

MOZAMBIQUE

News reports & clippings

535 - 5 April 2021

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In this issue

Cabo Delgado

+ **BBC says people must reap benefits**

+ **Insurgents slowly leave Palma**

+ **Foreign forces in Cabo Delgado**

+ **Deflating gas bubble**

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Military not enough says BBC; Moz must convince people they are not abandoned while TNCs profit

"Counter-insurgency is never just about military victories, it involves that old cliché of 'winning hearts and minds'. So to defeat this insurgency, yes, it will initially take a properly equipped and co-ordinated campaign by Mozambique's own forces, with foreign logistic assistance. But for it to succeed in the long term it will take far more than that," warns Frank Gardner OBE, the BBC's highly respected security correspondent.

"It needs good governance and investment in the local community: schools, roads, jobs - enough to assuage people's sense that they have been abandoned by their government while big foreign multinationals sweep in and reap the benefits of their country's precious natural resources.

"In Afghanistan I saw how tactical military victories over the Taliban by Nato and Afghan government forces were later undone by a failure of government. Areas 'liberated' from Taliban rule later slipped back under their sway once the troops departed and corrupt police and government officials resumed their nefarious activities at the expense of the local population. The same will happen in Mozambique if the coming military effort is not backed up by a marked improvement in civil affairs," warns Gardner.

Gardner was shot and seriously injured while reporting for the BBC in Saudi Arabia in 2004. He now reports from a wheelchair. "Mozambique: Why IS is so hard to defeat in Mozambique" (BBC, 31 Mar) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-56597861>

"Portugal is committed to resolving "the underlying issue" of the war in Cabo Delgado, said Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa on 29 March.

Insurgents slowly leave Palma

After holding it for 10 days, insurgents have drifted away from Palma, which now appears under government control, with some people returning. Journalists have been flown in. From these reports the town is not destroyed, but heavily damaged. Two TVM reports show that BCI bank and Vodacom shop destroyed, but BIM and Standard Bank seem not to have been attacked. TVM shows the district administration and police totally destroyed, official buildings and some others burned, the hospital damaged, district administrator's house attacked, and many shops broken into. Film appears to show both looting and traders recovering their merchandise. But many buildings seem undamaged. Palma's Catholic church apparently was not been attacked. The TVM reports this morning (6 Apr) are on <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=451464902791452> and <https://youtu.be/jk0ubSdPCgg>. Two other TVM news videos from Palma today and yesterday are on <https://www.facebook.com/212195609522142/videos/196539278668028> <https://www.facebook.com/100006535605117/videos/pcb.3072119513015872/3072118036349353> Sky news was one of the foreign teams included in the press tour and its report is on <https://news.sky.com/story/mozambique-bodies-in-the-street-and-hospital-vandalised-sky-news-first-to-see-devastation-left-by-extremists-12266659>

The army admits the insurgents had support of some local people and that they will try to screen people returning home.

It appears that foreigners were not targeted, and so far only two are known dead, both in the convoy trying to escape the Amarula Hotel.

Other reports say government buildings and documents were burned. The last holdout of insurgents appears to have been the Palma airstrip, recaptured Sunday morning.

There was other fighting on Saturday (3 Apr), including in Quitunda, the resettlement village just outside the walled Afungi construction complex. But insurgents made no attempt to breach the walls. (See Sun Tzu, below)

Three boats were captured by insurgents on Saturday including that Alfa-Jimbo cargo vessel which had been taking food from Pemba to Palma.

There has been a flood of fake videos on social media, from Mbau, Mocimboa da Praia and elsewhere. Mobile phones systems are still down. So the only real footage, so far, comes from the journalists who visited, and some taken by DAG early in the fighting.

Foreign forces in Cabo Delgado

At least 100 former British SAS fighters are in Nacala training Mozambican forces. We think they are from Burnham Global, a British company with military links based in UAE, which has a contract to train Mozambicans to use armoured vehicles and aircraft purchased from the South African company Paramount.

President Cyril Ramaphosa said that the South African National Defence Force sent troops to rescue 50 South Africans in Palma. It appears that the only South African killed was Adrian Nel who led the ill fated convoy out of the Amarula Hotel.

“Portuguese Foreign Minister Augusto Santos Silva told RTP that a team of ‘around 60’ soldiers were ‘getting ready’ to go ‘in the coming weeks’ to Mozambique.

Other civil war news

During the attack on Palma, there were attacks elsewhere. In Manica village, Mucojo, Macomia district, 17 villagers were killed in an attack. In coastal Macomia on 24 March attackers arrived by boat, moving along the coast and surprising fishermen working the coasts of the Mucojo and Quiterajo administrative posts. Witnesses said that some were killed and others captured.

Refugees fleeing north to Tanzania were turned away by Tanzania at the Rovuma River border.

MediaFax (5 Apr) reports civil servants (except teachers) fleeing Nangade.

The Southern African Development Community will meet 8 April to discuss regional measures to resolve the insurgency in Mozambique.

