



Militancy/Terrorism

28

JAN

12:28 UTC

Mozambique SITUATION UPDATE: Attacks in Palma, Nangade districts as militancy in Cabo Delgado Province slows due to poor weather conditions in January

Executive Summary

- Militant activity slowed in January due to difficult weather conditions. Nonetheless, attacks in Pundanhar underscore the village as a focal point for attacks due to its position on the Palma-Mueda road. The militants seek to shut it down as the only remaining road that connects to Palma town to further isolate the area.
- Progress has been slow in solidifying foreign military assistance despite a recent visit by the Portuguese foreign affairs minister, with President Filipe Nyusi's government continuing to hesitate to accept aid from the EU as well as from the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Please be advised

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

Map #	District	Locale	Date	Brief Description
1	Palma	Pundanhar	January 16	Six killed as three vehicles attacked, one stolen, two set ablaze.
	Palma	Pundanhar	January 19	Three killed as petrol transport vehicle attacked, set ablaze.
2	Nangade	Namiune	January 21	Village leader beheaded in militant attack.
3	Nangade	Mandimba	January 22	Border Guard position attacked, looted as soldiers immediately fled.
4	Macomia	Olumboa	January 6	Seven fishermen beheaded as militants attacked

5	Macomia	Litamanda	January 21	them, stole boats for island attacks. Group of local self-defense militia pursued, killed six militants.
6	Ibo	Quirimba Island	January 5	Four killed in militant attack.
7	Ibo	Matembo Island	January 6	21 people abducted in militant attack.
8	Ibo	Magundula Island	January 7	Fishermen fled after militant attack.



Other Developments

- Reports indicate that in a briefing on January 12, French armed forces minister Florence Parly raised the possibility of working with EU partners to assist in training the Mozambican military. She reportedly noted the presence of French military forces in nearby Mayotte and Reunion that could assist.
- Portugal’s Minister of Foreign Affairs reportedly took a three-day trip to Maputo to represent both Portugal and the EU. He reportedly said on January 22 that the EU can help train Mozambican troops.
- According to January 21 reports, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) canceled a regional summit that was intended to be held in Maputo to discuss the insurgency and the region’s response. It was reportedly canceled due to an increase in COVID-19 cases.
- According to a humanitarian update released on January 26, there are at least 566,000 people displaced in Cabo Delgado Province and a total of 1.3 million people in need in Mozambique.

Assessments & Forecast

1. Activity associated with the insurgency in Cabo Delgado slowed in January, largely due to the difficult weather conditions. January falls within the routine rainy season in northern Mozambique, which has been recently exacerbated by the impact of Tropical Storm Eloise on January 23. The weather has affected the ability of both militants and security forces to mobilize within the province, with mostly unpaved roads being difficult to traverse. It has also affected the militants' efforts to secure supplies, with reports of multiple small-scale incidents centered on militants seeking food and other goods. This is likely to continue driving smaller attacks in rural areas of the province in the coming weeks.
2. The attacks in Pundanhar underscore the position of the village and its environs as a repeated target for militants. This is likely because it is the largest village outside of Palma on the Palma-Mueda road and thus the most likely area to see a concentration of people and goods along this road. The roadside attacks in particular are suggestive of the militants' aims to endanger the Palma-Mueda road and intimidate residents from using it. The intention would be to shut down the last major road that links to Palma, which would complete the isolation of the town and exponentially increase its vulnerability.
3. Progress has also been slow regarding potential foreign military assistance. Reports suggest that President Filipe Nyusi has yet to authorize EU aid despite renewed talks with Portuguese and EU interlocutors. It is also possible that France may lend involvement due to the growing threat to French energy facilities, though this would likely be done under the auspices of the EU. The delays by the Nyusi administration have not been accompanied by explicit statements, thus it remains unclear whether Nyusi is seeking hold out for greater commitments from the EU. It is also possible that Nyusi prefers to avoid the presence of foreign forces altogether and is awaiting results as a result of the reinforced private military company presence in Cabo Delgado.
4. It appears clearer that SADC will be minimally involved, if at all, regardless of whether the next summit is able to be held. Although the militants present a long-term threat to the wider region, there is an inherent lack of capability or cooperation among the Southern African bloc given that there is no precedent for prolonged military intervention borne by a regional coalition. It also continues to appear that Mozambique and its neighboring countries prefer bilateral cooperation rather than working together under SADC on this matter. In any case, both EU and SADC intervention could raise similar concerns in terms of focus on protecting the energy sector in Cabo Delgado. While protecting energy facilities will likely remain the significant focus of both the Mozambican security forces and any foreign supporters, this holds the potential to exacerbate the poor governance and mistrust in the region that has helped to fuel the insurgency. In the interim, militant activity is likely to continue in Palma and along the coast.

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.