



18 April 2024

Cabo Ligado Update: 1-14 April 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-April 2024

- Total number of political violence events: 1,795
- Total number of reported fatalities from political violence: 5,652
- Total number of reported fatalities from political violence targeting civilians: 2,354

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

SITUATION SUMMARY

Security forces have attempted to regain the initiative since the start of April by launching an offensive on the insurgent-held Macomia coast, around the town of Mucojo. Meanwhile, Islamic State Mozambique (ISM) killed at least four people in Quissanga district, with the end of Ramadan likely signaling a renewal of insurgent activity.

On 2 April, insurgents set up a blockade on the road to Mucojo, where they continue to impose a strict form of Islamic government, including the prohibition of alcohol and mandatory fasting during Ramadan, *Carta de Moçambique* [reported](#). Four days later, the Mozambique Air Force fired on the area from helicopters, according to multiple sources. The extent of the damage they inflicted is unclear, but there were unconfirmed reports from local sources that there were civilian casualties.

An ultralight Bat Hawk aircraft equipped with machine guns was also active in operations in the area. Bat Hawks had been used by the private military contractor Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) when it was fighting insurgents in Cabo Delgado between 2019 and 2021, one of which [crashed](#) while on patrol. There is no evidence that DAG is still operating in Mozambique. On 10 April, the Bat Hawk went missing and is believed to have crashed near Mucojo. On this occasion, it seems that the pilot was an [individual contractor](#), originally from South Africa, and working with the Police of the Republic of Mozambique.

On 9 April, the first day of Eid al-Fitr, insurgents beheaded at least four people in the village of Namaluco in Quissanga district, bordering the Mucojo administrative area. The victims were caught making alcoholic drinks, according to local sources. Insurgents also kidnapped several people and injured one person in the attack.

The attackers possibly came from the villages of Olumboa and Darumba on the Macomia coast, which around 100 insurgents were observed passing through on 9 April. The next day, insurgents were seen in Cagembe in Quissanga and celebrated Eid with the local community.

By 13 April, insurgents were in Tapara, Quissanga, just south of the town of Bilibiza. One local source reported that the insurgents had women and children in tow, and they were fleeing military operations, possibly in Mucojo. Lusa [reported](#) that insurgents killed five people and amputated the arm of another in Bilibiza on 10 April, but Cabo Ligado has not been able to verify this. On 14 April, insurgents clashed with a security forces patrol near the village of Nanduli in Ancuabe district before withdrawing into the Pulo forest. No casualties have been reported so far.

Another group of around a dozen insurgents looted the islands of Quifuque in Palma district and Tambuzi off the coast of Mocímboa da Praia town on 10 April. There were no reported casualties, but homes and shops were stripped of basic goods.

Insurgents also continue to operate in western Macomia. On 7 April, the Local Force in Chai raided a camp of approximately 50 insurgents from Mucojo, killing 10 before withdrawing due to a lack of ammunition.

FOCUS: ISM SCATTERS FROM MUCOJO

ISM fighters dispersed across a wide area of Cabo Delgado last week in the wake of [FDS operations](#) in Mucojo, Macomia district. The operation exhibited some characteristics familiar from the wider conflict. The operations by FADM did not discriminate between civilians and ISM fighters. ISM's dispersal was predictable, and mostly unchecked, with the only significant resistance coming from Local Force units based near Chai.

There are well-founded concerns about the potential for civilian fatalities in these operations. Speaking to Radio Mocambique on 11 February about operations in Mucojo, Macomia District Administrator Tomás Badae stated that any civilians found in the area would be considered to be collaborators with the insurgents. It is not yet known how many civilian fatalities there were, though helicopter-mounted armaments are unlikely to be precise.

The presence of the Bat Hawk aircraft, thought to be under the control of the Police of the Republic of Mozambique though piloted by a contractor, presents a further complication. The presence of a contractor, if not known to other security actors, may complicate relationships between branches of the Defense and Security Forces if not properly coordinated.

In addition to those problems, the operations have been unable to curtail the ability of ISM to disperse when confronted by offensive operations. The arrival of a group of fighters in Quifuque and Tambuzi islands on 10 April, and their subsequent progress towards the Messalo river indicates that the Messalo river basin remains a safe haven for ISM, two and a half years after the [first attempts](#) to dislodge them from there.

