



CABO LIGADO

10 January 2024

Cabo Ligado Update: 11 December 2023-7 January 2024

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

BY THE NUMBERS

Cabo Delgado, October 2017-January 2024

- Total number of political violence events: 1,727
- Total number of reported fatalities from political violence: 4,829
- Total number of reported fatalities from political violence targeting civilians: 2,058

All ACLED data are available for download via the [data export tool](#) and [curated data files](#).

SITUATION SUMMARY

The last three weeks have been one of the most eventful periods in Cabo Delgado province since 2022, as Islamic State Mozambique (ISM) activity escalated over December, culminating in an offensive in the new year. The escalation in activity saw ISM involved in 12 events between 11 December and 7 January. The offensive appeared to target the N380 highway, with attacks stretching from central Macomia district to within five kilometers of Mocímboa da Praia town. The scope of the offensive may indicate that insurgents are trying to draw security forces away from the coast after Major General Tiago Nampole, head of the Mozambican army, [announced](#) on 19 December that planning for an operation to deny insurgents access to the sea was underway. Nampole insisted at the same time that Cabo Delgado was “90-95% secure” and that conditions are safe for TotalEnergies to restart its liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in the province - a narrative insurgents are surely keen to challenge.

The first half of December was relatively quiet across most of the province. On 19 December, two fishermen were killed near Lake Nguri in Muidumbe district by men in military uniforms, presumed to be insurgents, twelve days after insurgents [assaulted](#) a Mozambican Defense and Security Forces (FDS) position in the same area, killing five soldiers.

Insurgents were sighted in Mocímboa da Praia on 21 December for the first time that month when an armed group of around 11, dressed in the uniform of the European Union (EU)-trained Quick Reaction Force, according to one source, stopped a minibus carrying a group of school athletes on the road between the villages of Chitunda and Chinda. One of the insurgents called on the passengers to support their cause, according to [Voice of America](#), before releasing them all unharmed.

On 26 December, insurgents launched a major attack, simultaneously targeting security forces at Mucojo

and Pangane in Macomia district. Insurgents killed up to nine Mozambican soldiers at Mucojo, where they also burned an armored personnel carrier, causing civilians in the area to [flee by boat](#) to Matemo island and Macomia town. The vehicle destroyed had carried reinforcements from Macomia town, believed to be from the EU-trained Quick Reaction Force, according to a security source. Forces of the Southern Africa Development Community reinforced the area the next day. Islamic State (IS) issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack. IS also claimed to have killed four soldiers at Pangane, three of whom were ambushed between Mucojo village and Macomia town as they fled.

On 30 December, armed men, likely insurgents, entered Litamanda village in Macomia on the N380, fired guns into the air, and stole some goods as the local population fled.

On 3 January, insurgents killed at least two civilians, a 13-year-old boy and a man in his 60s, in Ntotwe village, 20 km from Mocímboa da Praia town. IS claimed to have killed three and to have burned dozens of houses. The same day, insurgents were seen taking goods from Nhonge island, near Mocímboa da Praia. Insurgents also fired on an FDS boat, injuring at least one on board, near the island of Quilhanhune, or Kero Niuni, off the coast of Mocímboa da Praia district.

The next day, the IS official spokesperson, Abu Hudhayfah al-Ansari, announced a global offensive, named the “kill them wherever you find them” campaign, pledging its affiliate groups to intensify attacks following [suicide bombings](#) in Iran that killed at least 84 people. IS separately claimed that its attack on the FDS boat near Quilhanhune was part of this campaign.

On the day of the campaign’s announcement, insurgents killed one civilian and burned several homes and buildings in Chai, Macomia, for which IS claimed credit. The next day, insurgents attacked Chitunda village in Mocímboa da Praia, claiming to have killed two as part of the campaign, but these fatalities have not been corroborated so far. Insurgents killed another four civilians that day in Chimbanga village, just 5 km from Mocímboa da Praia town, including a local community worker for the international charity [Médecins Sans Frontières](#), and burned many homes. IS also claimed this attack was part of the campaign.

Following the attack on Chimbanga, panic spread throughout Mocímboa da Praia and many tried to flee to the towns of Mueda and Pemba. Rwanda Security Forces (RSF) [blocked](#) the roads and prevented all civilians from leaving the town, assuring them that patrols were underway to secure the area.

The final two ISM attacks in this period took place on 7 January. In Quinto Congresso, Macomia, insurgents assaulted a position held by the police Rapid Intervention Unit, capturing one, seizing military materials, and burning huts in the village, a source reported. Insurgents also attacked Mungwe village, also known as Criação, in Muidumbe, between Chinda and Chitunda. No casualties were reported but IS published photos of its fighters burning several homes.

