

MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

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Editor: Joseph Hanlon (j.hanlon@open.ac.uk)

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Land grab and press crackdown point to dubious beliefs about war

A land grab in Palma by the Council of Ministers, a press crackdown in the new anti-terrorism law, and the continued discouragement of a return of displaced people - all in the past two weeks - points to the strength of three dubious beliefs by key parts of the Frelimo leadership.

First is that the war is entirely external destabilisation and that there is no local grievance.

Second, therefore, is that they war can be won militarily and no political and economic changes are required in Cabo Delgado.

And third is that pressure from Europe to step up gas production - based on Ukraine and the failure of the Glasgow COP-26 to curb gas - will force TotalEnergies to back down on its demand that it will restart work only when all the displaced people have returned. Instead there seems a strong belief that Total Energies will be forced to return to work in a security zone, while the war continues elsewhere.

The first two articles below look at the land grab, grievance and press issues. The next two report on the return of displaced people. The fifth looks at gas production delays.

12,000 hectares of Palma given to unknown agency, underlining belief that grievance does not fuel war

The Council of Ministers on 17 May gave 12,000 hectares in Palma district to a previously unknown agency, the Cabo Delgado Economic Development Promotion Centre (CPD). Spokesperson and Deputy Justice Minister Filimão Suazi gave no details on the company or the location of the land. CPD was created in July 2021 as a non-profit company controlled by the Cabo

Delgado governor, to promote Cabo Delgado development. Its links to the various competing agencies are unclear. (CDD 22 May)

The 12,000 ha would be a square block 11 km on each side. By law, any land concession over 10,000 ha is so large that it must be approved by the Council of Ministers. By law, a concession can only be granted after consultation with the occupants. But they are not there because they have been displaced by the war, so there apparently has been no consultation. Smaller land concessions are made by the Ministry of Agriculture (1000 to 10,000 ha) and the province (below 1,000 ha). No such concessions have been published but it seems likely some may have been made; it is known that further mining concessions have been made in Cabo Delgado

Land is highly prized and contested in Palma. Rwandan companies linked to President Paul Kagame have apparently been promised contracts and will want land. With Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi fighting to retain power at the September Frelimo party Congress, Palma land will be an important way to buy support.

Researchers point to land concessions and displacement, notably from the Montepuez ruby mine and the Afungi gas site, as having contributed to the insurgency. People moved out of Afungi were resettled in Quitunda, just outside the gates of the gas camp. And attacks in 2020 in the zone were said to be partly launched by guerrillas housed by supporters of the insurgency inside the village.

President Nyusi denies that there is any grievance. He stated publicly in Brussels in February that Mozambique has no responsibility for the war in Cabo Delgado, and that it is entirely caused by foreign militants. This is Mozambique's official policy. And grabbing 12,000 ha from thousands of already displaced people will cause huge resentment. But apparently Nyusi's dubious belief is that it will not. Or, for immediate political gains, his he is prepared to take a very great risk? (See our special report 7 for a more detailed discussion of the issue, 19 April, bit.ly/Moz-593)

The Frelimo leadership's dubious belief in lack of grievance comes is part from closing their ears. Graça Machel said recently that grievances are "a fact. We cannot think that it is just infiltration from outside." And the joint World Bank, African Development Bank, UN and EU ERDIN proposal which the Council of Ministers refused to consider says that "at the root of this insurgency are perceptions of inequality, exclusion and marginalisation [and] perceptions of injustice in the distribution of benefits and opportunities arising from extractive activities."

