



Militancy/Terrorism

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Mozambique SITUATION UPDATE: Militants allegedly convening in Mocimboa da Praia to launch offensive as per sources on May 11

Executive Summary

- The alleged gathering of militants in Mocimboa da Praia to launch an offensive is notable. Given the direct roads leading to Mueda and Palma from Mocimboa da Praia, one of the two cities is the likely target of a potential offensive. While Mueda is possibly more attractive due to its status as the Makonde heartland, it is more heavily fortified, making it a more difficult target.
- While the government has repeatedly stated its control over Palma, they have an incentive to project that they have restored security in light of the French energy company's declaration of "force majeure." Thus, it is not certain that Palma will be able to withstand an attack similar to the March 24 offensive.
- The militants' continued recruiting by promising employment underscores the development aspect of the ongoing insurgency and highlights the need for soft counter-militancy approaches in conjunction with a robust military to adequately handle the insurgency.
- While the establishment of the "Northern Mozambique Recovery Project" indicates international and governmental cognizance of this need, it remains uncertain if the project will actually translate into on-ground improvement given corruption, bureaucracy, and inefficiencies. Further, the gains from these approaches are longer-term and thus this project is unlikely to affect militancy levels over the coming months.

Please be advised

The following notable security incidents were reported in Cabo Delgado & Nampula Provinces:

Map #	District	Locale	Date	Brief Description
1	Nangade	Ngalonga	May 7	At least three suspected militants killed by local vigilante
2	Macomia	Mucojo	April 30	Suspected militants abduct three locals
3	Macomia	Chai	May 1	Suspected militants kill soldier
4	Macomia	Muongwe Island	May 3	Militants fire at two vessels on Mucongwe Island
5	Macomia	Makolowe Island	May 12	Three abducted

fisherman kill two militants who kidnapped them
Police arrested 15 people on suspicion of being recruited by insurgents



Other Developments

Militant activity

- Sources indicate a little less than two dozen fires across Palma, Nangade, Macomia, Muidumbe, Mueda, and Mocimboa da Praia districts between May 5-10.
- Sources from May 11 indicate evidence of militants recruiting young people from Ngauma, Muembe, and Nipepe districts in Niassa Province.
- Sources from May 12 indicate that militants are reportedly gathering in Mocimboa da Praia allegedly for a new militant offensive following the end of Ramadan.

Humanitarian support

- Reports from April 28 indicate that the World Bank approved support of 1.1 billion USD to Mozambique for the “Northern Mozambique Recovery Project.” The money will be released in tranches with the first installment of 100 million USD slated for emergency response to villages

that were attacked and are hosting IDPs. The money would be used to improve facilities and infrastructure and for job creation.

- Additionally, 700 millions USD has been approved under the Allocation for Prevention and Resilience (PRA) to prevent the escalation of the conflict and “build resilience.”

LNG project

- The Army spokesperson reportedly stated that Palma was fully under the control of the defense and security forces (FDS) on April 29 after suspected militants burned some houses in the outskirts of Palma.
- Sources from April 29 indicate that the French energy giant admitted to a delay of at least one year in restarting the liquified natural gas (LNG) project in the Afungi Peninsula after declaring “force majeure” on [April 26](#).
- The government reportedly assured the company of their commitment to restoring security in a meeting with the company’s executives as per reports on May 3. In turn, the executives reaffirmed the viability of the LNG project in the Afungi Peninsula.

Regional, international support

- The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CLPC) is slated to send a mission to Mozambique to closely monitor the military and humanitarian situation in Cabo Delgado as per reports on May 5.
- Sources from May 5 indicate that the EU is set to discuss the situation in Mozambique and suggests the possibility of an EU training mission in Mozambique similar to the training mission in the Sahel.
- Reports indicate that Mozambique and Portugal signed a military cooperation agreement for five years on May 10. The agreement is focused on strengthening the Mozambican security forces with the Portuguese military, who will be based in Catembe near Maputo, tasked with training successive companies in the Mozambican forces. Portugal further announced that it would send 60 soldiers to join the 60 already in Mozambique.
- Reports from May 10 indicate that South African President Cyril Ramaphosa reaffirmed the country’s readiness to join a standby force in Mozambique if called upon.