In addition to the insurgency, there was one confirmed incident of political violence in Namogelia, Chiure district, on 18 December, where a mob stoned to death four members of the local administration accused of deliberately spreading cholera.

FOCUS: IS’S “KILL THEM WHEREVER YOU FIND THEM” CAMPAIGN

The 4 January statement by IS spokesperson Abu Hudhayfah Al-Ansari has real implications in Mozambique. The concentration of attacks by ISM in the past week illustrates how ISM is well integrated into IS structures internationally. ISM has seamlessly contributed to the current campaign, “kill them wherever you find them.” The continued targeting of civilians, as urged by Abu Hudhayfah, also indicates the long-standing ideological influence that IS has had in Mozambique. Whether or not this rate of attacks can be sustained,

the campaign has important implications for the people of Cabo Delgado, and those supporting the military response to ISM.

The almost 35-minute statement was dominated by analysis of the situation in Palestine and the role of Iran and its allies there. The struggle is fundamentally ideological, Abu Hudhayfah says, arguing that Rafidah – a derogatory term for Shia Muslims – are using it to expand their influence southwards, and that other Muslim states in the region are part of a “Jewish-Crusader alliance.” He then called on IS “soldiers” and supporters to “target the Jews, Crusaders, and their criminal allies in every spot on the earth and under every sky.” Furthermore, they should “seek easy targets before hard ones, civilian targets before military ones.”

Within 24 hours of the statement’s release, IS had issued claims for [30 incidents worldwide](#), three of which were from Mozambique, and which came during a global decline in operations. Between 4 and 8 January, IS had claimed seven incidents in Mozambique, five of them targeting civilians, and nine civilian deaths. ISM has [consistently targeted civilians](#) over military targets over the years, and will continue to do so. The focus on civilian targeting is not only a feature of this IS campaign, but also a reflection of how ISM operations have long been influenced by IS ideology. The ease with which ISM has stepped up operations to coincide with a global campaign indicates its integration into IS structures. It also suggests that its attempt to win ‘hearts and minds’ by [engaging less confrontationally](#) with communities over the past year was simply tactical.

The concentration of attacks as part of this wider IS campaign has immediate implications for Mozambique. Firstly, it illustrates the continued centrality of civilian targeting to ISM. Secondly, attacks so close to Mocímboa da Praia town have prompted attempts to [flee the district headquarters](#), threatening the significant return of people who had been displaced from the district by the conflict. A corollary of this is that RSF’s reputation of being trustworthy and supportive of civilians in the town may be damaged by them preventing people from leaving the town.

These recent developments will also be food for thought for the EU, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The EU Training Mission in Mozambique has trained the equivalent of 11 companies of the Defense Armed Forces of Mozambique. A decision on the renewal of the program is now being considered. The SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) is due to [withdraw in July 2024](#). Recent events may mean that SADC and its host may need to review this understanding.

Finally, the intensification of actions comes as TotalEnergies sends Jean-Christophe Rufin to the province [for the second time](#) to report on security and human rights as the firm considers restarting the LNG project. While his [first report](#) in May 2023 [understated levels of political violence](#) at the time, if ISM can sustain operations in Mocímboa da Praia, they may further delay the resumption of the project.

ROUND-UP

EUTM-MOZ seeks renewal

Portugal’s Minister of Defence, Helena Carreiras, has expressed [support](#) for continuing the EU Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM-MOZ). This month, the mission started training its 11th and last Mozambican special forces unit, known as the Quick Reaction Force, under the current mandate, which is due to expire in September this year. Portugal, which leads EUTM-MOZ, is seeking approval from the European Council to renew the mission.

SAMIM should end by July 2024, says Botswana president

President Dr. Mokgweetsi E.K Masisi of Botswana [said](#) the SAMIM “should have every reason to come to an end” by July this year in a visit to Botswana troops in Cabo Delgado at the end of December. He said

insurgents should not be encouraged by the withdrawal, warning them that if they resume attacks, "the second coming will be more ferocious than the first." In July last year, the SADC decided to end its mission within 12 months, according to the [annotated agenda](#) of a summit held with SADC leaders, but this decision was not made public.

Bishop of Pemba warns of perpetual violence in Cabo Delgado

The Bishop of Pemba, António Juliase, has [warned](#) that Cabo Delgado faces perpetual 'terrorism' and escalating violence if the security situation is normalized. He criticized the tendency to see the situation as a problem just for Cabo Delgado, rather than the country as a whole. "What worries me most as bishop of this diocese is that this situation will become a chronic system of violence and spikes in attacks," warned Bishop Juliase.