This is not a new issue. In 2020 Mozambique blocked SADC summit meetings and attempts by SADC to create a military force to intervene, because South Africa also demanded that Mozambique look at the causes of the war. "Silencing the guns in [Cabo Delgado and elsewhere] requires dealing with the root causes of conflicts, which invariably includes governance deficits, human rights abuses and contestation over resources," said Naledi Pandor, South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, in a media briefing on 14 December 2020. <https://bit.ly/Moz-510>

And Frelimo was right to be worried that SADC would raise the issue. The head of the Southern African Development Community Military Mission (SAMIM) in Cabo Delgado, Botswana Professor Mpho Molomo, gave lectures two weeks ago at Joaquim Chissano and Eduardo Mondlane universities in Maputo. He said that security efforts will not be enough to bring stability in the region until social development issues are resolved. Insurgents are still at large in the bush, he said, and the terrorist threat there persists, despite the setbacks that the rebels have suffered. (Cabo Ligado 24 May)

“Generalised poverty and inequality, especially in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives, are Mozambique’s main development challenge,” said African Development Bank representative in Mozambique, César Augusto Mba Abogo, on 17 May. The country must promote and accelerate the structural transformation of the economy aimed at creating jobs to reduce poverty and inequality, he said. (Lusa 18 May) He is citing the entire country, but it clearly applies in Cabo Delgado.

Terrorism law includes vague 'fake news' curb which could be used against press, bloggers

Parliament approved an anti-terrorism law on 19 May which includes several press restrictions. The most contentious states that anyone in Mozambique who "makes or reproduces publicly statements about terrorist acts, which they know to be false or grossly distorted, with the intention of creating panic, disturbance, insecurity and public disorder, is punished with 2 to 8 years imprisonment."

The original version of the clause was widely criticised and on the day of the final debate (19 May) the chair of the parliamentary First Commission suddenly introduced this revised text with the added phrase about "intention of creating panic" and reducing the jail term. Nevertheless the words "false" and "insecurity" are so vague and broad that they could be interpreted to mean that those who say that grievances will cause insurgent actions are acting illegally. As in many countries, judges are named by government, and a judge could rule that as the President says that grievances are not causing the war, that anyone who says otherwise is knowingly publishing false information.

The new law also states that "fundamental rights" guaranteed in the constitution can be overridden during the investigation of a terrorist act, including the interception of any type of communication. The original draft law would have criminalised publishing classified information, but this was also dropped at the last minute. But a civil servant leaking classified information can be prosecuted, which is seen as targeting whistle blowers. (Carta de Moçambique 20 May, Lusa 19 May, @Verdade 18 May)

The wording may still change. In Mozambique after a law is passed by parliament, the government edits the law before formal publication. So it will be necessary to check the final version in Boletim de Republica.

Not yet safe for displaced, as returnees flee again

People fleeing the war are starting to return home and so far none have been attacked by insurgents, said Defence Minister Cristóvão Chume on 4 May (O Pais, 4 May). It was yet another over-optimistic comment by a senior official.

Two weeks later, on 20-24 May, insurgents attacked Quinto Congresso, Nova Zambezia, Nkoe, Onumoz and Chicomo villages in northern Macomia district, near the key N380 road, Cabo Delgado provincial police commander, Vicente Chicote said. Houses were burned and people were beheaded and disembowelled, he said. A mosque leader and the government's administrative post head also beheaded in Chicomo. (MediaFax 25 & 30 May, AIM 25 May; Pinnacle News 22 May) Zitamar (24 May) reports that the SADC force deployed to Chicomo was forced to retreat as they were outnumbered by insurgents. A health worker was captured when a health car was attacked in Meluco district on the way to Macomia on 26 May. The O Pais (26 May) headline was clear: "Decapitations in Macomia reveal that liberated zones are not yet secure."

The N380 is the only paved road north to Mueda and Palma, and insurgents have been trying to keep control of this zone and road. Rwandan, South African and Mozambican troops claimed to have cleared this area around Chai and the N380, and displaced people had gradually returned, only to have to flee again. Chume spoke too soon.

Meanwhile public officials in Mocimboa da Praia and Muidumbe have been ordered to return to work and no longer stay in Pemba, but many are refusing, saying it is unsafe and their houses and offices have been destroyed. The Secretary of State for Cabo Delgado, Antonio Supeia, visited the

Muidumbe district capital, Namacunde, on 20 May and found that only 350 public servants, out of the 900 in the district, had so far returned to work. (Carta de Moçambique, 25 May) Namacunde is on the road north from Chai to Mueda and the zone remains insecure, although displaced people are drifting back. But government believes that most people will not return until they see a functioning local government with health posts and schools - thus the pressure for civil servants to return first.

