

Cabo Ligado Weekly: 13-19 July

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[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

The civilian security situation in Cabo Delgado worsened further last week, as spreading disease joined insurgent and state violence as a direct threat to civilian lives in Mozambique’s northeast. Reports of insurgent violence last week included five incidents across Macomia, Mocimboa da Praia, and Ibo districts, while reports of government violence against civilians came from Mocimboa da Praia and Pemba districts.

In a return to an area they occupied as recently as early June, insurgents raided Litamanda and Chai, in Macomia district, on the evening of 14 July. They killed one civilian and burned five homes in Litamanda, while in Chai they looted extensively without causing any casualties. The next day, according to a [report](#) from the Facebook page Bifes de Pemba, a raiding party attempting to return to Chai from Mocimboa da Praia district struck Mungue, on the border between Mocimboa da Praia and Muidumbe districts. The report, as yet unconfirmed, states that insurgents killed over 20 civilians in Mungue.

On 17 July, a man was found dead near Muagamula, Macomia district. Locals believe he was ambushed by insurgents. He was a security guard at a gospel radio station, but there is no indication that he was targeted for his religion.

On 19 July, insurgents kidnapped a woman and looted in Mussemuco, Ibo district. The attack caused many residents of Mussemuco, which is on the mainland, to flee to Ibo Island, where many other displaced Mozambicans are already living.

In the meantime, harsh government actions against civilians continued in Mocimboa da Praia. On 13 July, government troops fired shots and confiscated phones and other property at a market in the Nabubussi neighborhood of Mocimboa da Praia. The next day, also in Nabubussi, soldiers beat a man and his mother before making off with 550 meticaís (\$7.80) the man had in his pocket. Pinnacle News published a video on 18 July of soldiers mutilating bodies of alleged insurgents in a mass grave somewhere in Mocimboa da Praia district.

Further south, 15 displaced civilians arriving in Pemba by dhow on 14 July were arrested by Mozambican marines and held in police custody until they confessed to being members of the insurgency. By the next day, they were free, after reports reached the press that they had been

tortured into their confessions, including being bitten by dogs. Police have disputed the torture charges after a week of silence, but violent interrogations of civilians have been a feature of government security force practice in the Cabo Delgado conflict for a long time.

Finally, an outbreak of cholera, which has been present in the conflict zone since January, has worsened. At least 13 civilians have reportedly died from diarrhea, while another was killed in violence related to the outbreak.

Incident Focus: Cholera

Mozambican health authorities [declared](#) a cholera outbreak in the conflict-affected districts of Macomia, Mocimboa da Praia, and Ibo in February, after patients began complaining of acute diarrhea the previous month. That outbreak seems to be worsening in the wake of displacements caused by recent fighting, threatening to drive a further wedge between Cabo Delgado civilians and their government so long as treatment is not forthcoming.

Many displaced civilians are now living in areas where water and sanitation facilities are stretched. In Nkomangano, for example, just north of Mocimboa da Praia town, people displaced by the recent battle there are suffering from diarrhea, and a source there reports that there are no prospects for better access to clean water. Five have died so far. The situation in Ilha Nhonge, another popular nearby destination for displaced Mocimboa da Praia residents, is similar, although no deaths have yet been reported. In Macomia, there have been eight recent cholera deaths -- four in Quiterajo and another four on Ilha Quilhanhane. Cases have also been reported in Mocimboa da Praia town, Malinde, in Mocimboa da Praia district, and Ilha Vamizi, in Palma district.

With the conflict preventing both government and NGO aid from reaching most displaced people, efforts to control the spread of the disease have become desperate and coercive in some instances. In Mocimboa da Praia town, two young men were accused of causing the disease and beaten until they escaped. In Malinde, a man was lynched after being accused of being the source of the illness. The outbreaks and the violence surrounding them underline the extent to which mass displacement is a humanitarian disaster and how badly the conflict exacerbates the problem. If the government or NGOs were able to reach displaced populations to provide cleaner water and sanitation, these deaths could be easily prevented.

Government Response

The Mozambican government has taken some steps to exfiltrate civilians from the conflict zone, where they can more easily receive aid, but efforts so far have been woefully inadequate to the task at hand. Last week, the government [announced](#) that it is building a center for people displaced by the Cabo Delgado conflict in neighboring Niassa province, where there will be fresh drinking water and sanitation available. The camp, which will boast eight public toilets, could prove to be a lifesaver for many, but the scale of construction will have to increase quickly to begin to accommodate the well over 200,000 people who have fled their homes.

On the security front, the biggest news of the week is the [extension and expansion](#) of the government's contract with the private military company Dyck Advisory Group (DAG). The new contract will keep the Mozambican military in helicopter air support at least through the end of the year. The contract reportedly includes money for DAG to train Mozambican ground troops in combined arms and air assault tactics, in order to improve coordination between helicopter and ground units. Lack of coordination has been a problem in the past, with DAG helicopters relying on indiscriminate firing when engaged with insurgents, injuring civilians and damaging buildings as a result.

