

SOUTHERN AFRICAN JIHAD:

THE CABO DELGADO INSURGENCY

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PART I: UNCOVERING THE ORIGINS OF THE CABO DELGADO INSURGENCY

Executive Summary - The ongoing Cabo Delgado insurgency threatens:

- the country's all-important liquefied natural gas projects in the Afungi Peninsula area,
- cross border trade between Mozambique and Tanzania,
- other economic activities in the province such as mining and tourism.

Some potential may also exist for the insurgency to spread further.

In a 3 part series, Intelyse will examine the origins of the insurgency, the escalation of militant activity in the province in 2019, and the group's likely trajectory in 2020, including its potential impacts on security, politics, and commercial interests in the region.

In part 1 of this series, Intelyse intends to outline the origins and identity of the militants of Cabo Delgado. Since October 2017, the province has seen an increasingly deadly insurgency: Often attributed to the spread through Kenya and Tanzania of violent Islamic jihad attributed to the legacy of radical Kenyan Muslim cleric Aboud Rogo. This report will show that the migrating jihadis have found deep-rooted support within a marginalized minority segment of the local Muslim community.

Poverty and government neglect/marginalization, combined with feelings of resentment and disillusionment, are widespread throughout in Cabo Delgado. The presence of rich natural resources and expanding levels of foreign investment have not benefited local communities. The Cabo Delgado province provides an environment primed for expanding, interconnected organized crime and violent extremism.

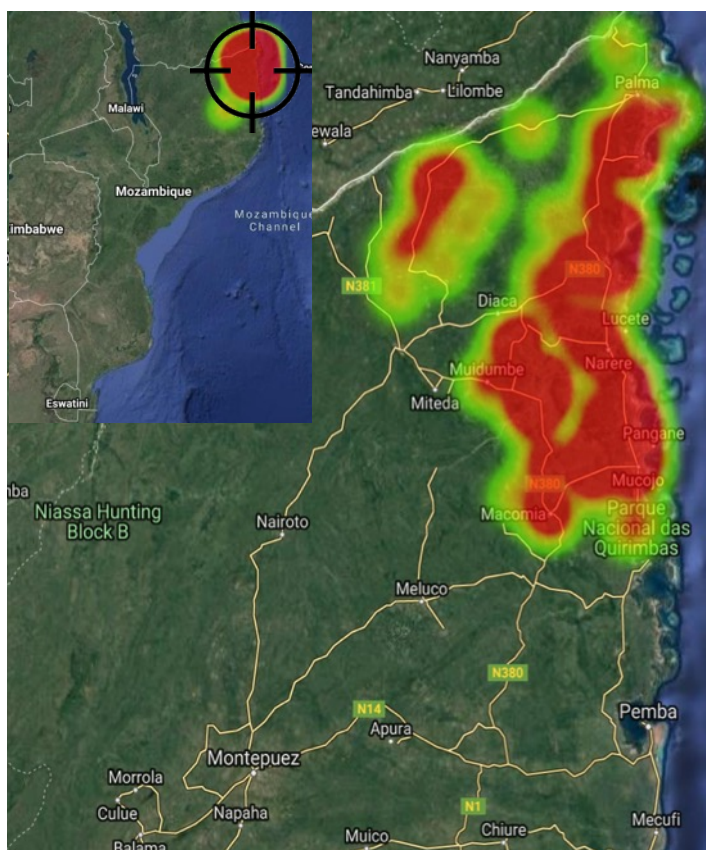


Image 1: Heatmapping of insurgency related incidents in Central Coastal Cabo Delgado, 01 May – 30 November 2019

The insurgency campaign is expanding geographically into areas designated for gas development, towards ruby deposit concentrates and the logistics and tourism hub of Pemba. As foreign businesses increase their presence, investment and operational activity in this area, it becomes increasingly important to understand the Cabo Delgado insurgency as a significant and growing threat for 2020.

Poverty and Riches in Cabo Delgado

Cabo Delgado is located in north-eastern Mozambique, bordering Tanzania to the north, Niassa Province to the west, and Nampula Province to the south. The province is home to approximately 2.3 million people consisting primarily of ethnic Makonde, Macau, and Mwani peoples. The Mwani, with a population of between 120,000-200,000 are a minority Muslim community, with a history of conflict with the larger, mostly Catholic Makonde community.