Police commander Chicote also confirmed the attack on Olumbi, Palma, near the stalled Afungi gas project. Mozambican and Rwandan forces said they had cleared insurgents from that zone last year as part of triumphal statements about controlling Palma and Mocimboa da Praia districts, and displaced people had started to return to Olumbi. MediaFax today (30 May) reports a 28 May attack on the road between Palma and Mocimboa da Praia, again not far from Afungi.

President Filipe Nyusi responded on 26 May saying that no one had told the displaced people to return home. They were free to flee and free to return, but return is not being commanded or even suggested. (*O Pais* 27 May)

This creates a conundrum for Nyusi and the Frelimo leadership. On one hand TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanné has repeatedly stressed the gas project can only resume when the displaced have returned home, at least in Mocimboa da Praia. On the other hand, many at the top of Frelimo would like to keep the displaced away, where they are being fed by friends, family and international aid. As the Palma land grab showed, it is much easier to take land if no one is there. And there is also a fear that insurgents will return with displaced people.

Meanwhile no one knows how many people are displaced. UN agencies have not released a number in nearly a year, and refuse requests for an estimate.

'Do we stay or do we return?'

The best study so far on displaced people in centres is "Do we stay or do we return? Poverty, social tensions, and displaced population's perspectives of return" by João Feijó, Jerry Maquenzi and Neuza Balane, published 23 May by the Rural Observatory (OMR, Observatório do Meio Rural). OMR has become the most important Mozambican research institute on the Cabo Delgado war. In English and Portuguese on <https://omrmz.org/omrweb/publicacoes/dr-171/>

Most displaced people fled to the south of Cabo Delgado where they remain in serious poverty with lack of access to agricultural land, chronic malnutrition and external dependence. Competition for land and firewood increases tension with local people. Initially local people semi-voluntarily and temporarily ceded land for the displaced people, but after two years there is pressure for return of land or payment of rent.

People tend to return in steps, starting in areas close to their places of origin, but concentrating in district headquarters towns or in denser villages, residing in areas that are not theirs and exploiting available agricultural land nearby, with or without the knowledge of the respective owners. In these circumstances land conflicts are inevitable, comments OMR.

Nearly all displaced people want to return to their previous home, but OMR notes that "in a vague and laconic way, the displaced populations are informed that they must wait for the government official announcement to return to their places of origin."

OMR points to four overlapping issues. First, people returning have nothing and need support to resume farming and fishing, as well as reopen small businesses including agricultural trading and workshops. They also need health, education and other public services.

Second, OMR worries that the early return of people could make them vulnerable to insurgent attacks. The emergence of shops and concentration of food stocks, as well as the collusion of

sectors of the population with insurgents by providing information, will turn isolated villages into targets for looting and a continuation of low-intensity warfare, it warns.

Third, it calls for "compensating local populations for making agricultural land available to displaced populations, involving the payment of symbolic, but consensual, amounts for the cession of these areas."

Finally, OMR calls for "opening channels of communication with rebel leaders, promoting amnesties, guaranteeing security and mechanisms for the socio-economic reintegration of defectors, involving local leaders as mediators."

First gas from floating platform in October, but no consensus on return to main onshore project

First exports from the ENI floating gas liquification platform should start in October. This is far enough off shore to be not affected by the war, and there is talk of a second platform. But floating platforms are comparatively small. Most natural gas liquification will take place on shore on the Afungi peninsula, and work there was shut down in March last year by TotalEnergies because of the war. The French company TotalEnergies is the lead of the consortium for Area 1, closest to the coast. The US company ExxonMobil is the lead for Area 4, further out to sea but still planning to pipe most of the gas back to Afungi. ExxonMobil has made clear that it will only start once Total has resumed work. Area 4 also includes the Italian company ENI and the Portuguese company Galp, but Galp is reported to be pulling out of Mozambique and Angola to concentrate on Brazil.

