Mocimboa da Praia occupied

Mocimboa da Praia was occupied by insurgents this morning (Monday 23 March) and at 18h00 this afternoon was still under their control with no military response, report Estacio Valoi and Nazira Suleimane of Moz24Horas. https://www.moz24h.co.mz/ In two press conferences today, the spokesperson for the General Command of the Mozambican police, Orlando Mudumane, confirmed the attack. He told reporters in Maputo that the insurgents had attacked and occupied the barracks of the defence forces, where they hoisted their black flag. Apparently senior and more experienced officials had recently moved to the main base in Mueda, leaving newly arrived officials in charge in Mocimboa. The police commander Bernardino Rafael made a flying visit with press last Monday (16 March) to show the press everything was in control. President Nyusi visited Mueda on 13 March. (AIM, @Verdade, O Pais, 23 Mar; CDD 22 Mar) The town of Mocimboa da Praia was occupied for a day in the first action of the civil war, on 5 October 2017.

Insurgents apparently arrived by both sea and land, and also attacked the police station, freeing prisoners. Houses have been burned and a school and other infrastructure destroyed. Dozens of people have fled in panic to the local hospitals and mosques, assuming them to be safer. The invaders have built barricades on the main roads leading into the town, which they control.

First covid-19 case; 695 in quarantine

The first person to be officially infected by the Covid-19 virus in Mozambique is a 75-year-old Mozambican who had recently arrived from Britain, health minister Armindo Tiago announced Sunday. Checks were made on 338,427 passengers arriving in Mozambique, of whom 1248 were sent into quarantine and 695 remain in quarantine. One of those is Maputo Mayor Eneas Comiche, who on 10 March attended an event in London and sat next to Prince Albert II of Monaco, who has since tested positive for Covid-19.

All visas have been cancelled. All schools and universities have been closed, but all other people are expected to go to work. No event can have more than 50 people.

Mozambique does not have the capacity to stop the spread. Most people do not have enough soap and water to wash their hands more frequently. Travel to work in Maputo and other big cities is in jam packed mini-buses. The health service has only 34 functional
ventilators and 2500 test kits. (Lusa, @Verdade 23 Mar)

Mozambique has appealed for $700 mn in budget support from donors.

**South Arica now has 402 cases, and has imposed a 21 day lockdown.** Except for key workers, no one can leave their homes except to seek medical care, buy food, medicine and other supplies or collect a social grant. All shops and businesses will be closed, except for pharmacies, laboratories, banks, essential financial and payment services, supermarkets, petrol stations and health care providers. Companies that are essential to the production and transportation of food, basic goods and medical supplies will remain open.

**Exxon Mobil is likely to delay** its final investment decision (FID) on its $30 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in Mozambique as the coronavirus disrupts early works and a depressed gas market makes investors wary, Reuters reported Saturday (21 Mar). Covid-19 is causing a global recession which is reducing demand for gas, just as Russia and Saudi Arabia are in an overproduction battle and are pushing down oil prices.

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