Renamo leader controversially appointed as presidential candidate

[Dissent](#) has arisen in opposition party Renamo after party spokesperson José Manteigas announced party leader Ossufo Momade as Renamo's candidate for the October presidential election on 3 January without consulting the party congress. Demonstrations outside party headquarters called for a more charismatic and capable leader than Momade, with Quelimane mayor Manuel de Araújo and parliamentary deputy Venâncio Mondlane notably more popular among the party's younger members. The office of the leader of the party is also entitled to [one million United States dollars](#) in annual government funding, which the leader can use at his discretion.

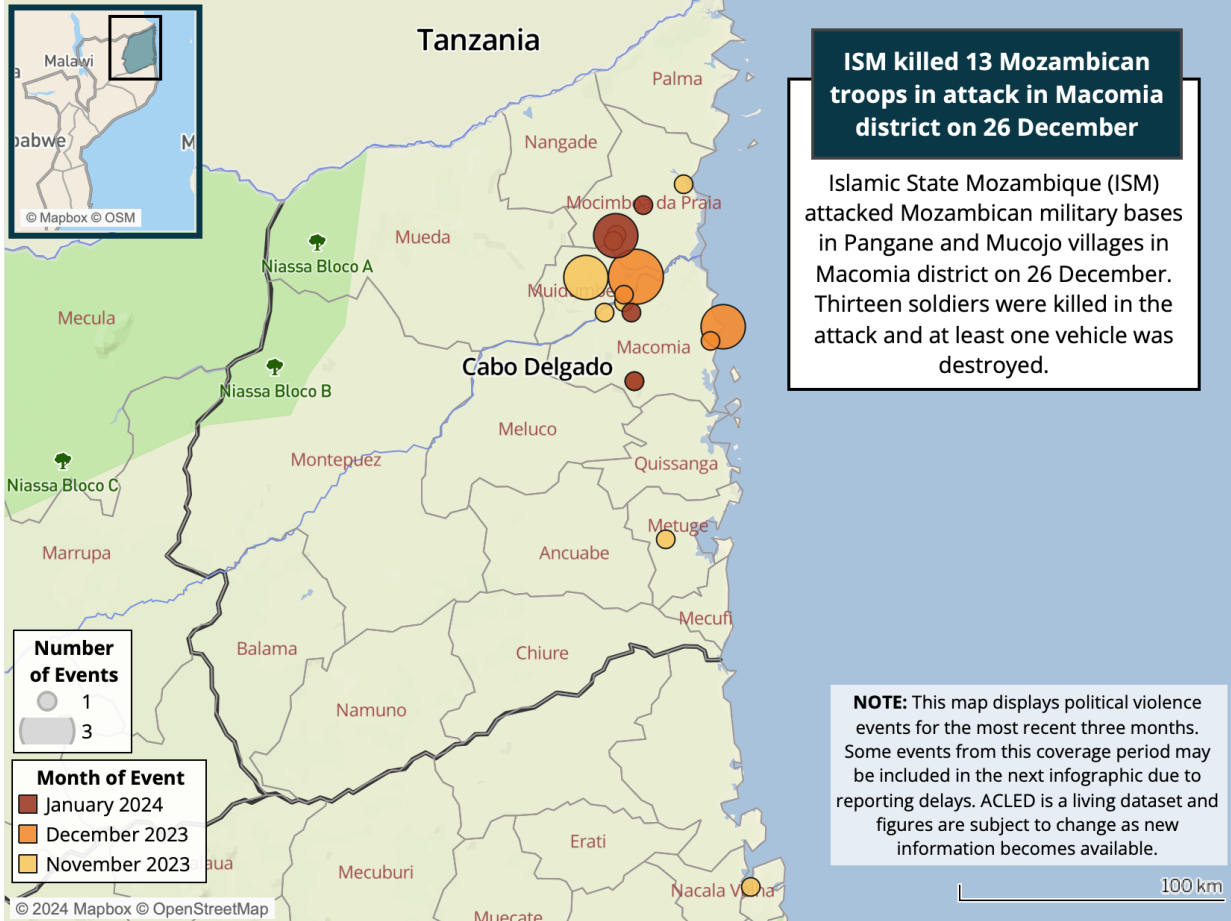
Tanzanian authorities maintain security measures in Mtwara

Authorities in Mihambwe ward in Mtwara district have restricted initiation ceremonies to daytime hours as a security measure. Mihambwe lies approximately 10 km over the border from Mandimba in Nangade district, where Tanzania People's Defence Force troops are deployed. Such ceremonies have been targeted by ISM in Mozambique, [most recently](#) in November.

Over November and December, the Immigration Department's [Mjue Jirani Yako \(Know Your Neighbor\) exercise](#) identified over 11,000 long-term but unregistered residents of Mozambican origin in Mtwara region. Those identified will stay, but the exercise indicates the security forces' ongoing efforts to engage with communities in Mtwara region.

Cabo Ligado Update #160

1 November 2023 - 5 January 2024



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