ISM's progress south was, for the most part, undisturbed, with one group having had time to stop and celebrate Eid al-Fitr. In the past, the group has been able to operate relatively freely in the province's southern districts. In [November 2022](#), the group swept through Chiúre, Namuno, Balama, and Montepuez districts, meeting resistance from the Naparama militia only. More recently, in February this year, ISM undertook 13 attacks on civilians over 19 days in Chiúre district without being disturbed by FDS.

The only resistance met by the scattering fighters was near Chai, where the Local Force had a relatively successful engagement. The Local Force, initially formed at the community level before being brought under the FADM, has been active in Chai since at least January 2021 and is seen by Frelimo as being a critical part of the post-SAMIM security configuration, [according to Zitamar News](#) sources.

ROUND UP

Most SAMIM forces withdraw from Cabo Delgado

SAMIM contingents from South Africa, Botswana, and Lesotho have [officially announced their exit](#) from Cabo Delgado, leaving Tanzania as the only partner with troops in the field, ahead of the mission's official conclusion on 15 July. Botswana pulled out its forces on 5 April. South Africa mounted its farewell parade two days later, followed by Lesotho on 14 April. Cabo Ligado understands that a small South African presence remains in Muagumula, near Macomia town. The remaining Tanzanian forces in Nangade district also operate under a bilateral security agreement with Mozambique that is expected to continue after July.

New OMR report

A [new report](#) from the Rural Environment Observatory think tank (OMR) highlights how a lack of international humanitarian aid, and domestic social spending, which is being squeezed by increased defense spending, is worsening the plight of people living in Cabo Delgado. Schools are struggling to keep up with waves of displacement, with class sizes of 200 in places such as Mueda. Access to water is a problem in many displacement camps. Health centers routinely lack basic supplies. Aid and development projects to produce food have, in some cases, been abandoned. International companies' social responsibility initiatives "have not translated into a clear improvement in people's living conditions." OMR argues that this reinforces people's belief that the benefits of the province's natural resources are not equitably shared.

Pemba drugs haul

Mozambique's criminal investigation service, Sernic, seized [55 kilograms of cocaine](#) and 30 kg of hashish in the Cabo Delgado provincial headquarters of Pemba. Sernic did not specify the date of the seizure. A suspect was arrested, but authorities have yet to identify the owner of the drugs or their origin and destination. The illicit drug trade has recurrently been rumored to be providing finance for the insurgency, with the head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Mozambique [saying in February](#) he is concerned about "the interconnections between drug trafficking and the financing of terrorist activities in the north of the country." Some [researchers have found](#), however, that drug trafficking has reduced in Cabo Delgado because of the conflict, with traffickers preferring to bring their cargoes ashore further south in Mozambique, on the Nampula or Zambezia coastlines. On 16 April, the UNODC in Mozambique [opened an office](#) in Pemba.

Frelimo succession update

President Filipe Nyusi and his circle survived attempts at a series of Frelimo meetings in the first week of April to force the selection of a presidential candidate for the October general election, or the finalization of a shortlist of candidates, at a [meeting](#) of the Frelimo Central Committee on 5-6 April. Instead, Nyusi announced at the end of that meeting that the Political Commission, a group of the 19 most senior party members, would draw up a shortlist. Zitamar News and others [reported](#) that Nyusi is now leaning toward supporting the head of the Tax Authority, Amélia Muendane, to succeed him. Other names in the frame include José Pacheco, a veteran of a number of senior government posts and a former governor of Cabo Delgado; former Minister for the Interior Basílio Monteiro; and former Prime Minister Luísa Diogo. The final decision will be made at an extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee due to take place in early May.

Telegram clamps down on IS channels


In recent days, most of the Islamic State (IS) Telegram channels monitored by Cabo Ligado have been removed from Telegram. Telegram is thought to have started actively [restricting such channels](#) around the start of April. IS has not issued any claims via its Telegram channels for incidents in Mozambique since 18 March. A hiatus like this is not unprecedented. Nevertheless, this is the longest break since mid-2023, when no claims were issued on Telegram from 30 May until 2 July that year. Such breaks usually reflect conditions in the field, though given Telegram's removal campaign, some uncertainty about IS's media operations cannot be discounted as a cause of the hiatus.