Deflating gas bubble

Dreams of a gas bonanza peaked in 2015, and the bubble has deflated ever since. Projections then were that gas production would start in 2019 with liquefied natural gas (LNG) production reaching 100 million tonnes per year (mt/y). Government revenue would be \$95 bn over 25 years, effectively doubling current annual expenditure of \$3.5 bn per year.

Ownerships have changed but the far offshore part is now controlled by ExxonMobil with ENI as the junior partner, and the zone closer to the coast is operated by Total (taking over from Anadarko). First off the mark was ENI, which approved a \$5 bn floating LNG platform now being put in place, which will produce 3 mt/y, probably starting next year. This is the *only* project now under way and could in the end be the only gas production.

All the other LNG from both zones was to be produced onshore on the Afungi peninsula and original designs were for 10 LNG "trains" producing more than 50 mt/y. This plan was halved then cut again, and in 2020 Total went ahead with 2 trains to produce 13 mt/y - with no plans for further expansion. ExxonMobil delayed and delayed and has now said production is unlikely. And last week Total pulled out, probably for a year or more.

Thus the only sure production is ENI's 3 mt/y - just 3% of the dreams - and the best case is that Total goes gets enough to go ahead with its 13 mt/y - in combination with ENI only 16% of the dreams. The balloon has deflated and dreams are dashed.

Global politics, environment and war all played a part. The big market for LNG was seen as replacing coal for electricity generation - although gas is a fossil fuel, it produces only half the carbon of coal. So it is a "transition" fuel to non-carbon.

China was seen as the biggest potential market, but US sanctions against China and the US taking sides in the Middle East led to China aligning with two gas producers not aligned to the US, and in March signing major long-term gas contracts with Iran and Qatar.

Meanwhile the past year has seen growing environmental and investor pressure both on global energy companies to stop fossil fuel production, including gas, and on electricity producers to switch directly to renewables. This has led to major cuts in new gas investments, including by ExxonMobil, which also wrote off more than \$17 bn in gas assets. Mozambique is not written off, but put low on its list.

The window to sell gas is already short, so any further delays will leave Mozambique gas with no longer term market. The bubble has deflated, and Mozambique could be left with LNG only from the ENI floating platform.

Short personal thoughts

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised sang Gil Scott-Heron in 1971.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnJFhuOWgXg> Could he have imagined that 50 years later the war was being broadcast on WhatsApp and Facebook, and that fighters would be filming themselves on smartphones and mercenaries and journalists would use their phones to film from helicopters and that drones would film - and everyone broadcasting and circulating their own reports and films. But citizen journalism is not helping - personal perspectives mix with rumour and fake news - and we still have no clear idea of the details of what happened in Palma. The revolution is on social media, but we are not better informed. *jh*

Medieval walled cities seem back in fashion. The Total project on the Afungi peninsula was effectively a walled city, with Total staff and the Mozambican army inside, and contractors and other Mozambicans outside. When the attack came the gates were closed and the lesser people outside the walls left to fend for themselves. But the walled city of Afungi is too small. Total had demanded a 25 km security zone including Palma, and it surely will not return until the ramparts are built around the entire large area - allowing the company to control the now destroyed Palma. And it is not just a case of keeping insurgents with machetes outside the zone. Attacks on Saudi Arabia have shown what can be done with drones. *jh*

"The skilful leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting; he captures their cities without laying siege to them; he overthrows their kingdom without lengthy operations in the field. ... the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities." (Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, probably 5th century BCE, Lionel Giles translation)

The Green Zone of Baghdad was a heavily fortified zone in the centre of the Iraqi capital completely surrounded by high concrete blast walls and barbed wire fences with access only available through a handful of entry control points. It was set up and run by US forces 2003-9 and then by Iraqi forces until 2015. As well as government and military offices, 5000 officials and civil contractors lived in the 10 sq km area. It was also the base for private military contractors. A further 5000 original residents remained there. There were only a few entrance checkpoints with soldiers checking documents. It has been argued that Total will want a "green zone" around Afungi and Palma, ruled by a private military company or the French Foreign Legion. The Palma "green zone" would need to be 50 times as large as the one in Baghdad, but it would be possible. It would also need strong coastal protection to secure Palma bay and the water in front of Afungi.

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Important external links

Cabo Delgado civil war:

Cabo Ligado weekly report <http://bit.ly/CaboLigado>

War reports, detailed maps, census data - <http://bit.ly/Moz-CDg>

Covid-19 daily updated data <https://www.facebook.com/miguel.de.brito1>

and <https://covid19.ins.gov.mz/documentos-em-pdf/boletins-diarios/>

Daily flood reports - <http://bit.ly/Moz-flood21>

Cyclone trackers, <https://www.cyclocane.com/> and <https://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/jtwc.html>

J Hanlon downloadable books: <http://bit.ly/Hanlon-books>

"Chickens & Beer: A recipe for agricultural Growth": <https://bit.ly/Chickens-Beer>

Data on all Mozambique **elections:** <http://bit.ly/MozEIData>

Previous editions of this newsletter, in pdf: <http://bit.ly/MozNews2021> and bit.ly/MozNews2020, which contain many more links

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