



MOZAMBIQUE

SITUATION TRACKER

Africa Program

13 April 2021

The following Situation Tracker looks at the background on the 2017 insurgency in Cabo Delgado, actions from the Mozambican Government, economic and social influence, and the current situation in the country.



Background on Insurgency in Cabo Delgado

- Insurgency began in oil-rich Cabo Delgado Northern Province on October 5 and 6 2017.
- Three police stations attacked by 30 armed men in Mocimboa da Praia.
- The group of insurgents later identified as Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama or Ansar al-Sunna (ASWJ).
- Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama pledged allegiance to the Islamic State Central African Province (ISCAP).
- No visible leadership or public statement highlighting objectives or manifesto.
- Similar to Boko Haram and other jihadist group, they advocate for Sharia law.
- ASWJ or ISCAP is more motivated by criminal activities rather than islamic ideology.
- Multiple groups and cells of militants operating in the region.

Economic and Social Influence

- An estimated \$50 billion worth of untapped offshore gas in Cabo Delgado
- The region has attracted international investment in its oil, with the ability to extract and export 180 trillion cubic feet of natural gas
- Majority-muslim province
- Poor standard of living
- High rates of unemployment
- High rates of illiteracy and poverty
- Cabo Delgado is considered the least developed province in Mozambique

Tactics



Attacks on civilians



Attacks on Mozambican troops and
seizing their weapons



Destroyal of government
infrastructure



Handing out looted goods and
foods to villagers

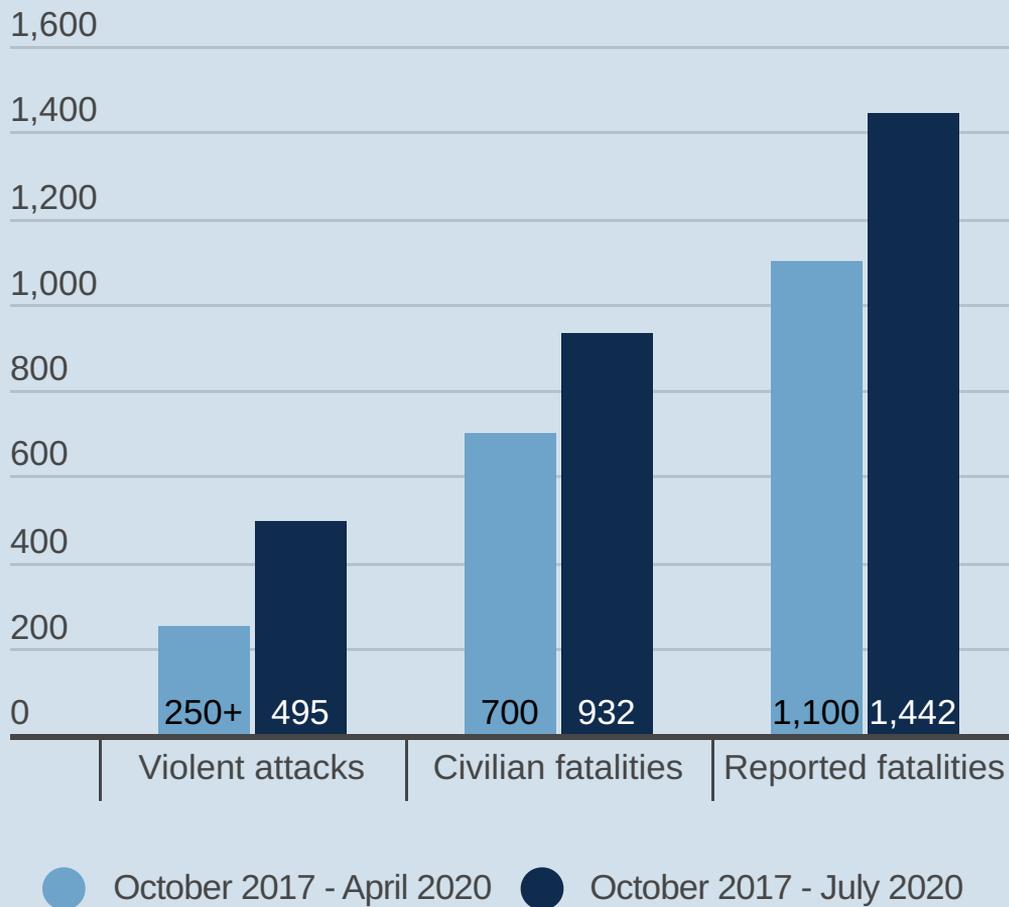


2021 Developments

- Beginning on March 24, 2021, an armed militant group, said to be affiliated with ISIS, launched attacks in Palma. This further displaced people who had previously fled conflict in other towns in Cabo Delgado. Fighting between the government forces and the insurgents intensified the following day.
- Palma is approximately 10km (six miles) away from a multibillion-dollar liquified natural gas project run by France's oil company Total and involving other multinational corporations.
- Total had previously suspended operations and evacuated some staff in late December 2020 after series of raids were launched nearby. The attacks on March 24 caused them to once again to evacuate staff from the construction site.
