



CABO LIGADO

17 August 2022

Cabo Ligado Monthly: July 2022

Cabo Ligado — or ‘connected cape’ — is a Mozambique conflict observatory launched by ACLED, Zitamar News, and MediaFax.

VITAL STATS

- ACLED recorded 35 organized political violence events in Cabo Delgado province in July, resulting in 56 reported fatalities
- Reported fatalities were highest in Macomia district, where insurgents carried out attacks on civilians and clashed with state forces
- Other events took place in Meluco, Nangade, Ancuabe, Palma, Montepuez, Mocímboa da Praia, and Muidumbe districts in Cabo Delgado

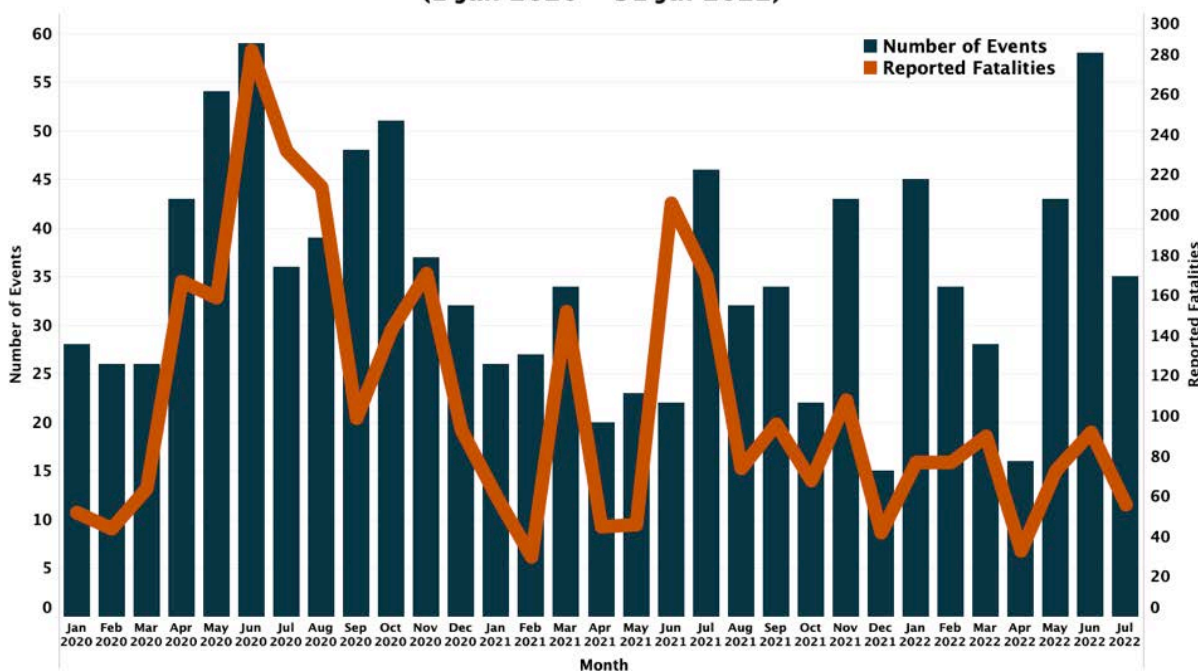
VITAL TRENDS

- Macomia remains the focus of insurgency and counterinsurgency
- Civilians remain the insurgents’ main target
- Small dispersed groups retain capacity to hit military targets

IN THIS REPORT

- Small business, and the return and reconstruction of Mocímboa da Praia
- Mocímboa da Praia – one year in government hands
- Nampula after the Lúrio attack
- SAMIM – a year in review

