



Militancy/Terrorism

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Mozambique SITUATION UPDATE: Militants conduct series of attacks in Nangade District, while government advances deals with foreign security companies, militaries

Executive Summary

- Militants raided clusters of villages in Nangade District twice within days, which aligns with previous patterns of attacks. This suggests an expansion of geographical activity and may suggest an effort to put pressure on both Palma District to the east and Mueda District to the south, while also posing an elevated threat to Tanzania.
- The government’s limited capacity to respond was further highlighted when internally displaced persons (IDPs) requested that the authorities arm them to defend themselves against militants. While the request was denied, this reflects growing trends of vigilantism that complicate the security environment.
- The government additionally took action in signing contracts with two private military companies (PMCs), which highlights their dependence on other entities for crucial capabilities such as air support. This also comes as Portugal reported they would be dispatching soldiers as part of a support mission in January, suggesting slow but continued progress in the public discussion regarding foreign involvement.

Please be advised

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

Map #	District	Locale	Date	Brief Description
1	Palma	Pundanhar	December 8	Militants attack two buses, steal passengers’ belongings
2	Nangade	Namiune	December 12	20 militants on six motorcycles kill 14 amid raids on multiple villages
3	Nangade	Chicuaia Nova	December 12	20 militants on six motorcycles kill 14 amid raids on multiple villages

4	Nangade	Litingina	December 12	20 militants on six motorcycles kill 14 amid raids on multiple villages Militants attack locality FDS claim to have killed 16 militants who attacked Nangade District villages between December 8-15
	Nangade	Litingina	December 15-16	
	Nangade	Litingina	December 21	
5	Nangade	Lukuamba	December 12	20 militants on six motorcycles kill 10 amid raids on multiple villages
6	Nangade	Samora Machel	December 15-16	Militants attack locality
7	Nangade	Machava	December 15-16	Militants attack locality
8	Nangade	Nkongo	December 15-16	Militants attack locality
9	Nangade	Namuembe	December 15-16	Militants attack locality
10	Mocimboa da Praia	Awasse	December 15	Clashes between security forces, militants
11	Macomia	Chai	December 9	Eight insurgents fired shots, robbed commercial establishments



Other Developments

- Sources from December 14 indicate that the government plans to extend a contract with a private South African military company, which has been supporting the defense and security forces (FDS) since April 2019. It also reportedly contracted another South African private military.
- Reports from December 12 citing the Portuguese Defense Minister indicate that a team of Portuguese military personnel will come to support the FDS in January 2021. He also said that Portugal, which is slated to assume the presidency of the EU in the first half of 2021, will seek to reinforce the EU support to Mozambique.
- Reports from December 11 indicate that internally displaced people (IDPs) in resettlement centers in the Ancuabe and Metuge districts asked visiting PM Carlos Agostinho do Rosario for weapons in order to fight militants. The PM reportedly refused over the 'risk of losing control of the situation'.

Assessments & Forecast

1. The two series of raids in Nangade District align with patterns seen previously in other districts, where militants will target clusters of villages and overrun them. This is often to intentionally terrorize and displace the population while also serving the militants' own needs in looting goods and supplies from the towns. This also expands their geographical focus, as this type of intensive focus on several villages at once has never occurred in Nangade. It is likely that the militants organized attacks there to put pressure both on Palma District to the east and Mueda District to the south, as both districts are particularly important to the government and have been increasingly encroached upon in recent weeks and months. This also sees the militants put pressure on the border with Tanzania and potentially moves more militant operations closer to the Rovuma River. This could provide support for cross-border raids in the future.
2. The fact that militants were able to launch repeated attacks in the district days apart suggests that no significant security response was immediately mounted. While the government subsequently claimed to have killed at least 16 of the militants involved in the attacks, this was reported several days after the second series of raids. This continues to emphasize their limited capabilities in securing rural parts of the province. In this context, the reports that IDPs at resettlement centers in Ancuabe and Metuge requested that the government supply them with weapons is notable. Acts of vigilantism and ad hoc self-defense groups have emerged throughout the insurgency, with the most organized of these being liberation war veterans who have organized near the Mueda Plateau in Mocimboa da Praia and Muidumbe districts. However, self-defense groups complicate an environment in which security forces and militants operate, with militants often wearing military uniforms, creating more opportunities for confusion and violence.
3. The government's limitations are further illustrated by the continued developments involving foreign intervention and involvement. The reported extension of a contract with a PMC as well as signing a new contract with a new PMC underscore the growing dependence on external organizations particularly for capabilities that Mozambique does not have available, such as air support. Furthermore, reports suggest that the two PMCs were hired by separate government ministries, which aligns with internal divisions within the Frelimo party as well as the historical development of separate security agencies during the Frelimo-Renamo conflicts in particular. It is likely that these divisions hinder cooperation on the ground within the security forces, which continue to undermine their operations.
4. Finally, in addition to the PMCs, the Portuguese defense minister's statement that Portuguese troops will be dispatched to Mozambique as part of a support mission notably indicates the first significant move in the months-long debate over foreign intervention. This follows previous public discussion that Portugal would provide training and support rather than more kinetic missions. Although the defense minister also noted an effort to bring along EU support, this will remain dependent on the Mozambican government's acceptance of the same as they may wish to avoid restrictions and accountability mechanisms that the EU could impose as conditions. Nonetheless, progress is likely to remain slow in terms of increasing official foreign involvement in the coming weeks and months.

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.