Cabo Ligado — or ‘connected cape’ — is a new conflict observatory monitoring political violence in Mozambique, launched in partnership with Zitamar News and Mediafax.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

**Cabo Delgado, October 2017-February 2021**

- Total number of organized violence events: 813
- Total number of reported fatalities from organized violence: 2,621
- Total number of reported fatalities from civilian targeting: 1,319

*All ACLED data are available for download via the data export tool.*

**SITUATION SUMMARY**

On 22 February, insurgents conducted two attacks along the border between Nangade and Mocimboa da Praia districts. The first, a morning attack, took place at Ingalonga, Nangade district. Insurgents beheaded two people there. Later that day, across the border in Mitope, Mocimboa da Praia district, insurgents captured three women and three men who had been working in their fields. One woman was released, and the three men were beheaded. Local militias deployed to the area in response, but no clashes were reported.

Three days later insurgents struck closer to the Nangade district capital, attacking the village of Luneque, which is only 10 kilometres from Nangade town. The attackers killed four civilians in the town, and caused many others to flee to the district capital.

On the evening of 26 February, insurgents surprised residents of Quirinde, Palma district as they ate dinner. Residents fled, but insurgents killed seven, three of whom were beheaded. Insurgents also destroyed homes and looted food and other goods. Quirinde is a coastal village north of Palma town, about six kilometres east of Quionga, which insurgents attacked on 19 February. One source reports that helicopters belonging to government forces or government contractors pursued the Quirinde attackers, causing an indeterminate number of casualties. According to Pinnacle News, the government has deployed two battalions of the police Rapid Intervention Unit to the area in an attempt to prevent further insurgent attacks on the route between Palma and the Tanzanian border.

Those deployments did not prevent another insurgent incursion in the area on 27 February, when insurgents
attacked the border post at Namoto, about 12 kilometers northwest of Quionga. No details about the attack are available.

According to Pinnacle News, Quirinde residents captured two alleged insurgents at some point during the week, beating them before handing them over to authorities.

There were also reports last week of insurgent movement south of Nangade town on the R763 road toward Mueda. There were no attacks on the road, but government officials ordered a temporary suspension of traffic in the area as a precautionary measure.

INCIDENT FOCUS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT

International human rights watchdog Amnesty International released a major new report on abuses in Cabo Delgado today. The report draws on interviews with dozens of people who experienced and witnessed violence by all sides in the conflict to paint a grim and accurate picture of what life has been like for civilians in coastal Cabo Delgado since the fighting began. Many of the abuses detailed in the report will not be new to those who have been following the conflict. Allegations of extrajudicial executions of prisoners by the government, for example, were first made by Amnesty International last September. The report does make some new charges, however, which are likely to shape future discussion of the conflict.

The report uses satellite imagery to track insurgent destruction of buildings during major occupations in Quissanga, Chai Sede, Litamanda, Macomia, and Mocimboa da Praia towns. The imagery and accompanying interviews cast some light on the logic of the insurgency’s ongoing destruction of civilian buildings. Insurgents burned any buildings associated with the government, including schools, health centers, government offices, and other forms of infrastructure. The house burnings, however, are more discriminate — often a house will be burned but one or more of the neighboring houses spared. This suggests that the burnings are targeted, a conclusion backed up by witness accounts. Insurgents in Mocimboa da Praia, for example, “knew specific buildings they wished to destroy, and specific people they wanted to kill (those deemed to support police or the government),” according to the report. Amnesty International Senior Crisis Adviser Brian Castner said in a press conference that, in some areas, the houses of people who would not turn their children over to the insurgency were targeted.

The report takes explicit aim at the actions of Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), the private military contractor (PMC) that has been providing air support to government forces as part of its contract with the Mozambican police. Amnesty International’s researchers spoke to 53 people who personally witnessed DAG helicopters firing indiscriminately at civilian buildings and crowds of people, with no way of telling whether the people were insurgents, civilians, or even government troops. Thirty of those people also observed DAG gunners dropping hand grenades indiscriminately from their helicopters. Incidents of friendly fire casualties and civilian injuries as a result of DAG actions have been reported before, but Amnesty International’s research indicates that DAG’s indiscriminate use of deadly force is much more frequent than had previously been reported. DAG pledged today to conduct an investigation into the allegations made in the report.