**Organized Political Violence and Reported Fatalities in Cabo Delgado
(1 Jan 2020 – 31 Jul 2022)**



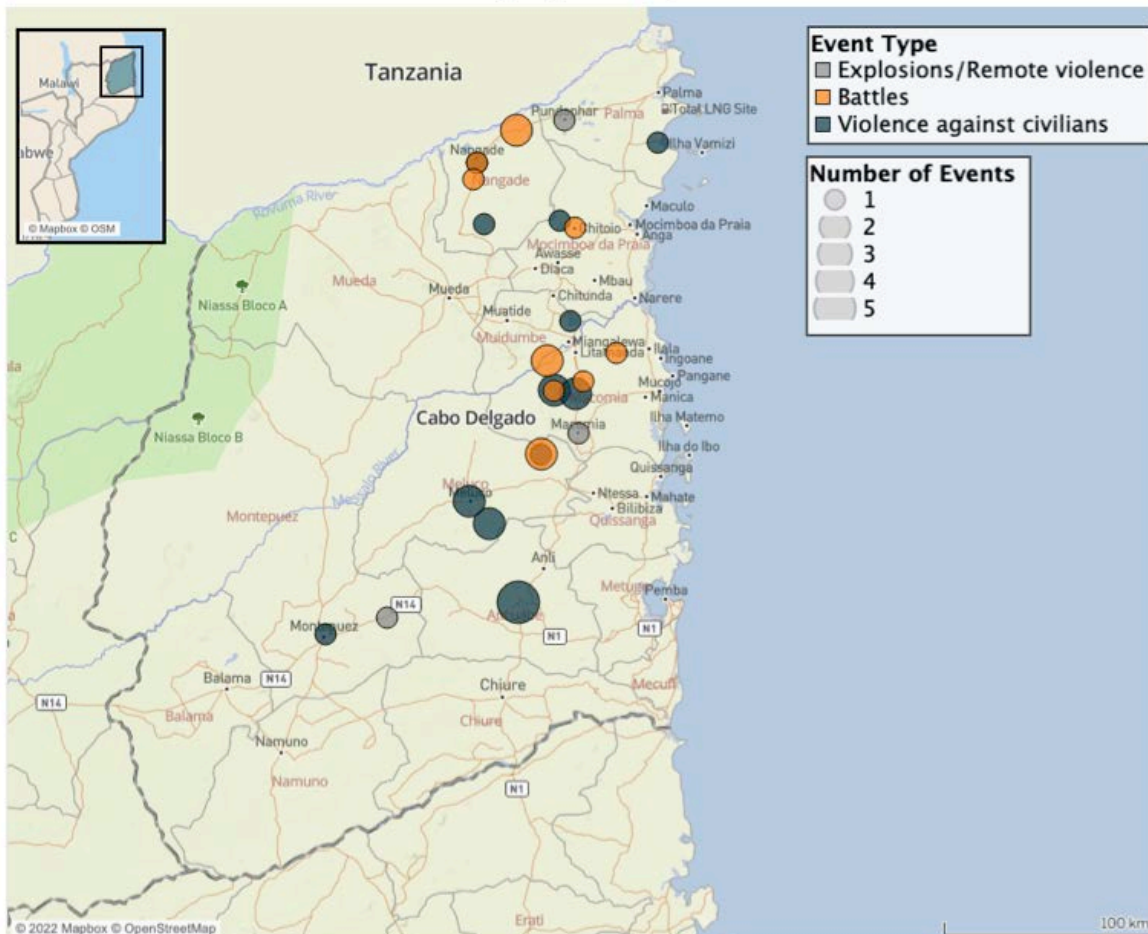
JULY SITUATION SUMMARY

With 56 fatalities, July was a quieter month than June, which saw the insurgents' bloody push into Ancuabe and Chiure districts in the south of the province. In July, Macomia district had the greatest concentration of insurgent activity, where they were involved in 10 incidents. This likely reflects disruption of insurgent bases in Catupa forest in the east of the district. In mid-July, President Filipe Nyusi [announced](#) the destruction of a major base in the area following operations led by the Mozambique Defense Armed Forces (FADM). While it is likely that the operation was less decisive than claimed by the authorities, it likely contributed to the concentration of actions in northern Macomia district. These were focused around the village of Chai, which saw four attacks on civilians, and three clashes with Local Forces, and Defense and Security Forces (FDS).