Other developments

- Unconfirmed reports from April 30 indicate that the Attorney General’s office has started criminal cases against people who published fake news about attacks in Cabo Delgado Province.
- The Mozambican Justice Minister stated that while the country has given access to journalists and humanitarian organizations to Cabo Delgado, the ongoing insecurity necessitates limits as per reports on May 5.

Assessments & Forecast

1. Reports on militants gathering in Mocimboa da Praia, which has been under insurgent control since August 2020, to launch a new offensive is highly notable. As conditions on the ground improve, militant activity has increased in recent weeks with incidents in Palma, Nangade, Macomia, Muidumbe, Mueda, and Mocimboa da Praia districts. This is liable to intensify, including a possible

large-scale offensive. Mocimboa da Praia has direct roads to Mueda and Palma making the two cities the most likely targets of a potential offensive, particularly as the route to Mueda is largely controlled by militants as well. While Mueda is the more attractive ideological target due to its status as the Makonde heartland, it is more heavily fortified and the militants may want to go for an easier target. **FORECAST:** Regardless, the government may seek to further fortify Mueda and establish lookouts and patrols along the road to Mocimboa da Praia as an early warning system.

2. Even though the government has repeatedly assured of the security forces' complete control of Palma amid bolstered deployments, it is not certain that the security forces will be able to withstand an attack similar to the March 24 offensive on Palma. The government's comments on their control are somewhat suspect since they are highly incentivized to portray that they have the situation in hand in light of the French energy company's imposition of "force majeure." Thus, they are liable to understate the threat of militancy in Palma and the Afungi Peninsula and discredit reports of attacks. This need to manage the narrative is denoted by the Attorney General's office allegedly filing criminal cases against people for "fake" reporting on militant attacks in Cabo Delgado.
3. While Niassa Province has yet to see a claimed militant attack, there has been evidence of radical Islamist cells in the province since 2017 and the militants have been recruiting from the province to join in the insurgency in Cabo Delgado over recent years. Thus, reports on militants recruiting from Ngauma, Muembe, and Nipepe districts in the province are not surprising. Militants play on social and religious disenfranchisement, promising economically excluded young people better wages and living conditions in Cabo Delgado. This underscores the socio-economic development, or the lack thereof, aspect to the ongoing insurgency and suggests that unless comprehensive policies are taken to develop and provide employment to the youth, recruiting from the marginalized in Cabo Delgado and elsewhere is liable to continue.
4. This highlights the necessity for soft counter-militancy approaches like community building and development in northern Mozambique to adequately counter the insurgency. The establishment of the "Northern Mozambique Recovery Project" suggests international cognizance of this need and is a step in the right direction. However, it remains to be seen how it is implemented and how much of the grant actually benefits the people taking into account inefficiencies, bureaucracy, and corruption. Moreover, these approaches take a longer time-frame to yield results. So, while job creation and local development may make it difficult for militants to find recruits in the longer run, it is unlikely to have any noticeable effect on the situation on the ground in the short-to-medium term.
5. In that context, the more immediate solutions will require a more robust and effective military to respond to the insurgency adequately. International partners are sending training missions to improve Mozambican troops. However, the effectiveness of these training missions is highly dependent on the discipline of Mozambican troops as well as whether they have adequate equipment and capabilities. Their limitations have been well-illustrated by the employment of private military companies. In addition, there are logistical challenges, such as the relatively few numbers of trainers as well as the amount of time, it would take to adequately train them. Thus, it is not likely that these training missions will have any significant impact on militancy levels, especially in the immediate term.

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Recommendations

1. Avoid all travel to northern and eastern Cabo Delgado Province in light of the threat from the ongoing Islamist insurgency.
2. Refrain from overland travel particularly in Cabo Delgado's Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia, Muidumbe, Palma, and Quissanga districts given ongoing security threats and poor infrastructure.