According to World Bank data from 2017, Mozambique was ranked as the 7th poorest country in the world, with an average annual gross national income of \$1,200 per person in the country. While there has been progress in the last 15 years in reducing poverty in Mozambique, Northern regions such as Zambezia, Nampula, Niassa, and Cabo Delgado have not seen the same substantial improvement that has been seen in the Central and Southern regions of the country. For example, between 1996 -2015, poverty rates in Maputo City and Maputo province fell by around 70%, vs. a 20% reduction in most of the north, including Cabo Delgado.

The province has long been regarded as neglected, politically marginalized, and underdeveloped. At around 60% Cabo Delgado has the highest illiteracy rate in Mozambique: approximately 35% of children not attending school, and just 0.3% of post-secondary school education. Thousands of youths remain unemployed in the province as well, with youth unemployment estimated as high as 88%.

At the same time, the province possesses the country's most important natural resources. These include the largest deposits of rubies in the world, large stocks of timber, and most significantly, the presence of large reserves of natural gas in the Rovuma basin area, south of Palma town. 2019 has seen significant progress in plans to begin commercially processing these gas reserves at liquefaction plants on the Afungi Peninsula in the Caba Delgado district. In June, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation announced a Final Investment Decision (FID), representing a \$20 billion investment into the liquefaction and exportation element for Area 1 of the project, and the largest single LNG project approved in Africa. Reports indicated that FIDs on other elements of the wider LNG project are anticipated for companies including Total and Exxon in 2020. Foreign investment on this scale has not previously been seen in Mozambique and according to some investments, if successful, could more than double the country's GDP in the coming years.

Cabo Delgado's largely impoverished population has seen little to no benefit in recent years from the discovery and exploitation of these resources. This has triggered growing resentment and frustration at both the government and foreign entities operating in the province, setting the stage for the rise of an enigmatic insurgency.

Illicit activity, however, is thriving in the province. Meanwhile, government neglect, the porous nearby border with Tanzania, access to the sea, densely forested terrain, and poor economic prospects have led the province to become a lucrative area for organized criminal syndicates. Criminal factions operate in Northern Mozambique and Southern Tanzania, with many Mozambican groups reportedly based in Nampula province to the south. Rubies, timber, ivory, and heroin are all smuggled through Cabo Delgado, with human trafficking networks also active in the region.

Stage Set for Insurgency

The traditionally dominant form of Islam in Cabo Delgado for centuries has been a form of moderate Sufi Islam with local traditions and practices. This local brand of Islam was regarded as tolerant and had long co-existed peacefully with Christians and Animists dating back to the days of Portuguese rule. In the 1970s, a new and more conservative style of Sunni Islam entered Mozambique as Muslim Mozambicans who had studied in Saudi Arabia returned to the country. This conservative strain, however, remained a minority. Conservative Sunni practices became somewhat more common over time as a reaction to the persecution of Muslims by the anti-religious FRELIMO government during the first years after independence, though Sufism was and is still the dominant form of Islam in the province.

Clashes with Islamist elements in Mozambique were reported as early as the late 1980s, though the current insurgency appears to have roots in events that occurred about a decade later. In 1998, a group of young northern Mozambican Muslim leaders broke away from the Sunni Mozambique Islamic Council, officially forming Ansar al Sunna (AAS), also later known as Ahlu Sunna wa Jamma (ASWJ). AAS/ASWJ was initially formed due to the perception that black African members of Mozambique's Muslim community were discriminated against by Mozambican Arab and Asian Muslim leaders, and "African" members disdain for the council's close ties to the FRELIMO government. AAS/ASWJ would become increasingly Islamist, gaining a small but dedicated number of followers.

