



Militancy/Terrorism

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Mozambique SITUATION UPDATE: Clashes with militants continue on Afungi Peninsula on January 2 as French energy company evacuates employees

Executive Summary

- Militants attacked villages on the Afungi Peninsula in close proximity to energy facilities after weeks of slowly encroaching on the peninsula and cutting off road access in Palma District. This represents the most direct threat to the facilities since the insurgency began.
- The Rapid Intervention Unit (BIR) has forces based in this area and were able to repel an attack on their camp but did not mobilize to defend the villages, suggesting that even the most sophisticated of Mozambique's security forces may be insufficient. The lack of confidence in their capabilities can be demonstrated by evacuations initiated by the energy company.
- This may reignite the discussion over foreign intervention, particularly by a naval power, given that Mozambique will not want to risk the potential of a permanent withdrawal. However, the area is likely to see further attacks either on the peninsula or toward Palma town in the coming days and weeks.

Please be advised

The following notable security incidents were reported in Cabo Delgado Province:

Map #	District	Locale	Date	Brief Description
1	Palma	Mute	December 23	Dozens of militants looted and burned homes, clashed with security forces.
2	Palma	Olumbe	December 28	Civilians kidnapped and killed as militants overrun village.
3	Palma	Monjane	December 28	Civilians killed as militants attacked the village.
4	Palma	Patacua	December 28	Military patrol ambushed on road from Monjane to

5	Palma	Quitunda	January 1-2	Patacua, two soldiers killed. Militants attack UIR camp, resettlement village on main road to Afungi project. Security forces allegedly launch operations in search of militants.
6	Palma	Senga	January 2	



Other Developments

- Reports from January 1 cite the French energy company based in the Afungi Peninsula as confirming that some of its staff was evacuated from the project due to recent attacks in the area. The company said in a statement that it had “temporarily reduced its workforce on site” due to the security challenges.
- Unconfirmed reports indicate that this involved the evacuation of some expatriate workers, while some local employees have been told to remain at home for the time being.

Assessments & Forecast

1. Militants have been encroaching on the Afungi Peninsula in recent weeks, with attacks on nearby villages in Palma District as well as renewed violence along the Palma-Mueda road in both Palma and Nangade districts. The roadside and village attacks have reinforced the isolation of Palma, with the district capital largely cut off from access for several months. This has been bolstered by

the militants' extended occupation of Mocimboa da Praia and successful movements in Macomia, Muidumbe, and Nangade districts over recent months. The militants have expanded their sphere of influence and undermined the perception of safety even in key areas such as district capitals, inside of Tanzanian territory, and, now, the Afungi Peninsula.

2. The attack on Quitunda is highly notable as it represents the first attack on company-built property. Although the village was designed as a resettlement community for those displaced by the project and is on the outside of the fence around the project, it is located in close proximity to company infrastructure, including the airfield. This underscores the high degree of access the militants were able to gain in a sensitive area, with the threat to company becoming much more immediate. The fact that this included an attack on a Rapid Intervention Unit (BIR) camp is consistent with militant patterns but illustrates the security forces' limitations. Although the BIR unit was reportedly able to repel the attack on their camp, this also suggests they were unable to mobilize to defend the villages in the area from militant infiltration.
3. In these circumstances, it appears that the attack in Monjane on December 28 served as a red line that led to the evacuations. Monjane has been attacked by militants in the past, with the last reported incident taking place in November 2019. However, these have always been small-scale incidents in contrast to recent developments, which have shown larger and more organized forces capable of conducting coordinated attacks. Despite the fence around the project and the French company's statement that it is in continual contact with the government, this suggests a loss of confidence in the Mozambican security forces and associated security contractors to adequately protect the peninsula. The area is liable to be difficult to secure, even if the fence is reinforced, given that the militants have demonstrated the ability to maneuver by sea.
4. Although the government has made various agreements in recent years regarding the protection of Afungi, much of their dilemma was able to be delayed as the militants had never attempted to directly attack the oil and gas industry despite coming into close proximity from time to time.
FORECAST: This apparent shift by the militants may ignite the debate over foreign intervention, whether by accelerating Portugal or EU offers, or potentially by drawing in France. French involvement could be particularly valuable given the need for naval assistance. The government may be particularly inclined to allow greater foreign intervention in the wake of the evacuations given how crucial the energy industry is for Mozambique's economy.
5. **FORECAST:** The militants may be emboldened by the significant impact of their recent attacks and continue to put pressure on the security of the Afungi Peninsula by conducting further attacks on the outside of the fence. It is also possible that militants will attempt to breach the fence, particularly if they bolster their number of forces in the area. At the same time, given that the government is likely to have sent military reinforcements to the peninsula, militants may use this distraction to move toward Palma town in the coming days. Increased activity is expected in Palma District in the coming days regardless, despite the logistical and weather-related difficulties of operating in the area.

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.