The pattern of attacks in July across the province saw civilians in isolated rural communities continuing to bear the brunt of attacks. There were five such attacks in each of Meluco and Ancuabe districts, four in Macomia, and one in each of Mocímboa da Praia, Muidumbe, Montepuez, Nangade, and Palma.

Nevertheless, insurgents were still able to mount significant actions against the FDS. On 9 July, they launched a successful attack on a position of the Mozambican police force's Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR), forcing officers to flee and allowing the seizure of arms and equipment. On 13 July, they clashed with FDS troops near Quinto Congresso in Macomia district and again were able to seize equipment in a successful engagement. In the north of the province, an incursion was made into the outskirts of Nangade district headquarters, the first such incident in the town. Civilians were the target, with up to 20 homes destroyed and at least two people killed.

Organized Political Violence in Cabo Delgado (July 2022)



SMALL BUSINESS, AND THE RETURN AND RECONSTRUCTION OF MOCÍMBOA DA PRAIA

By Peter Bofin, Cabo Ligado

The Cabo Delgado insurgency, counterinsurgency operations, and future solutions are inextricably entwined with private sector interests at all levels. Concern for the prospects of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) project at Afungi precipitated direct military intervention, and subsequent aid, diplomatic and military cooperation initiatives. The spread of the insurgency south has threatened both domestic and foreign mining interests, and potentially state revenues. But small trading enterprises in Cabo Delgado too have been considerably disrupted, with trade links to Tanzania broken, urban centers depopulated, and property damaged or destroyed. Ensuring sustainable return in the north of the province will to a great extent depend on ensuring that local businesses can re-establish themselves. The challenges in terms of security, basic infrastructure, and financial services are considerable.

On 27 July, the Cabo Delgado authorities organized a meeting to bring together private sector leaders in Mocímboa da Praia, and establish the Conselho Empresarial Distrital, or District Business Council. With the theme of “The Economic Recovery of Mocímboa da Praia,” the meeting demonstrated the government’s eagerness to speed up return to the town, and the central role it is assigning to the private sector in this. The meeting reflected a desire for businesses to return in order to attract people to return on a larger scale than is happening now. This desire is shared by some business operators themselves, who are eager to return to their hometown, and restore their property and businesses.

Since early June, Mocímboa da Praia residents who had fled to Quitunda in Palma have been [returning](#) with the support of the Rwandan security forces. Returnees arrive once a week, but with just over 3,500 expected in total from Quitunda, the return of a cohort who have lost most is unlikely to be sustainable. For return to work, the capital and business connections that sustained employment and supply chains for a pre-conflict population of over 60,000 people will be necessary. July’s meeting targeted elements of the better off cohort who were able to make the longer journey to Pemba, and re-establish themselves in business. It is expected, though not assured, that initial support, which may be supported by TotalEnergies, will be expanded in the future to support businesses in the renovation of property and initial trading capital.

There are some interlinked challenges facing the authorities and businesses interested in return. These range from bureaucracy and oversight of payments, to physical security in Mocímboa da Praia town and environs. Bureaucracy presents, at least in the short term, the most easily addressed problems. Some businesses have seen their registration lapse during the conflict and will need assistance to re-establish credentials in order to access support. In the short term, this can be addressed relatively easily for the small number of businesses concerned, but in the longer term will require addressing systems of business registration, taxation, and more.