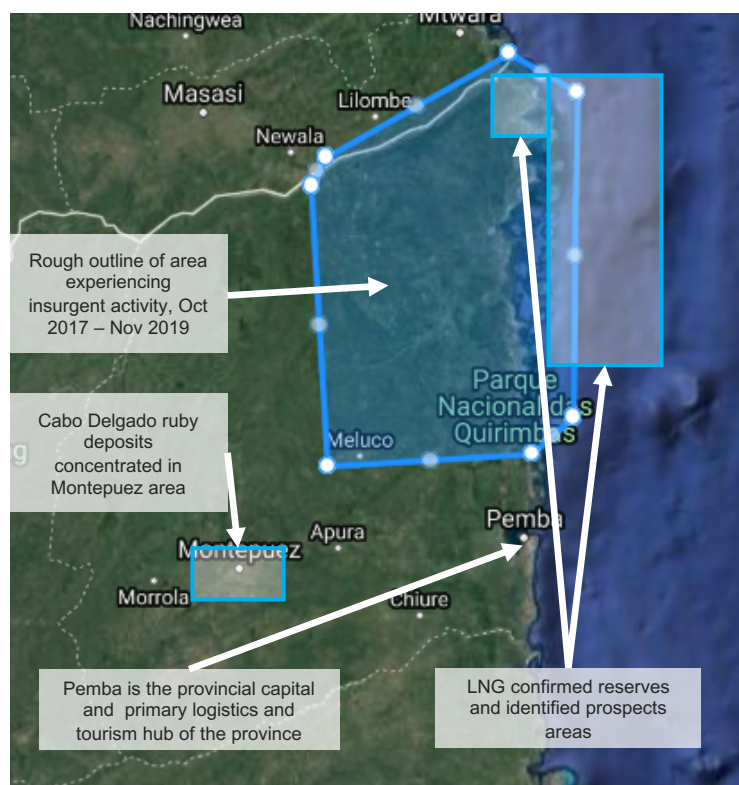


Image 2: Cabo Delgado Insurgency, Natural Resources, and Key Locations

By 2014, individuals using the same group name(s) (AAS/ASWJ), would build 2 mosques in Mocimboa da Praia. Note that it is unclear if this later manifestation of AAS/ASWJ was a direct continuation of the group set up in 1998, or if the new group was merely inspired by the first. The new AAS/ASWJ group will continue to be referred to using this acronym.

What is clear is that AAS/ASWJ elements before 2014 had been working to convert young men, primarily from the Mwani ethnic group, and to break away from existing mosques. Group members made efforts to disassociate themselves from the state, including from state schools and courts to establish their own "society". No clear central leader of the group emerged at this time. Instead, a number of clerics appeared to have initially formed a loose association with one another; some of these leaders appeared to have had some contact with Islamist and even jihadist circles outside of Mozambique.

At this time, most AAS/ASWJ members appeared to have been young, male Mwani Cabo Delgado natives, many of them itinerant street traders or unemployed. In 2015, there were reports of a number of confrontations in local mosques, in which AAS/ASWJ members entered wearing shoes and reportedly armed with knives, intent on challenging local Islamic practices and imams as not truly Islamic.

As early as 2014, AAS/ASWJ members had reportedly become involved with criminal smuggling syndicates operating in Northern Mozambique and Southern Tanzania. This participation seems to have been primarily as members of criminal syndicates controlling ruby, timber, and illicit drug smuggling as well as human trafficking activities in the province. These activities took members into both Tanzania and Nampula province. Many group members at this time also reportedly joined the group after being offered business loans by AAS/ASWJ. During this period, many members would accumulate significant wealth. It is also important to note that around this time, sources differ as to whether the group was AAS/ASWJ itself or was a new, more radical group made up of ex-AAS/ASWJ members.

By late 2015, the group had begun to form military cells, and it may have been around this time that the group became known locally as "al Shabaab" (AS), Arabic for "the youth"; note that there are no direct links between the Somali group of the same name. Also in 2015, the group appears to have made contact with and been further radicalized by a group of foreigners active in the same smuggling circles in Southern Tanzania and Northern Mozambique.

Radical Kenyan Cleric's Reach Beyond the Grave

About Rogo was a radical Kenyan Muslim cleric who had been based in the port city of Mombasa since the late 1980s. He became radicalized after an Islamic political party he had campaigned for was banned.