Cabo Ligado Update #167


30 March - 13 April

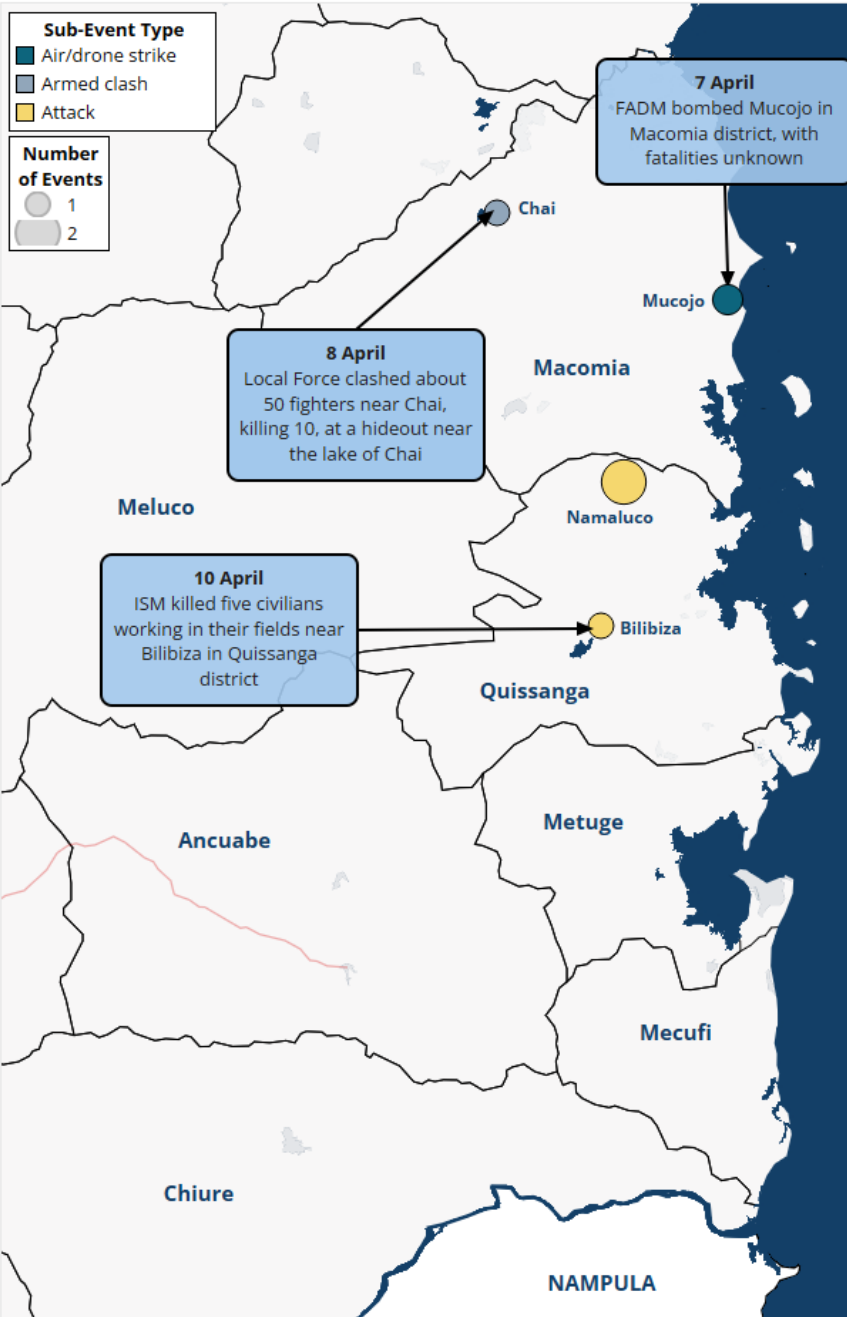
Key Data Points

Events in Cabo Delgado province from 1 October 2017 to 13 April 2024

 At least 1,795 political violence events

 At least 5,652 reported fatalities from political violence

 At least 2,354 reported fatalities from political violence targeting civilians



NOTE: This map displays political violence events that have taken place in Cabo Delgado province from 30 March - 13 April 2024. Some events from this coverage period may be included in the next infographic due to reporting delays. ACLED is a living dataset and figures are subject to change as new information becomes available.