Even Economy Minister Max Tonela admits that the Afungi gas project will not resume this year, so the question is about 2023. Opinion is mixed but consultants Eurasia expect the war to get worse. (Lusa 23 May)

But European Union (EU) ambassador to Mozambique António Gaspar told Lusa (18 May) he believes that within "months" there will be security in Cabo Delgado for the return of large investments associated to natural gas. He also sees a quick resumption because "I think Mozambique gas, in the current context, with the EU's strategic need to drastically reduce and end dependence on hydrocarbons from Russia," gets a new opportunity.

Much depends on the Cabo Delgado civil war, but there are also questions about long term demand for the gas. That, in turn, depends on the Ukraine war and climate change. The calculation all gas companies will make is that it will take five years to reach LNG exports from Afungi, and gas must be sold for another 15-20 years to make the investment profitable - that is, until 2043 or 2049,

McKinsey, one of the world's three largest management consultants, on 30 April produced its latest Global Energy Perspective (<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/oil-and-gas/our-insights/global-energy-perspective-2022>) which predicts that global gas consumption will only increase by 10%, peaking in 2035, which would lead to global heating of 1.9°C. If the peak were reached in 2030, global heating would be 1.7°C. To reach the agreed target of 1.5°C gas production would have to start falling now.

So a lot depends on Mozambique being able to keep its share of a declining market from 2035. That, in turn depends on the Ukraine war and whether Russian sanctions are maintained for a decade or more. Any peace accord with Russia could include an end to sanctions and cheaper Russian gas returning to the global market.

It also depends on environmental pressures. The COP-26 climate conference in Glasgow last year let fossil fuels off lightly. The EU has now declared gas a clean fuel. But the climate emergency hit the coast of KwaZulu-Natal in neighbouring South Africa on 13 April and 23 May with "rain bombs" - record breaking rainfall of 350 mm in 24 hours that caused massive flooding and washouts and

killed 500 people. Droughts, floods and cyclones are more severe in Mozambique. Will future COP negotiations move toward reduced gas use?

TotalEnergy's decision to restart will depend not just on the war, but also on assessments of the market based on global politics and the response to the climate emergency, and on EU and French pressure to increase or decrease gas production.

Economy Minister Max Tonela sees an ongoing market for Mozambique gas because, although gas is a fossil fuel, it is "relatively clean". The "EU will continue supporting Mozambique to maximise the potential of its natural gas as a transition energy", said EU ambassador António Sánchez-Benedito. (Diário Económico 14 May)

But the UK is more cautious. "Yes, we can understand that to get to renewables sometimes gas is an important transition," said Vicky Ford, UK minister for Africa, Latin America and Caribbean. "But actually what we must do is continue to work with countries on the long term renewables and alternative energy sources. The biggest challenge the world faces is climate change" (Further Africa 27 May)

Tanzania has a large off-shore gas field just north of the one in Cabo Delgado. Under John Magufuli it was not developed, but Samia Suluhu Hussan who became president last year has moved forward rapidly. On 29 April an agreement was signed with ExxonMobil, Equinor and Shell for a \$30 billion gas liquification programme.

25 countries sending military personnel

To fight the insurgents or to train Mozambicans, 25 countries are sending military personnel. The largest contingent, of more than 2000, is from Rwanda. Uganda says it has people in Mozambique.

SADC has a military mission (SAMIM) actually fighting, with personnel from 10 countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The EU training mission consists of soldiers and officers from 12 countries. By order of arrival, they are Portugal (the largest contingent), Spain, Finland (the second largest contingent), Estonia, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Romania and France. Italy, Sweden and Lithuania will join shortly. The EU has 140 soldiers divided into two training centres, one in Chimoio, and the other in Katembe. (EU and SADC websites; AIM 26 May) The United States has a training mission, bringing to 25 the number of foreign countries involved.

The South African Navy's frigate SAS Spioenkop (F147) patrolled the coast of Cabo Delgado for three months, March to late May. The ship took part in fighting against insurgents around Matemo Island, The Tanzanian Navy ship Fatundu is also patrolling. (defenceWeb 26 May) *Africa Intelligence* (26 May) says some of the French contingent are from the Foreign Legion.