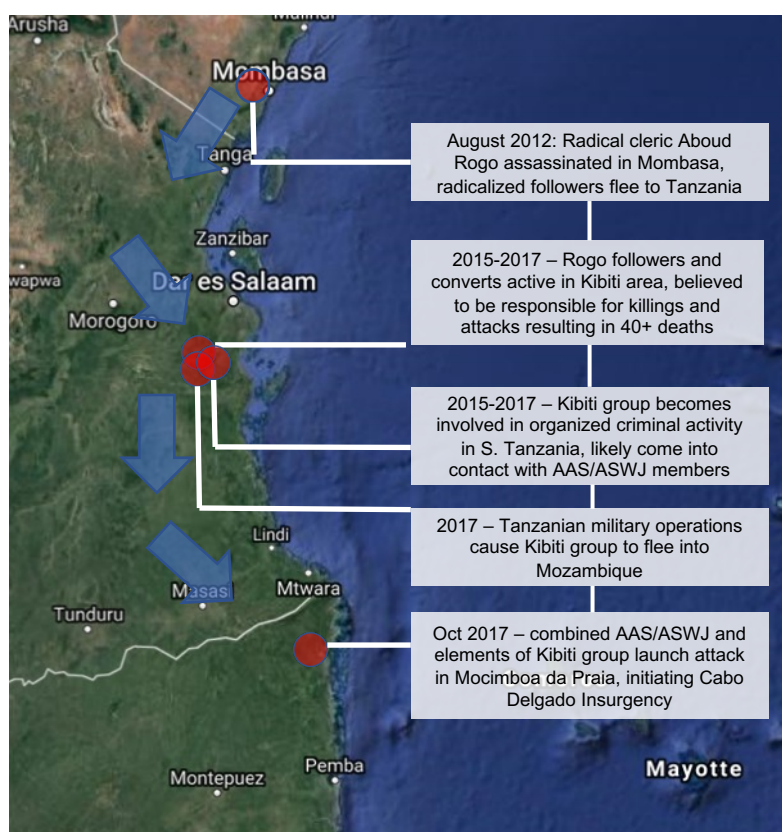
Retreating completely from politics, Rogo was disillusioned with the Kenyan government which he then viewed as illegitimate. In 1998, he reportedly provided material and other forms of support to al Qaeda cells that conducted the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam embassy attacks. In 2002, he was arrested in connection with a bombing in Mombasa that left 13 dead and in 2005, established contacts with Islamist elements operating in Somalia. After 2007, Rogo was believed to have had direct links to al Shabaab (AS), the Somali hard-line Islamist militant group, and reportedly visited an AS training camp in Somalia in 2009. Rogo from his Mombasa mosque preached that true Muslims should travel to Somalia to fight for the group. Rogo fiercely condemned Kenya's decision to join the war in Somalia against AS in 2012, and praised AS attacks in Kenya as "just retribution".

In 2012, Rogo was arrested for possession of guns, ammunition, and detonators, and faced charges of belonging to AS. That year the UN Security Council also sanctioned Rogo for providing "financial, material, logistical, or technical support" to AS. He was also believed to be the key leader of "al Hijra", the Kenyan franchise of AS. Despite these charges, Rogo was released on bail in February 2012. In televised sermons in April and July, he would go on to praise terror attacks in Kenya and called the Kenyan security services "infidels".

On 27 August 2012, Rogo was shot and killed in Mombasa. Rogo's killing is widely believed to have been conducted by Kenyan security forces who regarded Rogo as too dangerous to be allowed to live – even if in Kenyan government custody.

Despite Rogo's death, his legacy would live on. An incredibly charismatic preacher who praised al Qaeda and AS, Rogo's messages called for the rejection of the state, the importance of jihad, and a return to a more fundamentalist brand of Islam, saying that Muslims in Africa often did not understand their religion and that local Islamic practices had been corrupted. Rogo's messages in the East African lingua franca of Swahili were spread via CDs, tapes, and other propaganda his mosque began producing in the mid-2000s, and widely shared in Kenya, Tanzania, and beyond.

Rogo's Followers and Ideas Migrate South



Many of Rogo's followers in Kenya, fearing for their own lives after Rogo and other associated clerics were mysteriously assassinated, fled south into Tanzania. How many of these followers fled into Kenya, or even the identities of the leading individuals of this group remain unclear. What is clear, however, is that at least some of Rogo's followers, including some Tanzanians influenced by his readily available sermons, gathered in the Kibiti area of Rufiji district in southern Tanzania by early 2015.

Image 3: Kenya/Tanzania Group movements/key events in lead-up to Cabo Delgado insurgency

At this time in the area, a new group of preachers became active and were known as "walokole wa kiislamu", meaning Islamic revivalists or "born again" Muslims. These preachers were reportedly strongly influenced by Rogo's sermons. It is somewhat unclear if these clerics were directly connected to Rogo and his followers, or merely influenced by his teachings. Members of this new movement were reported to have built separate mosques in the area, and to have made attempts to take over existing mosques in Kibiti and nearby areas. Reports from the area at the time indicated that youths were being taught "new ideas" and given military training, with an emphasis on the need to cleanse the area of "impure religious practices".

In 2015, killings began in Kibiti in attacks targeting government and ruling party officials, as well as local authorities and civilians. A number of abductions were also reported at this time, as well as killings in which victims were mutilated or maimed. The area had experienced no similar violence prior to 2015. Sources in the area began reporting that youths began calling elders "kaffirs" and that some madrassa teachers had begun to prevent their students from attending secular schools, saying they were illegitimate and haram. These killings would not end until after a Tanzanian military operation in 2017, though Tanzania at no point would acknowledge that Islamic extremism could be a driving force behind the attacks. One of the last and most significant incidents in Tanzania occurred south of Dar es Salaam in April of 2017 in which unidentified gunmen shot and killed 8 police officers in a road ambush.