- The Southern African Development Community has held several meetings to discuss the instability and the growing threat of terrorism in the region.
- ISIS claimed the deadly attacks in Palma and the government army have reclaimed the area.
- The U.S. designated what it called, ISIS-Mozambique as Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorists, while imposing sanctions against its alleged leaders on 10, March 2021 and later launched a two-month special operation forces counterinsurgency training for Mozambique government forces.
- Former colonial power, Portugal, also offered to send in around 60 military trainers.

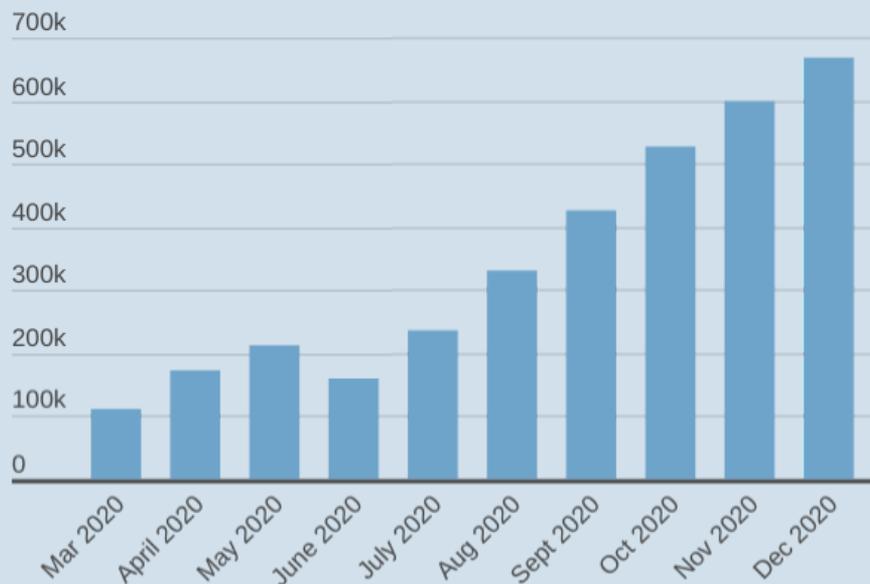
2020 saw a rise in violent activities, such as the kidnapping of civilians, in comparison to previous years. Militants seized additional territory to expand their base in Cabo Delgado, a region that experienced over 300% increase in attacks. Rebels captured Mocimboa da Praia in August 2020 and have held it since then.

Activities since October 2017



Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED)

Civilians displaced by violence in 2020



Source: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), U.S. State Department

Mozambican Government Action

- Similarly to Nigeria, the Mozambican government downplayed the potential lethality of the group.
- Government declared militants anti-development agents.
- Implemented a repressive, militarized campaign, utilizing private military contractors including Russian Wagner Group and South Africa's Dyck Advisory Group.
- Government forces accused of human rights violation and corruption
- Seeks greater international support to deal with the crisis.

Regional and International Response

- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) - a regional cooperation for Southern Africa countries - recognized the crisis, two years since the first insurgency.
- SADC claimed it took Mozambique over two years to ask for help
- SADC leaders expressed solidarity in fighting the extremist group. Yet, there is little clarity on its plans.
- The African Union (AU) acknowledged the crisis in Mozambique for the first time at the 33rd AU summit in Addis Ababa in February 2020.
- The AU intends to support Mozambique, but couldn't intervene ahead of SADC.
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) partnered with Mozambique on terrorism prevention trainings.