"Mozambique insurgency: Why 24 countries have sent troops", BBC 23 May, by Joseph Hanlon. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-61464431> More than 2,000 well trained Rwandan troops were sufficient to largely take control of the two coastal districts, Palma and Mocimboa da Praia, near giant gas fields. Despite their successes, Mozambique's civil war rumbles on. The big struggles now are political - about money, the causes of the war, who can fight, and if the gas project can resume.

Other news

7 kidnappings this year; only 1 victim released

Five out of six people kidnapped in the first three months of this year are still held captive, admitted

police commander Bernardino Rafael on 26 May. The growing wave of kidnappings is of wealthy Asian-origin business people and their families who are ransomed for large sums of money.

Rafael said that the involvement of police officers in kidnapping cases "stains the corporation". The attorney general recently told parliament that the kidnappings are hard to crack because the gangs include "police, lawyers and even magistrates and other actors in the judiciary."

The latest kidnap was on 19 May in Beira. The daughter of businessman Firouz Saleji was walking with a friend in a street close to the campus of the Catholic University when a car with four men came to take her. Two of the occupants left the car, "One of them ran to the victim and started dragging her into the car. The other, who was holding a weapon, threatened anyone who tried to help the kidnapped woman," said a witness. (Zitamar 20 May)

Rafael also admitted a rise in armed robberies. He said that between January and March, there were 21 crimes involving the use of firearms. He admitted some of the guns used came from police units and private security companies. (MediaFax, Lusa, Zitamar, AIM 27 May)

Mphanda Nkuwa dam moving forward

After 15 years of failed attempts, the proposal for the Mphanda Nkuwa dam just downstream from Cahora Bassa is going ahead. Two key actors are now involved: the World Bank IFC and the Africa Development Bank.

The project will generate 1,500 megawatts of electricity and require an investment of \$4.5 billion including the construction of a 1,300 kilometre high voltage direct current transmission line between the dam and Maputo. It will take until 2024 to complete financial arrangements and power should flow in 2031.

Eight companies and consortia have submitted proposals to implement the project. They include TotalEnergies, two Chinese companies, and the Zambian and Zimbabwean state energy companies (who might be expected to buy some of the electricity).

The problem has always been that South Africa is the obvious buyer of the electricity, but as part of the state capture era demanded that all energy supplies be national. This may now be changing.

In brief

An illegal network of 20,000 electricity consumers has been dismantled in Infulene (Matola) and neighbouring Marricuene district. It was an elaborate fraud, with false contracts and staff wearing the uniforms of the state electricity company, EDM. AIM (27 May) estimates that 50% of the energy consumed in Infulene is illegal.

A Russian disinformation campaign has been targeting Mozambique, South Africa and three other African countries, according to a US State Department statement (24 May). In the 2019 national elections there were fake polls from Russia, and in 2020 Facebook (Meta) took down 63 Facebook accounts, 29 Pages, and 7 Groups linked to Russian campaigns in Africa. Currently, some of President Nyusi's praise singers are posting on Mozambique social media material backing the Russian invasion of Ukraine which looks as if it is supplied by Russian sources.

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\$2bn secret debt trial: Daily press clippings in English on <https://bit.ly/Moz-Debt-Map-Trial> .

Important external links

Exchange rates 2006-21 & minimum wages 1996-2021 <https://bit.ly/Moz-Exch-wage-2021>

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 and monthly dry season reports - <https://bit.ly/Moz-Flood-2022>

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

Cabo Ligado weekly report on civil war <https://www.caboligado.com/>

Previous editions of this newsletter: <https://bit.ly/MozNews2022> and <http://bit.ly/MozNews2021>

Downloadable books: <http://bit.ly/Hanlon-books> Election data: <http://bit.ly/MozEIData>

My Mozambique archive: <http://bit.ly/Mozamb>

Cabo Delgado

Archive with reports, detailed maps, and census data <https://bit.ly/Moz-CDq>

Special reports on the war

Evolution of the war: global vs local. 27 Feb 2020 <http://bit.ly/CDelgadoOrigins>

Religion is shaping Cabo Delgado civil war. 30 April 2020 <https://bit.ly/CDelgadoReligion>