Re-establishing business will have to include adequate oversight to minimize opportunities for financing of the insurgency. The insurgency was initially driven by businessmen: [research](#) conducted in 2018 identified seven businessmen in Mocímboa da Praia suspected of financing the insurgency in its early days. Such links are suspected to still exist, according to one businessman from the town. Financial services are currently non-existent in the town, with the exception of mobile money platforms such as Mozambique’s M-Pesa, e-Mola, and mKesh. The mobile payment platforms of other countries in the region such as Tanzania and Kenya are also in use in the province. Businesses will rely on mobile payment platforms to support transactions within northern Mozambique and with suppliers in Cabo Delgado’s economic hinterland in Tanzania. Such transaction risk should not be an obstacle to the development of small trading or processing enterprises in the short term. While there will be a need to monitor mobile transactions for counterterrorist purposes, channeling support through organized business groups, which can vouch for members, will likely be the most effective means of addressing this risk.

Businesses face two physical security risks from two main quarters. The most critical one is from the insurgents. Mocím-

boa da Praia town was overrun by insurgents in August 2020, and retaken one year later by the FDS. Return has been slow since then, with the first systematic organized returns starting in June this year. Businesses keen on re-entering Mocímboa da Praia are aware of the risk presented to supply routes on the EN380, a route which once again now requires a military escort, but the town itself remains secure.

One businessman attributed the security of the town to the presence of the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) with an approach that prioritizes community engagement, but in doing so highlighted the second source of risk, the FDS itself. They compared unfavorably the situation in Macomia, where arrest of small business operators by the FDS is [not uncommon](#), to that in Mocímboa da Praia, attributing the difference to the high profile presence of the RDF. How long this will remain in place may prove to be the key factor in ensuring return to the town, as it has thus far in Palma to the north.

Tempting a cadre of business operators to the town is not without risk. One obvious risk is that it may present a significant rent seeking opportunity to those in public administration, and the agencies supporting the move. The corollary of this is that it will draw attention away from the needs of the more vulnerable returnees. In research released in August, the Rural Environment Observatory (OMR) identified as a distinct category of displaced persons from Mocímboa da Praia the “[economically more affluent individuals](#)” who were able to establish themselves in Pemba early in the conflict, and benefit from the “humanitarian aid industry,” as termed by the OMR in ways that more vulnerable rural populations without the means to migrate could not.

MOCÍMBOA DA PRAIA – ONE YEAR IN GOVERNMENT HANDS

By Tomás Queface, Cabo Ligado

August marks one year since the recapture of Mocímboa da Praia town by pro-government forces. The retaking of Mocímboa da Praia, which had been under insurgent control for just more than a year, followed a successful offensive led by Rwandan troops that began in July 2021. One year on, both the town and the district of Mocímboa da Praia continue to face enormous challenges in terms of restoration of safety, reconstruction, and basic conditions for the return of civilians.

For the Mozambique government, the recapture of Mocímboa was imperative if it was to re-establish state authority, and control the direction of the conflict. With a permanent base in the town, insurgents presented a threat to the neighboring districts of Palma, Nangade, Muidumbe, and Macomia. They also had access to the sea, from where they received supplies and new recruits, mainly from coastal Cabo Delgado and Nampula. Control of the strategic port, which was vital to the logistics of the liquefied LNG project, placed it high on the target list for the Rwandan forces that arrived in July 2021. The Mocímboa da Praia airfield, which was also under insurgent control, served to supply troops in northern Cabo Delgado before the insurgents’ takeover of the town. There were also reports that the town was being used to hold captives, as well as goods looted during the March 2021 attack on Palma.

The offensive that led to the recapture of Mocímboa da Praia began days after the arrival of the Rwandan troops in Cabo Delgado. The starting point was the district of Mueda, approximately 100 km west of Mocímboa da Praia. The Rwandan forces, supported by the Mozambican forces, soon reaped the rewards of their offensive. On 3 August, the Mozambican commander, Bernardino Rafael, [announced](#) the recapture of the strategically important Awasse junction on the N380 that links the town to Pemba in the south, and Mueda to the west. There was an important substation on the N380 that supplied electricity to the districts of Mocímboa da Praia, Palma, Nangade, and Mueda. Five days later came the [announcement](#) of the seizure of the port town of Mocímboa da Praia.

