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## Cabo Ligado Weekly: 8-14 June

***Cabo Ligado** — or ‘connected cape’ — is a new conflict observatory monitoring political violence in Mozambique, launched in partnership with Zitamar News, Mediafax, and the International Crisis Group.*

### Situation Summary

Both government and insurgent forces launched attacks last week, with running battles between the two taking place in Mocimboa da Praia district and insurgent attacks against civilians affecting Macomia and Quissanga districts as well. Insurgents continue to stretch government capabilities with the geographic range of their operations, making it difficult for security forces to protect civilians effectively.

On 8 June, insurgents killed two civilians in Tapara, Quissanga district, one for being a Christian and another for having a firearm in his home. The attackers then kidnapped three women and burned the village, directing the remaining civilians to go to the nearby village of Bilibiza.

The next day, the government began its offensive in Mocimboa da Praia district with an [attack](#) on Marere (more on this in this week’s *Incident Focus*). A combination of government security forces on the ground and Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) helicopter gunships in the air pushed insurgents out of a base in Marere, recovering a large cache of weapons and two armored cars that insurgents had captured earlier in the conflict. Government forces [killed](#) nine insurgents in the battle and later executed 13 prisoners they had taken, while suffering two deaths themselves. As insurgents withdrew northward from Marere, they kidnapped two girls from the fields around Mpanga, also in Mocimboa da Praia district.

Also on 9 June, insurgents launched four attacks in Macomia district. In Natugo 2 and Mitacata, they beheaded 11 people who they called out by name and abducted seven girls in a daytime attack. In Nacutuco, they killed six civilians in a night attack, and burned homes in nearby Ingoane.

On 10 June, insurgents were back in action in Mocimboa da Praia district, killing one civilian in Mitumbate. Ten family leaders were also killed in Cabora, Macomia district, between 10 and 11 June. The [initial report](#) of the Cabora attack specifies that ethnic Makondes were targeted, but Cabo Ligado understands from sources that both the attackers and many of the victims were Macua rather than Makonde.

The government offensive also continued on 11 June, with DAG helicopters responding quickly to calls for help from civilians under attack in Makulo and Cabacera, Mocimboa da Praia district. The gunships sent insurgents scattering, but casualties are unclear.

12 June saw two insurgent attacks in Macomia district, one in which a civilian was beheaded in Ingoane and another in which people traveling on motorcycles were ambushed at Nanjaba. Four passengers were beheaded for being unable to recite Quranic verses. The next day, insurgents burned homes in Manica, Macomia district, while government forces and insurgents clashed in Chinda, Mocimboa da Praia.

Finally, on 14 June, insurgents killed four civilians in Malinde, Mocimboa da Praia district, and looted and burned homes, but were pushed back by government troops, who [claim](#) to have wounded 15 insurgents. In all, at least 39 civilians died in the conflict in the last week, along with at least 22 insurgents and two Mozambican soldiers. The week also saw more reported deaths from the battle for Macomia, with locals discovering the bodies of four more civilians and security force sources [reporting](#) 10 government deaths in the battle. The total death toll from the battle for Macomia now stands at 23 civilians and 10 members of Mozambican security forces, along with an unknown number of insurgents.

### **Incident focus: Insurgent Retreat From Marere**

Marere is near the coast, on Mocimboa da Praia district's southern border. When government forces overran the insurgent base there on 9 June, the surviving insurgents retreated north, towards Mocimboa da Praia town. The coast between Marere and Mocimboa da Praia has been a no-go zone for travelers for some time, and it is likely that the Marere base was an anchor of insurgent control in the area. The government's successful move to evict the insurgents, therefore, may actually shift the local balance of power, so long as government ground troops can retain a presence in the area.

After the battle at Marere, insurgents moved to Mocimboa da Praia town, setting up roadblocks around nearby Buji and kidnapping two girls in Mpanga. Rather than launching major attacks there, however, insurgents reportedly continued their northward flight, splitting into two groups. One continued up the coast, in the direction of Palma — it was likely this group that attacked Mitumbate and was harassed by DAG helicopters in Makulo and Cabacera. The other moved west, toward Nangade — this may have been the group that clashed with government forces in Chinda on 13 June, although this is less certain, as Chinda sits on a stretch of road already well-known as an insurgent hunting ground.

Government troops in Palma scrambled to protect the town from a northern insurgent advance, but the coastal group is more likely interested in securing freedom of movement in the hinterlands between Mocimboa da Praia and Palma than in launching a quick attack against Palma town. Insurgents have shown a propensity for moving by ship, so access to the coast is important to them. The westward group has the opportunity to occupy the sparsely populated, rugged area where Nangade, Mocimboa da Praia, and Palma districts all come together. Using that as a base of operations, insurgents will be able to access the major transportation routes of northeastern Cabo Delgado. The stretch of the N380 that runs through Awasse between Mocimboa da Praia and Mueda and provides a vital overland travel route for Mocimboa da Praia will be of particular interest.

