money was to be used. Instead it went to the oligarchs and their patronage systems. Why do we think the gas billions will be any better used? jh

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Important external links

Flood, cyclone and weather: weather https://www.inam.gov.mz/
  (which uses z time which is UCT - Coordinated Universal Time) and https://www.cyclocane.com/
Two LSE working papers - World Bank questions its Mozambique 'success' where oligarchs brought

Cabo Delgado

Cabo Ligado weekly report on civil war https://www.caboligado.com/
Archive with reports, detailed maps, and census data https://bit.ly/Moz-CDg

Special reports on the war
  Are the drums of war silencing any hope of peace? 26 July 2020 http://bit.ly/Moz-496

Mozambique heroin transit trade

Gas for development?
  Gas_for_development_or_just_for_money?_2015 bit.ly/MozGasEng
  Gás_para_desenvolvimento_ou_apenas_dinheiro?_2015 bit.ly/MozGasPt

Background reading

Special reports
  Special report on four poverty surveys: bit.ly/MozPoverty

$2bn secret debt - in English

In Portuguese:

Eleven books by Joseph Hanlon can be downloaded, free: https://bit.ly/HanlonBooks
Bangladesh confronts climate change (2016)
Moçambique e as grandes cheias de 2000 (2001)
Mozambique and the Great Flood of 2000 (2001)
Paz Sem Beneficio: Como o FMI Bloqueia a Reconstrução (1997)

These are still available for sale:
Galinhas e cerveja: uma receita para o crescimento (2014) (free in English)
Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South (2010)

Mozambique media websites, English:
Club of Mozambique (free): http://clubofmozambique.com/
Zitamar (paywall): http://zitamar.com/

Mozambique media websites, Portuguese (all with partial paywall):
Notícias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz
O País: www.opais.co.mz
@Verdade: http://www.verdade.co.mz
Carta de Moçambique https://cartamz.com

Mozambique think tanks and pressure groups, Portuguese:
Centro de Integridade Pública: CIP https://cipmoz.org/
Observatório do Meio Rural: OMR https://omrmz.org/
Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos: ISE https://www.iese.ac.mz/
Centro Para Democracia e Desenvolvimento CDD https://ccdmoz.org/ (some CDD in English)
Also CDD now controls Fórum de Monitoria do Orçamento - FMO (main debt group) http://www.fmo.org.mz
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