The Rwandan offensive continued, particularly in the dense forests of Mocímboa da Praia. Most of these operations took place away from media coverage. The few reports of Rwandan operations in Cabo Delgado came from the Rwandan media, which, in addition to having privileged access to the conflict zones, went to great lengths to [describe](#) the Rwandan operations as a genuine success. The advances of the Rwandan forces led the government to envisage a possible post-foreign intervention scenario. On 26 November, Nyusi [launched](#) a pilot phase of 13 police companies, aimed at

protecting district capitals in the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa, and Nampula and thus laying the groundwork for the FDS to lead counterinsurgency efforts.

Yet by January 2022, Mocímboa da Praia remained a ghost town. During insurgent control, the town was looted and almost all public and private infrastructure was destroyed. It was reported that there were preparations at that time for the return of the population. However, this was not possible due to the precarious situation of the town. The Governor of Cabo Delgado, Valige Tauabo, even [advised](#) against any return to Mocímboa.

This stance changed following the remarks made by the Chief Executive Officer of TotalEnergies, Patrick Pouyanné, in January 2022 when he [said](#) that TotalEnergies would only return to Afungi when he himself went to Mocímboa da Praia and Palma and saw "that life is back to normal, with government services and the population there." Since then, the government began to push for the return of Mocímboa da Praia's displaced, even when there were sectors of the government and international organizations that cautioned against such initiatives without basic conditions being met.

In February, Minister of Defense Cristóvão Chume [suggested](#) that there were favorable security conditions for large-scale return. According to Chume, the government's plan would be to create the basic conditions so that by the end of the first half of the year, most of the displaced people could return to their homes. However, a Council of Ministers' mission to Cabo Delgado in March [noted](#) the lack of primary conditions for the return of civilians and public servants, and weaknesses in the consolidation of security. These observations were also made by some civilians who attended the Mocímboa da Praia day festivities on 7 April and said that there were severe restrictions on the movement of people in the town due to fear of infiltration by insurgents. Another constraint was that works to rehabilitate damaged infrastructure had not yet started. The administrator of Mocímboa da Praia, João Saraiva [said](#) in March at an event in Maputo that there was already a detailed plan and budget for the reconstruction of Mocímboa da Praia, but that there was a shortage of funds. Despite these deadlocks, the plan for the return of the populations did not disappear. On 7 June 2022, the transfer of the displaced persons to Mocímboa da Praia officially started. The first group was composed of 123 returnees who arrived in Mocímboa da Praia from Palma district, a process carried out by Rwandan and Mozambican forces. It is expected that in the near future more returnees from Mocímboa da Praia will be transferred to their places of origin.

Restrictions on returnees' movement, as well as a ban on fishing and farming, were in place until the end of July, worsening the food security of the people who relied on aid provided by the authorities. Some people who violated those restrictions paid a heavy price. On 30 June, Rwandan forces [shot dead](#) a civilian who was crossing from one neighborhood to another without permission from the authorities. Days later, and under similar circumstances, another civilian was shot by Mozambican forces, sustaining injuries. These situations indicated tensions in the town, as well as the authorities' fear of infiltration by insurgents.

The security situation has been further complicated by insurgent attacks in the district of Mocímboa da Praia. On 12 July, insurgents reportedly attacked the village of Chitolo, less than 40 km from the main town. Later, on 22 July, they [attacked](#) the village of Mitope, 35 km east of the town of Mocímboa da Praia, burning several houses. These incidents of violence indicate that ongoing armed violence has not yet been completely eradicated and will require more work and commitment from the security and defense forces as people return, and as insurgent supply shortages continue.

Those displaced from Mocímboa da Praia in Pemba are following the process of the return of the displaced with expectations and anxiety. There are hopes that with the return of the population, many businesses will flourish and the rehabilitation works of the destroyed infrastructure may lead to the employment of many young people. However, they also foresee difficulties since they will have to start their lives over from scratch, and may find themselves in a situation of extreme dependency.