## Government Response

Mozambican security forces saw some battlefield success in Mocimboa da Praia last week, but winning battles is not enough for a successful counterinsurgency, and other news last week suggests that progress is slight at best on the government's overall effort to defeat the insurgency. For one thing, recent government actions in Quissanga and Macomia districts have failed to deter continued attacks there. For another, the Mocimboa da Praia victories are tainted by military sources' frank [admission](#) to Carta de Mocambique that security services executed insurgent prisoners who refused to cooperate with the government, a gross human rights abuse that may give some foreign governments pause about offering assistance to Mozambican units engaged in such activity

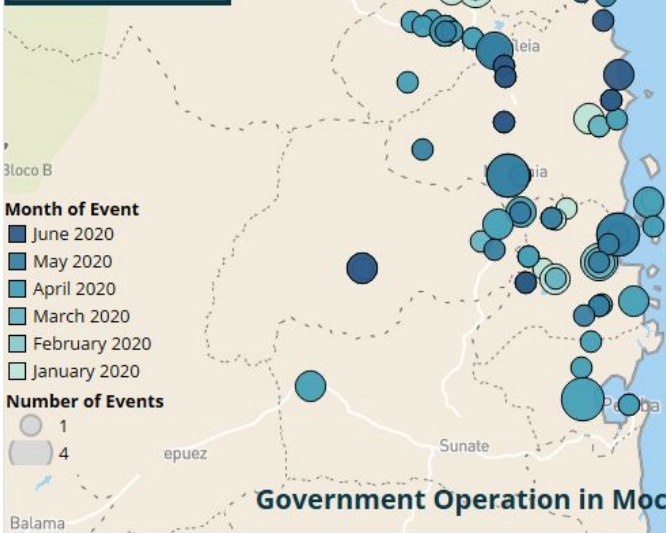
Indeed, it was a quiet week on the regional support front. Tanzanian high commissioner Rajabu Luhwavi paid lip service to the concept of Mozambican-Tanzanian cooperation against the insurgency during a 12 June trip to Maputo, but he also said that his country is, nearly three years into the conflict, still studying whether any of its citizens are involved. Effective cross-Rovuma cooperation may still be some way off.

British foreign secretary Dominic Raab, for his part, said that the UK is open to supporting Mozambique's counterinsurgency campaign during a phone call with Mozambique's president Filipe Nyusi, although Raab did not specify what that potential support might entail.

The government does have one unambiguously positive accomplishment to point to, however: the imminent return of large-scale cabotage (coastal shipping) to Cabo Delgado. A new public-private partnership dubbed SMC will begin increased service in Mozambique by running a ship with 450 tons of cargo capacity on a route between Pemba, Mocimboa da Praia, and Palma, offering a way to cheaply resupply conflict-hit areas without having to brave insurgent-controlled roads. With the humanitarian crisis in Cabo Delgado mounting and ground transportation growing more dangerous and expensive, the added transport capacity will be a major step in the right direction.

**Correction:** *Last week's weekly update improperly characterized some aspects of ISIS media operations. Nashir is not an ISIS news agency but an overall term for the group's social media apparatus. Also, as International Crisis Group senior advisor on non-state armed groups Sam Heller notes, "Al-Naba is not less prestigious" than Amaq and other official or semi-official ISIS publications, so it was wrong to argue that ISIS running its claim of the Macomia attack in Al-Naba represented a departure from the trend of prominent ISIS claims of major attacks in Mozambique. We regret the errors.*

# Ligado Weekly #5



## Adapting Insurgent Strategies

Last week featured sustained attacks by insurgents in Mocimboa da Praia district, as well as attacks in Macomia and Quissanga districts. On 8 June, insurgents killed two civilians, and kidnapped three women, in Tapara, Quissanga district. Over several days, beginning on 9 June, insurgents launched attacks in Macomia district. These attacks resulted in several civilian killings, including multiple instances of beheadings, and the kidnapping of seven girls. In Mocimboa de Praia, insurgents, despite a government offensive in the area, launched attacks on villages in the district, resulting in civilian killings, looting, and burning of homes.

The attacks by insurgents in Mocimboa de Praia, Macomia, and Quissanga districts, while facing a joint government and Dyck Advisory Group operation, demonstrate the insurgency's ability to attack on different fronts. In the face of the government-led operation, insurgents have shown the ability to rapidly adjust tactics. Since the government offensive, the insurgency has shifted from large-scale attacks to small group attacks focused on destroying villages and targeting suspected collaborators.

## Government Operation in Mocimboa de Praia

Last week, government forces, assisted by Dyck Advisory Group, had a string of victories that were part of an offensive into Mocimboa de Praia. On 9 June, state forces overran the insurgent base near Marere, forcing insurgents to retreat towards Mocimboa de Praia town. However, these victories may be soured by military sources' admission to executing prisoners, which highlights past abuses by security forces and may make gaining international support more difficult.



Note: There is often a lack of consensus over the spellings of place names in Mozambique. We endeavor to be consistent within Cabo Ligado publications, but be aware that alternative spellings exist and may appear in other publications.