The Kibiti group was also reported to have ties to illegal poaching and charcoal smuggling in the area, becoming involved in criminal activity in Kibiti in 2015. Through these criminal networks, whose range of activity extended into northern Mozambique, the Kibiti group first appears to have made connections in 2015 with the growing AAS/ASWJ movement in Cabo Delgado.

After security operations in the Kibiti, other areas of Rufiji District, and elsewhere, Tanzanian authorities said multiple "bandits" had been killed and as many as 380 people were alleged to have "disappeared". Police officials said some of those responsible for the Kibiti and Rufiji killings had fled into Mozambique. The group in Kibiti/Rufiji comprising of followers of Rogo, as well as other local converts, appeared to have already established connections with an increasingly radical AAS/ASWJ group in Cabo Delgado. The two group's trajectories and actions in Kibiti and the Mocimboa da Praia area were already remarkably similar. This included the establishment of their own mosques, rejection of the state, attempts to force their conservative brands of Islam on more moderate communities, and connections to organized crime at roughly the same time. The primary difference between the two groups had been the Tanzanian side's violent actions, in which at least 40 people had been killed in a series of murders and small-scale attacks from 2015-2017. Violence related to these groups in Mozambique, however, would shortly eclipse anything seen previously in Tanzania.

Native Mozambican AAS/ASWJ members were now joined by some of the fundamentalists who had fled Kibiti. These were likely a mixture of Tanzanian, Ugandan, and Kenyan nationals – though some accounts have suggested a number of Somali, Congolese, and Burundian nationals had also joined the group. This new injection of radical elements set the stage for violence to begin in Mozambique. In the first half of 2017, and possibly at an even earlier date, reports indicate that group members set up small training camps in Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia, and even Montepuez Districts. The group allegedly was able to hire former Mozambican policemen as well as border guards to provide group members with training. Sources also said the group had hired some members of the Somali AS network in Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania to provide military style training for its members.

IN PART II – THE INSURGENCY’S METEORIC 2019

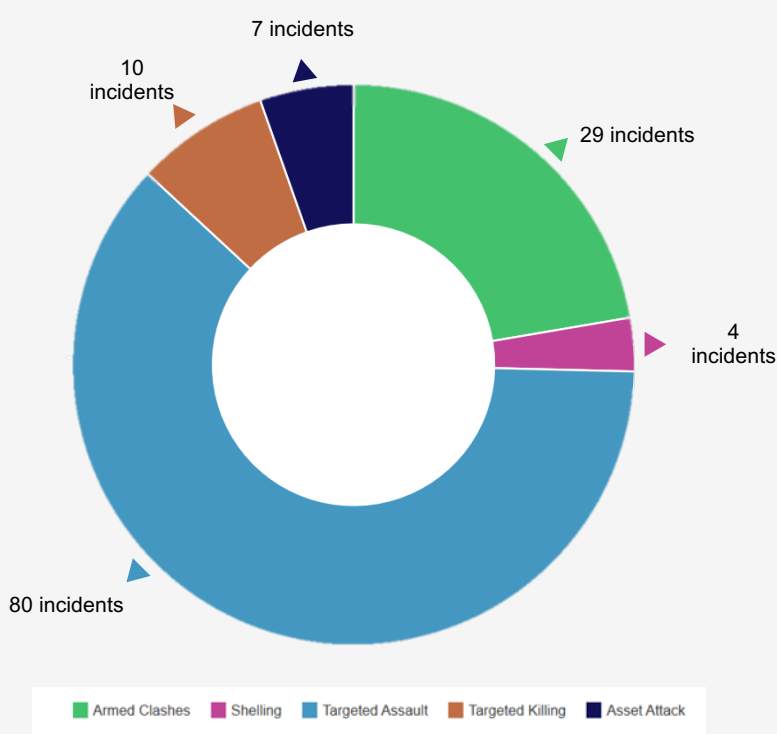


Image 4: Tracked insurgency related incidents in Cabo Delgado, 01 May – 30 November 2019

In Part II, Intelyse will briefly discuss the beginnings of the insurgency in 2017-2018 before covering the group’s substantial escalation of attacks across several Cabo Delgado Districts in 2019. A relatively primitive insurgency in 2017 in which militants were primarily armed with machetes had transformed itself by the end of 2019. The group within the last year has become a well-equipped and coordinated insurgency that had inflicted multiple defeats on the Mozambican army, threatened the country’s most valuable economic project, and boasts growing ties with ISIS. Intelyse will discuss in depth the insurgency’s metamorphosis in 2019, before discussing the group’s likely future activities and impacts on the region’s security, politics, and commercial prospects in Part III.