NAMPULA AFTER THE LÚRIO ATTACK

By Tomás Queface and Amade Abubacar, Cabo Ligado

The insurgents' push into Cabo Delgado's southern districts since May this year has sparked concerns that they could expand into Nampula province. Known to have networks that extend into the province, the threat became real in June, when insurgents crossed the Lúrio river, [entered](#) the village of Lúrio in Nampula's Memba district, looted food, shot and injured one man, and beheaded another. The attack was the first armed action in Nampula province by insurgents. The district, and the wider province was spared further attacks in July. Nevertheless, the attack, and the insurgents' continued presence in Chiure and Ancuabe, raise questions about the attackers' motivations, their ability to expand their attacks beyond Cabo Delgado, and the possible consequences of the changing security situation in Nampula.

Nampula, along with Niassa, has been identified by researchers at Maputo's Institute of Social and Economic Studies (IESE) as a fertile recruitment ground for the insurgency. IESE [points](#) to attempts to penetrate existing mosques in both provinces. In Nampula, they identified such attempts in Mutotope, on the fringes of Nampula town, as well as Memba. These attempts were, IESE contends, led by Tanzanians and Mozambicans who had undergone religious training in Tanzania. This reflects the approach used to successfully develop armed cells in Cabo Delgado, as well as in Tanzania, though it was markedly [less successful](#) there. In Nampula and Niassa, IESE contends that this approach to planting cells was not especially effective due to better coordination between state authorities and mainstream religious leaders in the Islamic Council of Mozambique, and the Islamic Congress. This has been despite the existence and prevalence of radical religious cells with tendencies to become militarized, and the situation of socio-economic vulnerability that makes local youth easy targets for recruitment networks.

Nampula media reports about the insurgent incursion into Lúrio [suggest](#) that the insurgents' primary goal was to rescue their collaborators in Memba and recruit more people. The first assumption resonates with IESE's evidence that there have been radical cells in Memba. These roots would be crucial for an insurgency seeking to expand its areas of operations both in and outside Cabo Delgado. According to a report by Nampula newspaper Ikweli, local youths who [attempted](#) to join the insurgency in Cabo Delgado were frustrated by the blockade imposed by the FDS both on land and on the coast. In this respect, the attacks in the south of Cabo Delgado, which culminated with the incursion into Memba aimed to open up a recruitment and logistics corridor.

The reaction of the police authorities was mixed. On the one hand, they publicly [denied](#) the reports of such attacks in Lúrio. However, in response to what they described as "rumors of a supposed insurgent incursion," they introduced a framework of actions to respond to the security threat to the province. A police unit was [deployed](#) to Lúrio, and a number of arrests were carried out of people accused of facilitating the entry of insurgents in Lúrio. At the same time, police controls were established along the main road that crosses the administrative post of Lúrio, and the circulation of vehicles was prohibited from 7 pm.

The impact of the insurgent incursion was less significant on trade and passenger transport. There is a feeling among locals that the insurgent incursion did not generate significant changes in terms of security measures after the Memba incident. The measures introduced moments after the attack were generally surgical and aimed at responding to a particular situation. Regular police stops on main roads, and the continued suspension of traffic crossing the Lúrio river have been the highlights of the security response for most people. Despite the limitation on the movement of vehicles, passenger drivers say that they are making their journeys with some sort of normality. One driver told Cabo Ligado, "it's not like Cabo Delgado. Here things got hot after the attack, at that time the police there on the Lúrio river didn't even want people to come to Nampula, there was a lot of searching and documents, but that doesn't take long. Now it's normal."