The agreement seems to have come into force alongside an expansion of helicopter infrastructure in Cabo Delgado. Past DAG efforts to provide air support for Mozambican troops have been hampered by having to fly out of Pemba, increasing travel time to more northern targets and decreasing the duration the helicopters could linger above a target before having to refuel. Sources say that DAG helicopters are already operating out of a new aerodrome in Macomia, near the center of the conflict zone. The training and new bases could solve some of the government's tactical challenges, but others remain. Supplying and protecting Macomia, for example, will be a tough job, particularly given how poorly government security forces have performed in defensive operations.

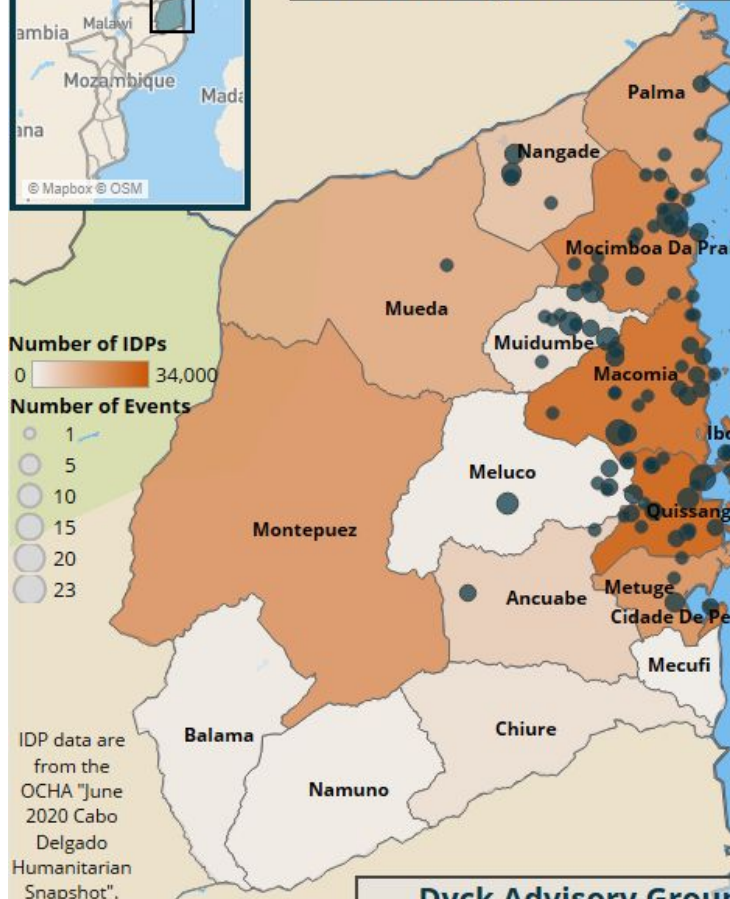
The military also seems to be trying to garrison Mocimboa da Praia even more strongly. Civilians attempting to return to their homes in Mocimboa da Praia's Pamunda neighborhood, where the town's port is located, were turned away by the military. With cabotage service in Cabo Delgado now online, it seems the military is taking extra steps to maintain its supply lines into the heart of the conflict.

Finally, a report [emerged](#) last week of physical confrontations between Mozambican soldiers and their superiors about the soldiers' dissatisfaction with the military's approach to the conflict. The fight, which took place in Ibo district, escalated to the point that shots were fired, although it is unclear if anyone was injured. Desertion remains a problem for the military, and soldiers in open revolt suggests the problem is not getting any better. Mozambican police chief Bernardino Rafael claimed last week that security forces had killed over 500 insurgents and that "the terrorist network is being dismantled," but it seems the rank and file are not so optimistic.

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.

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IDPs and Organized Violence in Cabo Delgado



The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has indicated that at least 250,000 people are estimated to be internally displaced in Cabo Delgado. IDP numbers from June largely overlap with where attacks have taken place during 2020. Attacks on district capitals have particularly aggravated the displacement crisis in the province. International humanitarian organizations, providing much needed humanitarian support, have been forced to close operations due to the danger posed by the insurgency. The absence of these organizations will only increase human suffering in Cabo Delgado.

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Dyck Advisory Group Contract

Last week the government announced an extension and expansion of its contract with the private military company Dyck Advisory Group (DAG). The new contract will continue the helicopter air support through the end of the year. The contract reportedly includes money for DAG to train Mozambican ground troops in combined arms and air assault tactics, in order to improve coordination between helicopter and ground units. Lack of coordination has been a problem in the past, with DAG helicopters relying on indiscriminate firing when engaged with insurgents, injuring civilians and damaging buildings as a result. The agreement seems to have come into force alongside an expansion of helicopter infrastructure in Cabo Delgado. Sources say that DAG helicopters are already operating out of a new aerodrome in Macomia, near the center of the conflict zone.

Organized Violence in Cabo Delgado (2020)