Intensifying argument over roots of war. 28 June 2020 <https://bit.ly/Moz-492>

Are the drums of war silencing any hope of peace? 26 July 2020 <http://bit.ly/Moz-496>

A history of violence presages the insurgency. 13 August 2020 <http://bit.ly/Moz-498>

Military & economic intervention. 3 Sept 2020 <https://bit.ly/CDelgadoIntervene>

Mozambique heroin transit trade

English - LSE - 2018 - <http://bit.ly/Moz-heroin>

Portuguese - CIP- 2018 - <http://bit.ly/HeroinaPT>

2001 first article- *Metical* - English and Portuguese <https://bit.ly/MozHeroin2001>

Gas for development?

Gas_for_development_or_just_for_money?_2015 bit.ly/MozGasEng

Gás_para_desenvolvimento_ou_apenas_dinheiro?_2015 bit.ly/MozGasPt

Background reading

Special reports

Social protection report - 2017 Mozambique - <http://bit.ly/MozSocPro>

Special report on four poverty surveys: bit.ly/MozPoverty

\$2bn secret debt - in English

Secret debt trial (Aug-Oct 2021) press reports <https://bit.ly/Moz-secret-debt>

Kroll - Full report on \$2bn debt - <http://bit.ly/Kroll-Moz>

Kroll report summary - <http://bit.ly/Kroll-sum>

Key points of Mozambique parliament report - Nov 2016 - <http://bit.ly/MozAR-debt-En>

Following the donor-designed path to Mozambique's \$2.2 bn debt - <http://bit.ly/3WQ-hanlon>

In Portuguese:

Parliamentary Report on the Secret Debt (complete) bit.ly/MozAR-debt

2018 Constitution - <http://bit.ly/2KF588T>

Election study collaboration: We have detailed election data from 1999 through 2014 and are inviting scholars to use this data collaboratively. <http://bit.ly/MozEIData>

Election newsletters are on <http://bit.ly/2H066Kq>

Ten books by Joseph Hanlon can be downloaded, free: <http://bit.ly/Hanlon-books>

Bangladesh confronts climate change (2016)

Chickens and beer: A recipe for agricultural growth in Mozambique (2014) is on <https://bit.ly/Chickens-Beer>

Há Mais Bicicletas – mas há desenvolvimento? (2008)

Civil War Civil Peace (2006): <https://bit.ly/Civil-War-Civil-Peace>

Moçambique e as grandes cheias de 2000 (2001)

Mozambique and the Great Flood of 2000 (2001)

Paz Sem Benefício: Como o FMI Bloqueia a Reconstrução (1997)

Peace Without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding (1996)

Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots (1991)

Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire (1984)

Apartheid's 2nd Front (1986) <available shortly>

These are still available for sale:

Galinhas e cerveja: uma receita para o crescimento (2014) (free in English)

Zimbabwe takes back its land (2013)

Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South (2010)

Do bicycles equal development in Mozambique? (2008) (free in Portuguese)

Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa (1986)

Mozambique media websites, English:

Club of Mozambique (free): <http://clubofmozambique.com/>

Zitamar (paywall): <http://zitamar.com/>

Mozambique media websites, Portuguese (all with partial paywall):

Notícias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz

O País: www.opais.co.mz

@Verdade: <http://www.verdade.co.mz>

Carta de Moçambique <https://cartamz.com>

Mozambique think tanks and pressure groups, Portuguese:

Centro de Integridade Pública: CIP <https://cipmoz.org/>

Observatório do Meio Rural: OMR <https://omrmz.org/>

Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos: IESE <https://www.iese.ac.mz/>

Centro Para Democracia e Desenvolvimento CDD <https://cddmoz.org/> (some CDD in English)

Also CDD now controls Fórum de Monitoria do Orçamento - FMO (main debt group) <http://www.fmo.org.mz>
and RMDDH - Rede Moçambicana dos Defensores dos Direitos Humanos (a human rights group).

To subscribe to all CDD publications: <http://eepurl.com/gO9l6v> (English or Portuguese).

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