There are also new allegations against Mozambican security forces, including a detailed eyewitness account with accompanying satellite evidence of a mass killing of civilians by Mozambican soldiers in Quissanga town. Several men were executed and their bodies buried in a mass grave behind the home of the Quissanga district permanent secretary. According to testimony from multiple witnesses, that grave became the site of over a dozen more extrajudicial killings of local civilians, and the area behind the permanent secretary’s house was used for beatings and rapes of civilians by government troops.
These well-documented allegations of widespread abuse by government forces pose a problem for international actors interested in supporting the government’s military effort in Cabo Delgado. Whether the hurdle is legal — in the case of the United States — or merely moral — in the case of the European Union — countries will not be eager to associate themselves with such actions. The problem is particularly acute for South Africa, where DAG is headquartered. As the report points out, the allegations against DAG within suggest that the company is in violation of the Foreign Military Assistance Act, the South African law governing the actions of South African PMCs. The South African government has repeatedly expressed an interest in supporting Mozambican security forces in Cabo Delgado, but now may be under international pressure to sanction the South African group most directly involved in the conflict.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Palma town remains in crisis, despite shipments of food reaching the town by sea last week. Sources reported on 22 February that at least three people had recently died of hunger in the town, lacking the money to purchase exorbitantly priced food. The town hospital is seeing patients of all ages suffering from malnutrition. Despite calls by the government for civil servants to return to the town, prominent residents are now abandoning Palma, selling their goods and finding ways out of the district.

Conditions are also difficult in areas to which they are likely to flee, however. Cholera cases are skyrocketing in Cabo Delgado, especially in communities hosting large numbers of internally displaced people. The disease has killed 55 people in the province in 2021, according to UNICEF, and there have been nearly 5,000 new cases so far this year. Of these, 400 were reported in the third week of February, the largest number of new cases in a week so far in 2021. According to a UNICEF spokesman, water and sanitation facilities in areas with large populations of displaced civilians “are not sufficient at the moment and need urgent upgrades.”

In part to lessen the strain on host communities in southern Cabo Delgado, authorities in Macomia are encouraging civilians displaced from the district to return. Tomás Bedae, the Mozambican police official who was appointed Macomia district administrator in June 2020, has been meeting with small traders to convince them that it is safe to resume business in the district. Some have taken Bedae up on his offer. In fact, the growing civilian population in Macomia and the lack of medical care available in the area was part of what convinced Médecins Sans Frontières to resume medical services in the district.

The return of some civilians to Macomia may be contributing to a slowing pace of displacement overall. Nampula province has reported a sharp slowdown in new arrivals from Cabo Delgado over the past month, with just over 1,000 displaced people coming into Nampula in February. In January, there were some 4,000 new arrivals escaping the violence in Cabo Delgado. In total, the province now hosts about 64,900 displaced civilians.

Note: There is often a lack of consensus over the spellings of place names in Mozambique. We endeavor to be consistent within Cabo Ligado publications, but be aware that alternative spellings exist and may appear in other publications.
Repeated Attacks

Insurgent attacks last week were executed along the Tanzania border in Palma district, and on both sides of the border between Mocimboa da Praia and Nangade districts. Many attacks took place in areas of recent insurgent activity, indicating the government’s inability to gain and sustain control in those areas. Those repeated attacks, and the resulting isolation of Palma town, are an ongoing indictment of the government’s ability to provide stable security in northern Cabo Delgado.

Abuses Threaten Foreign Support

Amnesty International’s report on allegations of widespread abuse by government and contractor forces pose a problem for international actors interested in supporting the government’s military effort in Cabo Delgado. Whether the hurdle is legal -- in the case of the United States -- or merely moral -- in the case of the European Union -- countries will not be eager to associate themselves with such actions. The problem is particularly acute for South Africa, where Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) is headquartered. As the report points out, the allegations against DAG suggest that the company is in violation of the Foreign Military Assistance Act, the South African law governing the actions of South African private military contractors.

Organized Political Violence in Cabo Delgado (1 JAN 2020 - 26 FEB 2021)