



# CABO LIGADO

9 March 2021

## Cabo Ligado Weekly: 1-7 March

*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-March 2021

- Total number of organized violence events: 829
- Total number of reported fatalities from organized violence: 2,655
- Total number of reported fatalities from civilian targeting: 1,344

All ACLED data are available for download via the [data export tool](#).

### SITUATION SUMMARY

Insurgents struck throughout Nangade district last week, nearly isolating Nangade town in a series of attacks. On 1 March, insurgents began [setting](#) roadblocks on the R763 south of Nangade town, cutting off the main route between Nangade and Mueda. The same day, insurgents killed two farmers working near the village of Eduardo Mondlane, just east of Litingina.

On 2 March, more insurgent roadblocks [sprang up](#) near Muiha village, in the northwest of Nangade district, near where the borders separating Nangade, Mueda, and Tanzania meet. Insurgents were also seen the same day in the countryside just west of Muiha, where they chased farmers from their fields. No casualties were reported. The incursions west of Muiha are the farthest west incidents in Cabo Delgado involving insurgent fighters ACLED has yet recorded.

Far to the east, insurgents once again attacked the border post of Namoto, Palma district on the night of 2 March. Despite a military unit being deployed to protect the area after it was [attacked](#) on 27 February, insurgents were able to loot the area and burn the border post to the ground. Helicopters evacuated border police shortly after the attack began, and no casualties have been reported.

The next day, insurgents used their roadblock system to ambush a military vehicle traveling on the R763 from Nangade town to Mueda. The ambush took place near Litingina, about 10 kilometers south of Nangade town. Insurgents placed logs in the road and opened fire on the vehicle as it approached. The soldiers in the vehicle returned fire with a rocket propelled grenade and barreled through the roadblock, but not before three

soldiers had been killed. The deceased include a lieutenant colonel and two enlisted men.

The same day, insurgents [killed](#) two civilians from the same family in the village of N'gangolo, which sits on the R763 south of Litingina. That night, insurgents raided the village of Samora Machel, east of Litingina. No details of that attack have been reported.

Insurgents drew even closer to Nangade town on 4 March when they attacked the village of 3 de Fevereiro, 9 kilometers east of the district capital. Most civilians had fled to Nangade town before the attack, but they could see the smoke from 3 de Fevereiro as insurgents burned homes in the village. Insurgents also returned to Samora Machel that night, but, again, no details of the attack emerged.

A report by Pinnacle News, confirmed by a Cabo Ligado source, notes that insurgents sent messages to Palma civilians, threatening to attack the town on 5 March. As with past threats of specific attack dates, no actual attack on Palma came on 5 March, although more security forces were deployed to the town as a precaution.

On 6 March, government forces attacked an insurgent encampment at Nkonga, in eastern Nangade district near the border with Mocimboa da Praia. The village had been deserted following insurgent attacks in the area, and insurgents had commandeered it as a place to hold hostages and stockpile looted goods. Supported by five helicopters, government troops assaulted the village and killed and captured multiple insurgents. Goods looted from Nangade district were recovered, and hostages taken by insurgents during their Nangade raids were freed.

*New information also emerged last week about an earlier incident. Following the 25 February insurgent [attack](#) on Luneque, Nangade district that killed four civilians, government forces [arrived](#) in the village and killed six insurgents. The government response was delayed because troops spent time issuing fines to Luneque villagers who had fled the attack without stopping to put on a face mask. The insurgents returned to the village later that day and burned homes there in reprisal for their losses.*

## INCIDENT FOCUS: SUPPLYING PALMA

Government security forces have not yet guaranteed the safety of the stretch of the R763 between Palma and Nangade towns. Insurgents are only making overland travel to Palma more treacherous. The ongoing attacks on Nangade district left Nangade town isolated and shut down the road between Nangade and Mueda. The government strike on Nkonga, though, has brought hope that the Nangade-Mueda route may soon be re-opened. As a result, no overland supplies had arrived in Palma town since [early February](#).

To alleviate suffering in Palma, the Cabo Delgado provincial government has resumed limited cabotage service to the town, delivering the first shipment of supplies on 26 February. Going forward, the provincial government expects to deliver 45,000 liters of fuel and 180 tons of food to Palma each week, which it believes will be enough to supply the whole district. Scholar Joseph Hanlon, however, [estimated](#) that Palma town alone requires 42 tons of food per day to meet World Health Organization standards for emergency situations, which is considerably more than the government shipments are bringing. Hanlon's calculations assume that the current town population is about 75,000 — 37,000 local residents and another 37,000 displaced civilians — but that number is likely an overestimate. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [estimates](#) the number of displaced people currently in Palma at roughly 23,000, and many people who lived there at the start of the conflict have fled. In any case, the food shipments are making

a difference. The price of rice has halved since the height of the hunger, although at MZN200 (\$2.69) per kilogram it is still quite expensive by local standards.

Total is adding to food availability by offering space to three trucks carrying a total of 105 tons of food on the barges the company runs from Pemba to Palma. The food, and the price controls Total has imposed on it, are sure to boost the company's waning popularity in Palma.

In the long run, the town's capacity to resupply by sea will only increase. Grindrod Freight Services, on whose barges the Total food trucks are being transported, [announced](#) last week that it expects to have the Palma logistics hub it is constructing operational by June. The hub will allow for faster and larger scale deliveries of fuel and containers, which will benefit both Total's construction effort and, potentially, the town's supply stream as a whole.

## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

More problems with Mozambique's special visa program for humanitarian workers were reported last week. The United Nations is [trying](#) to bring 57 experts into Mozambique through the special visa program to support international humanitarian response in Cabo Delgado and elsewhere in the country, but their visas have not been processed. The Mozambican government [announced](#) the program in December, claiming that it would make it easier for humanitarians to enter the country. These experts, however, have been waiting for a response to their applications since the program began. UN Resident Coordinator in Mozambique Myrta Kaulard called the lack of visas a "very big" challenge for humanitarian agencies that "in the end, will have implications for the availability of partners to contribute resources" if those resources cannot be distributed. The government had no comment on the situation.

The government did comment, however, on the allegations against state security forces in last week's Amnesty International report. General Bertolino Capitine, speaking with reporters during a tour of Cabo Delgado that is part of his continued [press rollout](#), denied that Mozambican forces had engaged in any war crimes. The denial is not believable, given the clear evidence to the contrary found in the Amnesty International report and other sources.

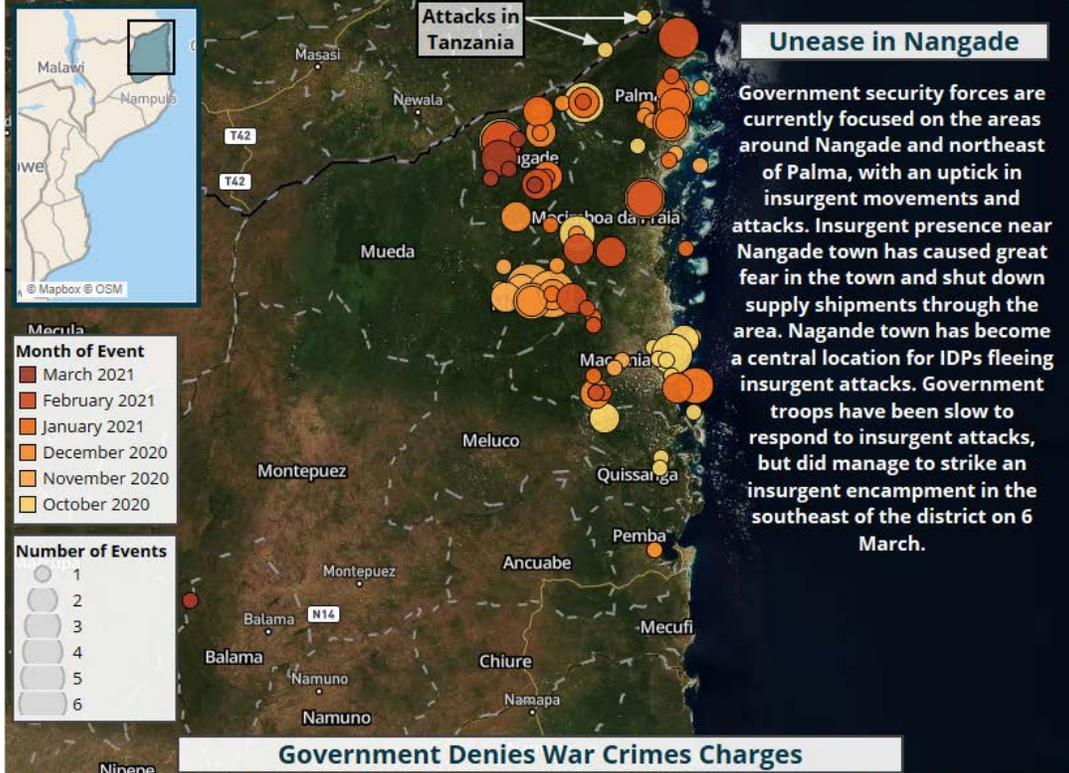
The same week DAG [announced](#) that it would launch an investigation into the charges leveled against it in the Amnesty International report — which included allegations of indiscriminately dropping hand grenades from helicopters on civilian infrastructure — new images [emerged](#) suggesting that the company could be using barrel bombs in Cabo Delgado. The photos show makeshift bombs fashioned inside propane tanks, some of which were loaded into the cockpit of a DAG helicopter. There have been no reports of bombs of that size exploding in the conflict zone thus far. However, if they were used in an area with civilian infrastructure, it would [contravene](#) international law.

The Mozambican military has reportedly [augmented](#) the aerial capability DAG provides to government forces by acquiring two SA 341B Gazelle helicopters from Paramount Group in South Africa. The Gazelles, the same type of aircraft DAG primarily uses, were seen at the Nacala airport in February, painted in the camouflage pattern of the Mozambican air force. Per the reported terms of the contract between the Mozambican military and Paramount, two more Gazelles should soon follow. The Mozambican air force's existing helicopter fleet is made up of aging Mi-24s that require constant maintenance.

On the natural gas front, last week ExxonMobil once again [declined](#) to set a date for a final investment decision on its natural gas project in Cabo Delgado. The move was not unexpected, but is still disappointing for

those in Mozambique looking forward to the \$30 billion project coming online. ExxonMobil officials did not cite security in their statement as a reason for the delay, but experts see improved security around the Afungi peninsula as a necessary prerequisite for the ExxonMobil project to go forward.

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## Government Denies War Crimes Charges

The government denied allegations leveled against state security forces in last week's Amnesty International report. General Bertolino Capitine, speaking with reporters during a tour of Cabo Delgado, denied that Mozambican forces had engaged in any war crimes. He also reportedly refuted that the government had a contract with Dyck Advisory Group (DAG). Neither denial is convincing, given the clear evidence to the contrary on both counts.

## Organized Political Violence in Cabo Delgado (1 JAN 2020 - 5 MAR 2021)