The attacks in Memba can be seen not as part of an expansion of the insurgency, but as a response to the need to strengthen its ranks by recruiting new members and recalling those who were once part of the insurgency. Although the attack was brief, it brought numerous challenges both for the security forces and government authorities and will re-

quire multiple approaches to address the situation. Non-security measures were addressed at a meeting in Nampula on 14 July organized by Clubes de Paz, an inter-denominational platform focused on peace and reconciliation. The meeting [brought together](#) district administrators from Nampula, Niassa, and parts of Cabo Delgado with religious leaders from Mozambique and the region. At the meeting, Anglican Bishop of Nampula Emanuel Ernesto spoke of the need to develop “new narratives and healthy habits” to counter the recruitment efforts of the insurgents. Hopefully, future meetings will involve the youth themselves.

SAMIM – A YEAR IN REVIEW

By Piers Pigou, Cabo Ligado, Cabo Ligado

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) entered its second year following its authorization on 23 June 2021, advanced deployment on 15 July 2021, and main operational launch on 9 August 2021. SAMIM’s mandate, set out in its Status of Forces Agreement with Mozambique, tasks the mission to assist Mozambique with restoring security and the establishment of a secure environment, restoring law and order, and to support humanitarian assistance and reconstruction.

SADC’s intervention, known as Operation Vikela, has been an important complement to local and Rwandan efforts to push back against insurgents who had been steadily gathering momentum since October 2017. With nine Personnel Contributing Countries (PCCs), the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), Botswana Defence Force (BDF), and Tanzania People’s Defence Force (TPDF) have taken on the heavy lifting operationally. These forces along with a contingent from the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) are responsible for supporting Mozambican security forces in a huge operational area covering Macomia, Nangade, and Mueda districts, as well as security on road arteries to these district capitals from the provincial capital Pemba. SAMIM headquarters are in Pemba, with the LDF based in Mueda, the BDF and TPDF in Nangade town, and SANDF in Macomia and now their new base, north of the town. As the insurgency mutated and spread, SAMIM has been forced to extend its attention, both in terms of intelligence and an increased security presence on transport arteries in southern districts. It has also been giving more attention to the threat assessments from neighboring provinces.

In July and September 2021, SAMIM forces were confronted with insurgent relocations from Palma and Mocímboa da Praia districts following Rwanda’s initial offensives. While these had knocked out major insurgent bases north of the Messalo River, a lack of coordination with SAMIM forces to ensure an effective backstop to fleeing insurgents enabled them to regroup and to re-establish camps to the south in SAMIM areas of operational responsibility and beyond. This included a two month foray into neighboring Niassa province in November and December 2021.

In October 2021, Mozambican, Rwandan, and SAMIM commanders met and committed to improve intelligence sharing and operational coordination. Limited synchronization between the forces, however, has continued to frustrate collaboration. This was evident in the uptick in insurgent activity in Nangade following the February 2022 joint RDF/FADM offensive in western Palma that drove insurgents out of the Pundandar area, and into Nangade district.

SAMIM’s mandate expects operational cooperation with the Mozambican security forces and they have continued to mount joint operations with and provide support to Local Forces. Security sources claim, however, that FADM’s inexperience has contributed to frustrations on the ground and further operational limitations.

Despite the disruption and degrading of insurgent capacities, it is difficult to assess the overall impact of SAMIM’s counterinsurgency efforts. In October 2021, SADC claimed SAMIM had made “[remarkable achievements](#)” on a range of fronts, including the capture of bases and insurgent leaders, as well as making progress with its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets. In late December, SAMIM announced further successes with the capture of two bases in the Chai area of northern Macomia, though SAMIM and FADM forces took casualties. SAMIM was also unable to press home its advantage following many confrontations, resulting in what one analyst described as “pushing bad food around a plate.” It was nevertheless clear that available assets and existing competencies were not fit for purpose, leading to augmented logistical support and the establishment of an intelligence fusion center.

Following calls for more support for the mission from member states at the January 2022 SADC summit, Zambia and Namibia added some additional support, but this did not bolster operational capacity on the ground. The deployment of additional troops from South Africa was delayed and in March 2022, the SADC chairperson's representative and SAMIM's civilian head of mission, [Professor Mpho Molomo told visiting SADC diplomats](#) in Cabo Delgado that success was contingent on the region "commit(ing) more resources to support the mission in all aspects."

SAMIM's capacity for offensive patrols in the dense forests of Cabo Delgado remains limited. Nevertheless, Special Forces have demonstrated impressive results over the last year, according to sources in the security sector, especially in light of limited air and ground support. Following the introduction in mid-2022 of an expanded force composed mainly of infantry deployed for a peacekeeping role, the mission's capacity for long range offensive patrols remains constrained. A major SAMIM/SANDF base has been established north of Macomia and will provide a major hub for further SANDF operations. Furthermore, insurgent forces operating in small, mobile groups have further stretched resources that are equipped for offensive patrols.

This challenge has become more complicated as the insurgency has expanded into southern districts since May this year, while attacks have continued in Nangade and Macomia districts. Attacks have been particularly intense in northern Macomia district. Rwandan forces were deployed to Chai in late March to reinforce efforts to dislodge insurgents in the district, and continue to mount joint operations with Mozambican forces. In early June, SAMIM launched a major offensive in Quinto Congresso in the Namabo forest of northeastern Macomia – where insurgents are believed to have major base –, resulting in several casualties.

In the face of more intensive counterinsurgency operations, insurgents began relocating from some of their main bases in Macomia. Consequently, SAMIM has had to extend its intelligence gathering towards southern districts, in particular Meluco and Ancuabe, spreading an already limited capacity. This has not diminished the threat level in Macomia or Nangade. SAMIM has also had to shore up security at certain key sites in Pemba, including the airport which is shared with civilian operations.

SAMIM intelligence gathering has nevertheless evolved since its initial deployment, enabling it to improve its monitoring of insurgent movement and communications, and by extension assessing insurgents' next moves. The challenge remains acting on that intelligence for many of the aforementioned reasons.

South Africa remains the central pillar of SAMIM personnel and equipment, but the institution is in dire straits and has been in steady decline for over two decades, facing budgetary and management challenges that are unlikely to improve any time soon. Consequently, SANDF has been, unable to deploy its Rooivalk attack helicopters or maintain a permanent naval presence. South Africa has nevertheless committed a budget for continued deployment in Mozambique until April 2023.

Operational effectiveness has been uneven, although relations with local communities have been generally positive. There have been some frustrations over reported [claims](#) of a slow response time by SAMIM troops to some insurgent attacks. These claims have been leveled especially at BDF and TPDF contingents in Nangade during 2022. It is unclear how this relates to operational modalities in trends of supporting local Mozambican forces, which have insisted on maintaining their point role.

Despite its limitations, SAMIM is the first completely self-funding regional security deployment on the continent. Despite the reticence of some SADC countries about approaching external donors, SADC has now formally approached the European Union (EU) for funding, as had Rwanda several months earlier. Both applications are still pending, but SAMIM is expected to receive about 10 million euros. This will not address all needs, raising further concerns about prospects for shoring up much needed capabilities, and by extension the success of the mission.

Having recently secured 1.8 million euros from the EU's Emergency Response Fund in July, SADC [announced](#) the launch of its Peacebuilding Support Programme, which will focus on capacity building of the police and prison services, women

and youth empowerment, and dialogue with civic leaders. The existing budget will constrain what is possible, and with the uncertainty of ongoing instability in many parts of the province, these initiatives are likely to only be focused in areas of consolidated security. It is important that they also complement other local and international efforts.

SADC leaders will review mission progress at their annual summit in Kinshasa in August. Notwithstanding positive developments in some parts of the province, there are deep concerns the insurgency may spread further and that insurgents are training new recruits and may be developing new bases, and logistical and supply networks in neighboring provinces. SAMIM is already overstretched and is ill-equipped to take on other areas. SADC must find additional resources, and at the same time continue to navigate Mozambique's political and security dynamics, while pushing for greater synergies with Rwanda's security forces.



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